

FIVE MINUTE SERMON

BY THE REV. F. P. HICKEY, O.S.B.

THE FIRST Sunday AFTER EPIPHANY

THE HOLY WILL OF GOD

"The good, and the acceptable, and the perfect Will of God." (Ism. xlii. 2)

At the beginning of the year let us resolve, wisely and carefully, to choose the safe path to heaven, and with God's help to persevere in it. This safe path is to do the Holy Will of God. In resolving to follow this path, we are attempting to do that which the blessed do in heaven, and for ever. "Thy Will be done on earth, as it is in heaven." God is so supreme that His Will is the law, the regulator, the perfection of all His creatures.

But how do we know what is the Will of God? From His Commandments and the teaching of the Church, and by that monitor within us, our conscience. If we only bravely accept the Will of God, there will be no worry or doubt, no perplexity and anxiety, for God's Will is wisdom itself and must prevail. We must pray, then, that we may have the grace to recognize it, accept it, act up to it, adore it, and love it.

But it is our nature to find obeying irksome, and we are quick and clever at inventing excuses from doing the Will of God. It is self that is the enemy. Self that has free will, which opposes itself to the Holy Will of God. Of our own nature, then, we are inclined to oppose; having sinned, the habit of opposition is strengthened; and through the malice and craft of the devil we shall be urged, unless we are watchful, into determined opposition to the Will of God. So it is by no means easy to do the Will of God on earth as the blessed do in heaven. We may mean it, intend it, resolve—and yet continually fall away.

Unless we had free will, we could not merit; but alas! if it rules us we shall be ruined. "Before man is life and death, good and evil, that which he shall choose shall be given him." Behold I set before you the way of life, the way of death (Jer. xxi. 8). Then, as we see that self uses its free will to oppose and thwart the Will of God, we must be on our guard, and fight against it. Our free will unchecked leads us to ruin; God's Will leads us to heaven. We must watch our hearts to see what awakens the evil of self. At first, if it all goes well, it lies quiet, but passion may be roused by envy, uncharitableness, a slight, an unpleasant command, by the very dullness and monotony of life indeed; and then self-will is up in arms, and disregards—yea, may boldly assert itself against—the Will of God. The devil is the instigator to fan the smouldering fire into a blaze.

This is the work of our life, and we must not be beguiled into believing anything else can take the place of doing the blessed Will of God. At first there is not open insubordination and rebellion against God's Will; but there is a quiet, crafty evil, that may seem very wrong, that starts the mischief, and that is tepidity. The sin of tepidity is the deliberate choosing in small matters to do our own will instead of the Will of God. Its beginnings are want of fervor, carelessness, and cheerful, prompt obedience. Our prayers, our duties are not omitted, but our heart is not in them. We do not miss Holy Mass, we are late at it, and choose that we may not pray to God that we may not be hurried over, shortened, and often forgotten. God's grace is by degrees withdrawn from us; it is not wanted, or cared for, or asked for. Tepidity is an insult to the Almighty God, an offence to the Holy God, and ingratitude to the Good God. It is a sudden temptation, a dangerous occasion—then, alas! a catastrophe, a fall into mortal sin. Self-will had been unbridled, there was no check on it, and now suddenly it breaks loose, and revolts against its God.

heaven, he will enter into the Kingdom of heaven." (Matt. vii. 21).

A PILGRIMAGE TO CASCIA

SAINT RITA'S CONVENT AND THE NUNS OF CASCIA

By Cecil Fanning

How different, how sadly different, all about me is from the almost medieval quiet of remote Cascia, the shrine of Saint Rita, which I left only a few days ago, hidden away in the verdant mountains of Umbria. As I write, I can see the majestic Cathedral of Milan, bathed in the glory of the full moon, and both the man-made and the divine monuments are silent testimony of the eventual triumph of right. Unmindful of me, a motor van occasionally rumbles by, loaded with soldiers going to relieve the guard, for the city is under martial law. Frequently, a curious crowd gathers in front of the "First Aid" offices, opposite my hotel window, and the wounded man is rushed clumsily by another is brought out. The streets are filled with low murmur of unrest. Occasionally there is a burst of song from the Fascisti, who boldly walk about in small groups, bare headed, dressed in black shirts open at the throat, with red and gold chevrons at their wrists, defying the strikers and the socialists. Every sound seems to echo some discontent.

What a contrast is Cascia, a small hill town such as one encounters only in the very remote districts of Italy and Sicily. Saint Rita's Church and Convent, which is the one interest of outstanding world importance in the town, is situated on one of its narrow lanes which lead from its main thoroughfare. The hamlet is a network of those pinched-by-ways, leading for the most part up steep inclines or flights of stone stairs. The main street is the only one broad enough to accommodate a vehicle, and the Church is thus removed even from the disturbance of an occasional rattling cart. Its setting is amid squalid dwellings, picturesque in their antiquity, but rude and unsanitary.

Saint Rita's Convent, though clean, is in disrepair and sadly needs paint and a number of other surface improvements to make it seem up to the expectation of a pilgrim, who had visited the shrines of other saints. One is put to confusion when the mind makes comparisons between it and the beautiful convents in the United States, none of which is old enough to have yet had the distinction of having a canonized saint. The air of poverty pervading everything at the Cascian convent but proves the pitiful sacrifices and self-denials necessary for the nuns to maintain what there is there.

One does not need to be told of the convent's poverty. The pilgrim can see at a glance that Saint Rita's community is desperately in need of help. Even the hard-working and faithful priest, a native of Cascia, cannot afford a table of his own and has to eat at the miserable hotel which many Americans would deem penance enough to endure for twenty-four hours.

Yet one hears no complaining at Cascia. The Nuns of Saint Rita's Convent belong to a small and not powerful sisterhood. For nearly five hundred years they have lived for their Saint, with a devotion and self-effacement that brings a modernist humbly to his knees. These noble women have watched and prayed and always with a deep and unswerving faith and dauntless hope in their hearts. For is not their Rita the Saint of the Impossible?

Hidden away in a wild canyon in the depths of the mountains of Umbria, far from a railroad and the commotions of commerce, they stare with the confused wonder of startled children at the evil times that have come upon them. What can they know or understand of foreign exchange? A lira, the Italian coin, used to be worth twenty cents. Now it is worth less than five cents. A laborer used to receive five lire per day and live well. Now he is poor on a daily wage of twenty lire. Sugar costs seven lire a pound and everything accordingly, but the brave Nuns of Cascia keep their wax candles burning at Saint Rita's shrine and generously give to each and all their blessed bread, rose leaves from Saint Rita's vine and other precious souvenirs, and apologize that they cannot do more, saying in helpless astonishment: "We are very poor!"

They hear of the glories of Assisi; the prosperity of St. Anne of Aury and the wealth of Lourdes, while, with undiminished loyalty and exquisite devotion, they hope for what, but for their devotion to Rita, would seem impossible.

countless examples of individual and of group loyalty to the principle of the might of right but a passionate war-mad regime has been riding rough shod over such simple and pure ideals as those to which the sisters of Saint Rita's Convent, true to the great traditions of the Catholic Church, have been clinging through it all.

We live in a commercial age. Success is too much gazed by income. To say, though, that times are degenerate, is aphoristic. Writers, even in the days before Christ, made such assertions, and all through the ages the same cry has reverberated. But the world is surely not worse in the present than it was in the past. Right will assert itself sooner or later. An arrival depends upon the cooperation of devout Catholics of all grades of society. God's saints and the souls of the faithful departed are ever near awaiting our prayers for aid; ready, at all times, to act as intermediaries in our behalf. If we have faith in this life and in the life to come (and who is capable of really living without such a faith) we should lean on those who have gone before and secure their help in these troubled times.

Devotion to Saint Rita is of inestimable help at all times, especially now in these times of stress and indecision. The experiences of her life seem to have schooled the Saint for great compassion. For me, there is no instance on record where a follower of Christ rose with more beautiful magnanimity from the sordid setting of her surroundings than did Saint Rita. That, no doubt, is one reason why she is called "the Saint of the Impossible." And you are missing very rich experiences, if you are not among the vast throng of people who are daily in communion with Saint Rita.

In this connection let me say that Mother Superior M. Teresa Fiasca, who is in charge of the community of nuns who are faithfully keeping the light of Rita's saintly life burning through this generation, assured me that she would welcome requests from devotees of the Saint in the United States. You will feel infinitely near Saint Rita if your special intention is offered from the altar of her own church, or if you have near you some souvenir of Saint Rita, such as some powdered grape leaves from the Saint's own vine; some dried rose leaves from the rose-tree of her own planting; some blessed bread (a specialty of the convent, a little hard cracker or biscuit) a medal that has been pressed against the Shrine of the Saint of the Impossible; or a picture or postcard.

But do not forget, the Nuns of Cascia are very poor. Saint Rita's Convent is not begging, but it is in great need. One dollar sent to Mother Superior M. Teresa Fiasca, Monastero di Saint Rita, Cascia, Province of Perugia, Italy, will when it arrives there be translated into some twenty francs, which will help to solve some of the daily problems which are confronting these self-sacrificing Augustinian Nuns of Cascia, because of their poverty. The postage from the United States is five cents. And money should be sent either as a post office money order, or in the form of a bank note.

On August 7th, 1887, two hundred and eighty years after her death, Pope Clement XII. wrote the name of Rita of Cascia in the Martirologio Romano, and on Ascension Day, May 24th, 1900, Pope Leo XIII. declared her a Saint. It was a long while for the little convent of Cascia to wait for the official recognition of their Saint, but the Nuns of Cascia have dauntless patience and faith. They have always been worthy sisters of Rita, the Saint of the Impossible.

DEVOTION OF HOLY EUCHARIST

Memories of a life of remarkable sanctity which did much to spread the rich Eucharistic devotion which is such a golden feature of Catholic piety are being recalled during the aftermath of the recent Eucharistic Congress, which has so signally enriched Catholic life.

Mother Mary Teresa Theodelinde Dubouche has already come to occupy a high place in the record of Catholic piety by reason of the fact that she received a mission from Almighty God which performed wonders in furthering the progress of Eucharist devotion. She was born in Montauban on May 2, 1809, and at an early age was noted for her recollection in church. It was on a Feast of Corpus Christi that the Blessed Sacrament impressed upon her soul the first vivid sentiments of unusual faith and love. She received the first revelation of her vocation in 1846. She went to venerate the Relics of the Passion in the Cathedral of Notre Dame at Paris, and at Holy Communion she was overwhelmed with the thought: "The Blessed Sacrament is above all."

At the side of the Holy Crown of Thorns she saw a Host, which seemed to be held up of itself. She alone saw the wonderful vision. It was at this time that she received the direction of the life that was to be hers. The Blessed Sacrament was to be "all" to the future foundress of the Adoration Reparatrice. DECIDED HER VOCATION She had another interior vision the next year, in which she saw Our Lord crowned with thorns,

with the veil of derision thrown over His head as during the Passion. Gently bowing His head, Our Divine Saviour placed on her lips two drops of blood which fell from His lips, and said: "Thou art My beloved. I have chosen thee. These two drops of blood from My mouth I give to thee for sinners."

It is recorded that these words decided her vocation. She was to found an institute which should have for its object to make reparation for the outrages received by Our Lord. She considered entering the Carmelite Convent on the Rue d'Enfer in Paris, and took rooms nearby. In February, 1848, the revolution broke out and Theodelinde organized a forty days' reparation, to which she invited many pious persons. The reparation days proved such a success that she desired to establish an association, and 2,000 names were presented for this purpose in a short time. The Associates of Reparation prayed day and night before the Blessed Sacrament, which was exposed during the Octave of Corpus Christi.

A GREAT FOUNDATION

Our Blessed Lord chose this time to show Himself for the third time to His faithful servant. The Venerable Mother Teresa wrote as follows of her vision: "The Eucharistic veil disappeared before me. I saw Our Lord on the altar as on a throne. He put a golden tube on His heart, and, plunging the other end into mine, He gave to my whole being a life which would have made me die without a miracle, and I heard these words: 'I need souls to adore and to make reparation to appease the justice of My Father, but all these Associations are insufficient. I want a religious consecration: I want souls who will be always before Me to revive My Life. I will place a tube on their heart as I have just done for you, and they, in their turn, will communicate this life to souls who belong to Me in the world.'"

Venerable Mary Teresa then saw clearly the complete organization of the work asked of her by Our Lord. First of all there were to be souls consecrated by the religious profession, and then others united to them by the Association, sharing in their adorations, united to their spirit of reparations and spreading it in the world.

On Aug. 6, 1848, Theodelinde inaugurated the community life for her first religious daughters in apartments attached to the convent. She was professed on May 29, 1849, and pressed against the Shrine of the Heart of Jesus. Thus was founded the Congregation of Adoration and Reparation. In 1852 the Venerable Mother obtained the privileges of perpetual exposition of the Blessed Sacrament. Since then her religious daughters have remained immolated in a prayer of supplication at the feet of the Holy Victim, exposed in their chapels day and night.—The Pilot.

WOLVES IN SHEEP'S CLOTHING

The devil can be respectable for his purposes. Neatness of appearance, glibness of tongue, and attractiveness of manner are not a guarantee of innocence or piety. "All that glitters is not gold," is the proverbial way of expressing the same fact. Many are deceived because they judge an individual's worth only from outward appearances. The brilliancy and color of the flame has attracted many a moth and brought to be the cause of its destruction.

Appearances are deceiving. Near one of the portals to the cathedral of Strassbourg there is a statue which has for its purpose the illustration of this fact. The front view is sculptured to show a beautiful exterior, from the side may be seen the back pictured as a crawling mass of worms. In carving this statue the artist had the above thought in mind, and wished to express in stone a lesson for the beholder. It is said that the face is the window of the soul and in the generality of cases it is. But always there must be made allowance for the exception. Similarly a neat appearance is the index of a well ordered interior, but again here room must be left for the exceptions. The whitened sepulchers spoken of by our Lord in the Bible tell the same truth. The term was applied to the Pharisees. Like the neatly whitened sepulchers to outward appearances they were both respectable and honorable men but inwardly like the sepulchers they harbored corruption.

Honeyed words, an avoidance of vulgarity, and a pleasing modulation may be as deceptive. These are all indications of culture, but culture of the modern kind, covers a multitude of sins. The very condemnation of vice is not always a sign of the hatred of it. Much less the expressed suspicion of its presence in others. Tennyson writes in this regard:

"And thy, sweet soul, that must impute a crime Are prone to it and impute themselves."

Circumspection here, too, is necessary. Until the speaker is well known and his character known to be blameless his words must be received with the proverbial grain of salt. Attractiveness of manner is perhaps the most deceptive. The social veneer of good manners is perhaps

most prevalent in our days. Much stress is laid on this accomplishment in our neo-pagan time. Finishing schools are now much in vogue. Good manners, however, mean nothing if they are not the outward expression of the genuine sentiments of the heart. The good manners which proceed from the artless simplicity of the less educated are the more sincere as well as the more winning. The greatest care must therefore be exercised in the judgment of character from good manners.

The words of warning which recently appeared in a Catholic contemporary are well worth repeating: "Girls should always refuse to accept offers of automobile rides from men when they do not know or whose character they are not sure. These men are usually very agreeable outwardly and seem harmless, but are absolutely corrupt and without conscience, and many girls who accept these invitations repent of it with a lifetime of remorse. Parents should also see that their daughters do not allow themselves to be placed in danger in this way and also in the danger of being out late at night."—A. R. in The Echo.

POWER OF MORAL FORCE

Under the title "The Pope Dares To Do It," the New York Times, of December 6, printed the following as its leading editorial. "Pope Pius has sent to the Near Eastern Conference at Lausanne a solemn protest concerning the deadly peril in which it is proposed to leave the Armenian and other Christian minorities throughout the Turkish Empire. His Holiness seems to be unaware of the immutable principle that you cannot protest against an act of gross inhumanity unless you are prepared to prevent it by force. It is to be imagined that the Turk will stand in fear of the Swiss Guards at the Vatican? The Holy See is without any temporal power to make. Yet the Pope does not hesitate to make his indignant voice heard at Lausanne and throughout Christendom as confidently as if he had fleets and armies at his command. This strange Pontiff seems to believe that there is still in the world such a thing as moral force. They would tell him his error if he applied to Washington."

God extends His protection to us through many agents, chief among whom are the Guardian Angels, whose office it is to assist and save all human wayfarers from the perils that at every turn in the road threaten the life of both body and soul. This consoling truth is clearly taught in the Scriptures, which say: "For He hath given His Angels charge over thee to keep thee in all thy ways." Not only the years of childhood, but youth in its prime, and manhood in its decay and old age come within the province of the ministering Angels. A simple faith in the power and protection of our celestial companion, who walks with us every step of our life, is one of the greatest needs of our materialistic and self-sufficient age. Surrounded

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BY CHURCH

Write to Cincinnati Bell Foundry Co., Cincinnati, O.

as we are by the vast throng of malign and unfriendly spirits that menace the soul, and by physical dangers that jeopardize the very existence of the body, let us turn constantly to our Guardian Angels for that defense and protection, which they alone can give, and show these all-shielding spirits the honor and gratitude they deserve.—The Missionary.

See Velveteen Announcement on page 8.

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