

FIVE-MINUTE SERMONS.

Third Sunday after Easter.

CHRIST AND THE CHURCH.

I have yet many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. (St. John xvi. 12.)

These words were spoken by our Lord in His last discourse to His disciples. What were those things which He had yet to say to them, but which they could not then bear?

They were things pertaining to the kingdom of God—that is, His church, His kingdom upon earth. He was about to leave the world and go to the Father, but He would leave behind Him an organized body to represent Him.

During those forty days, then, He sketched out the plan of the Catholic church, which the Apostles were to bring to completion, under the guidance of the Holy Ghost, Who was to teach them all truth.

These were the many things He had yet to say to them, but which they could not understand till then, because of their former imperfect and even erroneous notions of the nature of His kingdom upon earth. He had spoken of His church before, as it were, in hints; now He speaks no longer in parables, but plainly. Listen to the few recorded words of those which He spoke during those forty days, and you will find in them an outline of the Catholic church.

He first asserts His authority to found a kingdom in this world, saying: "All power is given to Me in heaven and on earth," and then declares that He commits this same authority to His Apostles and their successors in the church: "As My Father hath sent Me, I also send you." And, lest any one should say that this power and authority were given to the Apostles alone and not to their successors, He bids them go forth into all the world to preach the Gospel to every creature, and promises them His continual abiding Presence even to the end of the world. One of the Apostles He invested with a special authority over the others. The Good Shepherd would not leave His sheep in this world unguarded, so He gave to St. Peter and His successors the office of pastor of the whole church in the world. "Feed My lambs. Feed my sheep." He also set forth the means of obtaining eternal life in this earthly kingdom of His—namely, faith and holy baptism—"He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved," and He declared the blessedness of those who would accept the faith upon the authority of His church: "Blessed are they that have not seen and yet have believed." He provided a means by which those who should sin after baptism might find pardon and remission of their sins by instituting the sacrament of penance, giving to His Apostles and their successors the power to forgive and retain sins: "Whose sins you shall forgive they are forgiven them, and whose sins you shall retain they are retained." He had already instituted on the night before His passion the sacrament of the Holy Eucharist, and during those forty days He undoubtedly gave His Apostles the necessary instructions concerning the rest of the sacraments of the new law. The Gospels do not pretend to give us all our Lord's doings and sayings, as St. John expressly tells us at the end of his Gospel. But in these recorded sayings of Jesus, during this last brief time that He spent on earth, we have the written constitution of the Catholic church, though but in outline. The office of the Pope as supreme pastor, the plenary authority of the church, and the necessity of faith upon that authority as a means of obtaining eternal salvation—all this is clearly set forth in the words that I have quoted to you.

"Go, teach all nations," said our Lord to His church; and He added, "teaching them to observe whatsoever I have commanded you." On our part, then, is required faithful submission to His teaching, as it comes to us through the voice of His church. It is only by faith in this teaching and by a diligent observance of the commandments of God and His church that we can hope to save our souls and attain to the blessedness which He has promised.

THE OUGHT-TO-BES.

Written for The Catholic Standard and Times by Rev. J. T. Roche, author of "The Obligation of Hearing Mass," "Our Lady of Guadalupe," "The Life of St. Joseph," "Belief and Doubt," etc.

PERNICIOUS PIETY.

I have a clerical friend whose life has been made miserable for several years through the idiosyncrasies of a pious maiden lady, who fancies she has a mission in life. That mission is to promote the cause of total abstinence on every possible occasion. She is full of the most ardent zeal, but it is a zeal totally devoid of judgment. She has two bachelor brothers of very temperate habits, but she lives in an agony of fear lest they go out some night and come back confounded inebriates.

Her propaganda assumes a great variety of forms. She will stop the wife of a saloon keeper in the vestibule of the church and plead with her to turn her husband from his evil ways. She mails radical temperance literature to prominent churchmen all over the country, and calls upon them to come out openly and courageously and assail the ruin a demon. She is full of dramatic inactivity, and bobs up in unexpected places with tracts and sermons, which she is ready to distribute on the slightest provocation. In short, she is a pious nuisance of the most pronounced type, but the good priest has a hesitancy about suppressing her lest he prevent her doing a certain amount of good amongst men and women of her own peculiar mental calibre. He is at the same time morally convinced that in the long run she does more harm than good, and solemnly avers that women of her kind drive sane and sober people to drink.

Her case, however, is not uncommon. She is merely one of many. The variety is almost infinite; but there are certain well-defined characteristics about them which serve to put them in a class all by themselves. They possess all the outward appearances of piety, but there is at bottom a spirit of criticism and disobedience to author-

ity which sometimes leads to heresy and open rebellion. The old church does not move fast enough for them. They find many of the Protestant churches to be dominated by cranks and fool reformers, and they are surprised when priests and Bishops do not bow over with enthusiasm upon their projects for the reformation and sanctification of the world are brought to their notice.

VARIOUS FORMS.

Sometimes the crank is a well-meaning lady with a chain prayer to some favorite saint, promising extraordinary rewards for a faithful recitation of the same and threatening dire calamities for failure to comply with the conditions laid down. In such matters the approbation of the Holy See and the "nihil obstat" of the Bishop are regarded as being wholly unnecessary. It is enough to state that it was revealed to some holy confessor or to some pious nun with an impaired digestion to make it an object of crank credulity.

Sometimes it is a sensitive soul with a call to establish a new and hitherto unheard-of devotion in a parish; and when the pastor manifests a lack of interest it is a certain sign that he is lacking in zeal. Sometimes, again, it is pronouncedly pious graft masquerading under the guise of a popular devotion, and solely dependent for its success upon its appeal to the sympathies of this abnormal class of Catholics who cannot be made to understand that appeals of every kind should ever and always receive the sanction of the proper ecclesiastical authorities. Sometimes it is a believer in the wonderful working powers of some saintly relic of doubtful authenticity, or a would-be pilgrim to some far off European shrine where the natives believe that some pious fetish carried on their persons will protect them from the eternal fires, even if they miss Mass on Sundays and receive the sacraments only when in proximity to death. Such people are always ready to devote themselves to anything which bears the charm of novelty or to labor in a strange cause; but they hold themselves indifferent to the interests of their home parish, and regard with suspicion the priest who clings to the beaten paths and who fears to expose pious graft and pious grafters lest he should shock the weak who might be shocked at the things which are being done all over the world in the name of religion.

It is difficult to make some Catholics understand that the great means of salvation are those which are ready to hand—the sacraments of penance and the Holy Eucharist, prayer and the hearing of Mass whenever possible, but under penalty of grievous sin on Sundays and holy days. It is difficult to make them understand that devotion to our Immaculate Mother and to our Inmaculate Mother and to God's great saints does not rest upon private and accidental revelations to obscure individuals, but is part and parcel of the body of Catholic doctrine. It is difficult to make them understand that there are dangerous spiritual fads which priests and Bishops tolerate for fear of greater evils. It may shock the sad state of the church in France and many European countries as the natural consequence of an undue following after pious fads, whilst the great essentials of Catholicity were being neglected. The very people who will celebrate a feast day with great eclat and go in pilgrimage to some famous shrine will not hear Mass on Sundays and holy days, and will smile at the idea of making their Easter duty to our Catholic practice. They all play their part in the Catholic system, but it must never be forgotten that it is a minor part, and that insistence upon the great essentials lies at the root of a nation's steadfastness in the run of centuries.—Catholic Standard and Times.

KINDNESS.

The occasion for kind actions are manifold. No one passes a day without meeting with these fortunate opportunities. They grow round us even while we lie on a bed of sickness and the helpless are rich in a power of kindness toward the helpful. Yet, as is always the rule with kindness, the frequency of its opportunities is rivalled by the facility of its exception. Hardly out of twenty kind actions does one call for anything like an effort of self-denial on our part. Easiness is the rule, and difficulty the exception. When kindness does call for an effort, how noble and how self-rewarding is the sacrifice! We always gain more than we lose. We gain even outwardly, and often even inwardly. Nothing forfeits that. Moreover, there is something very economical about the generosity of kindness. A little goes a long way. It seems to be an almost universal fallacy among mankind, which leads them to put a higher price on kindness than it deserves. Neither do men look generally at what we have had to give up in order to do for them what we have done. They only look to the kindness. The manner is more to them than the matter. The sacrifice adds something but a small proportion of the whole. The very world, unkindly as it is, looks at kindness through a glass which multiplies as well as magnifies. I called this a fallacy. It is a sweet fallacy, and reminds us of that apparent fallacy which leads God to put such a price upon the pusillanimities of our love. This fallacy, however, confers upon kind actions a real power. The amount of kindness bears no proportion to the effect of kindness. The least kind action is taller than the hugest wrong. The weakest kindness can lift a heavy weight. Every kind action belongs to many persons, and lays many persons under obligations. We appropriate to ourselves kind actions done to those we love, and we forthwith proceed to love the doers of them. Nobody is kind only to one person at once, but to many persons in one. What a beautiful entanglement of char-



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Why get ourselves into by doing kind things? What possesses us that we do not do them oftener?—Father Fater.

THOUGHTS ON OUR LADY.

The sublime office to which Mary was called leads us to expect all that is highest in her. Her soul must have attained perfectly to that divine harmony that held everything in order and peace before sin entered into the world.

Mary was the mother of all truth; and her heart ever beat for the promulgation of divine truth. She teaches us to have each a Carmel, a holy mount where we may retire and wait for a Pentecostal flame to illuminate our minds, and to fill our frail and feeble will with divine strength for the service of our God.

For thirty years the Blessed Virgin lived in closest contact with the Incarnate Word. Then came the Public Ministry, the Passion, Calvary, the Resurrection; and then Pentecost, when surely the Holy Ghost again came upon her, and in a more ineffable way than upon the apostles.

Mary's whole life has been a pondering on ineffable mysteries, and a long ever increasing desire to enter into an ever more perfect union with God. St. Paul constantly appeals to Christians to practise the contemplative life, "Mind the things that are above." To Mary "pondering" was her daily rest and drink.

APPROACH DAILY.

SOMETHING MOST FERVENTLY DESIRED BY CHRIST AND THE CHURCH.

The Sacred Congregation of the Council has recently issued a most important decree recommending and encouraging frequent and daily Communion to our earthly food. Daily Communion is no reward of virtue, but the most powerful means of acquiring virtue. Its strength saves us from falling into mortal sins, and in it we find loving sorrow for even those lesser faults into which the best of men daily fall. From daily Communion the early Christians drew the strength that made them conquerors in the world, and have martyrs and saints of every land have found in daily Communion the source of their strength. For a while the chilling night of Jansenism affected many writers, even within the Church, who would forbid daily Communion to great numbers of Catholics, including all married people and business men and would restrict it to the very few who showed those wonderfully perfect dispositions which they considered a requisite only for saints; daily Communion were meant only for saints, and not for the mass of ordinary and recondite, struggling men. Yet while we know that daily Communion brings far more abundant fruits than Communion received only once in the week or month, we also know that the church's law prescribes no greater dispositions for a daily than for a monthly Communion, which all over the world, and actions in these days of coldness and disbelief to bring back faith and fervor in their hearts, have appealed to the Holy

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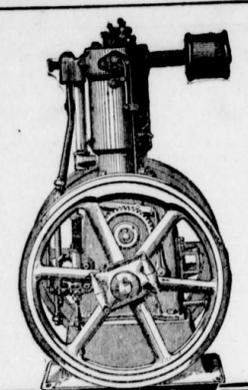
Father to instruct the faithful as to what dispositions are really required by the church and her Divine Spouse for frequent reception of His sacramental body, and by the Holy Father's order the congregation have fully discussed the question and have drawn up the following:

DECREE ON DAILY COMMUNION.

(1) Frequent and daily Communion is a thing most fervently desired by Christ our Lord and the Catholic church, and therefore must be left free to all Christians of every rank and condition so that no one can be forbidden to approach the Holy Table if he does so in a state of grace and with a right and pious intention. (2) A right intention consists in approaching the Holy Table not from custom, or from vanity or from merely human reasons, but in order to please Almighty God, to cling closer to Him in love, and by this divine remedy to heal our faults and weakness. (3) Freedom from venial sins—at least those that are fully deliberate—and from any affection for such sins is highly desirable in those who go to Holy Communion frequently or daily, with the firm determination never to sin again, is quite sufficient; for by this firm resolution daily communicants cannot fail to free themselves little by little from even venial sins and all affection for them. (4) The sacraments of the New Law produce their effect ex opere operato, yet greater effects are produced if there are greater dispositions in the receiver. Hence each one, according to his strength, position, and duties, should prepare himself by a careful preparation before Holy Communion and a fitting thanksgiving afterwards. (5) To show greater gratitude and obtain more merit from frequent and daily Communion a confessor's advice should be taken. But confessors must beware of dissuading anyone from frequent or daily Communion if they are in a state of grace and go with a right intention. (6) Frequent or daily Communion it is clear that we become more closely united with Christ, our spiritual life receives more abundant nourishment, our soul is more filled with virtues, and a stronger pledge of eternal happiness is given to the receiver. Hence parish priests, confessors and preachers, according to the approved doctrine of the Roman catechism (Part II, c. 63) should by frequent and most earnest exhortations to the Christian people to this future service at the altar, and custom (7) Frequent and daily Communion should be especially promoted in religious institutes of every class (the decree "Quemadmodum" passed by the Congregation of Bishops and Regulars on the 17th December, 1890 and remaining in force for them), and it should also be encouraged to the utmost extent in clerical seminaries whose pupils are looking forward longingly to their future service at the altar, and also in other Catholic educational establishments of every class (8) If communications on certain days are ordered in the rules, constitutions, or calendars of particular religious institutes of solemn or simple vows, these arrangements are to be taken as a mere direction and not as a command. If a certain number of Communions are prescribed this must be taken according to the piety of the religious as a minimum, and they must be left quite free to go frequently or even daily to Holy Communion, as already explained in this decree. To give to all religious, both male and female, the opportunity of knowing what this decree appoints, the superior of every religious house will take care to have this decree read in common in the vernacular tongue within the octave of Corpus Christi and once every year. (9) After the promulgation of this decree all ecclesiastical writers must abstain from contentious discussions as to the dispositions required for frequent and daily Communion.

The Holy Father in the audience of 17th December, 1905, approved and confirmed this decree and ordered it to be published.

HOW IS THIS FOR HONESTY? A correspondent asserts that Catholics are taught "by their canonized saints to lie and steal and cheat." Then he proceeds to do a little cheating himself, advancing in support of his assertion what he calls quotation from St. Alphonsus Liguori, precisely as if he had taken it word for word from the original. As a matter of fact he has plagiarized from the "Encyclopaedia Britannica," and Dr. Littledale is the "saint" from whom he quotes. How is that for honesty? It may be mentioned that the three articles on the Jesuits, Monasticism and St. Alphonsus which Littledale contributed to the "Encyclopaedia" are to be replaced by articles which will be truthful. They will, of course, be of less use to the anti-Catholic controversialist, but he can always fall back on "Plain Reasons," "Maria Monk" and other works of fiction necessary to the Protestant propaganda.—Glasgow Observer.



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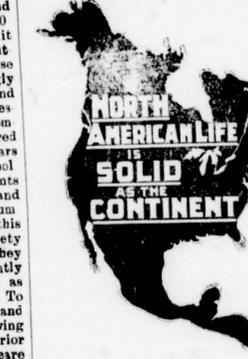
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