

FIVE MINUTE SERMON

REV. F. P. HICKEY, O. S. B. TRINITY SUNDAY

THE POWER OF THE CROSS

"Going therefore, teach ye all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." (Matt. xxviii. 19)

Custom, my dear brethren, from times immemorial, custom, sanctioned and authorized by the Church, has united the names of the Blessed Trinity with the sign of the Holy Cross. The very naming of the Blessed Trinity is a profession of faith in the Mystery, the signing ourselves with the cross is an acknowledgment of our Redemption. The revelation of the names of the Trinity, "Father, Son, and Holy Ghost," was made by the Son Himself. The Cross, hitherto a term of reproach, the accursed gibbet, was the instrument by which He redeemed the world, and with which He will come again to judge the world.

The naming and signing—blessing ourselves as it is commonly called—is an epitome of our religion. One God in three Persons; the Redemption and the Judgment.

In the earliest ages of the Church, those under instruction were taught about the cross before mention was made to them of the Blessed Sacrament. "Being questioned, 'Do you believe in Christ?' He would answer, 'I believe,' and signs himself with the cross of Christ, carries it on his forehead, and is not ashamed of the cross of His Lord." (St. Augustine.)

And with the appearance of the cross in the heavens, followed by the victory of Constantine and the freedom of the Church, came the public honouring and veneration of the cross. The emperor decreed that never again was the cross to be the instrument of death; the cross that had brought life to the souls of men. That he might build a church, in which the cross should be venerated, his mother, St. Helena, though eighty years of age, went to Jerusalem to find it. Her searching was blessed by God, and miracles attested the genuine cross. A portion was left in Jerusalem, and the empress returned with the precious relic, and the Church of the Holy Cross was built by Constantine in Rome.

The Church, in every blessing, in every Sacrament, in every Mass, makes use of the sacred sign of the cross. The Holy Oil used in the administration of the Sacrament are blessed with many signs of the Holy Cross. Holy Water, the Ashes, the Palms, all are purified and sanctified by the cross, signed over them many times.

Watch the number of times the Holy Cross is made during the baptism of a child. Watch, and wonder, and have respect. And when we have confessed our sins, the priest gives us absolution, with the sign of the cross and in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. When you are married, the very ring is sanctified by the cross, and the mutual promise, for whilst your hands are joined, the cross seals the compact and blesses it. When we are dying, the Holy Oil is given us with the sign of the cross, on our eyes and ears and mouth and hands and feet, that God may pardon the sins we have committed. Over your dead body, at your burial, the cross will claim you as God's own. Your very grave is guarded by the Cross.

But in the Sacrifice of the Mass you will see, in its solemnity, the use and veneration of the cross. Mass must be said facing a cross. The altar-stone is marked by the cross, the vestment likewise. The very first words and action are the sign of the cross, and "In the name of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost." The opening passage read from the Missal sanctified by the cross. The Gospel begins with the cross signed on the book, the forehead, mouth, and breast of the priest. And the bread and the chalice after being offered are laid on the altar with a cross. At the Sanctus, "Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord," how did He come? With the cross, and so it is made again. During the Canon of the Mass, time after time, both before and after the Consecration, as if the words were not sacred enough without it, the cross is signed as they are pronounced. Even with the Blessed Sacrament in his hand, the priest makes the cross over the Precious Blood three times over on two occasions. And the Communion, his own and each of the faithful, is given with the sign of the cross. And the Mass ends with the Blessing.

Let no one dare to think that this is idle repetition. The very sign of the cross is a power, a sanctifier, a safeguard to those who have the faith and use it reverently. When should I end if I were to tell of the Saints, who had such faith in the cross that miracles innumerable have attested its power? The cross is given, too, as a safeguard. "By the sign of the cross, O God, deliver us from our enemies" is the prayer of the Church. It is a safeguard to our soul, as a lightning conductor is to a building. The spite, the machinations of the devil are averted by the cross. Let us be constant in its use. Let us defend ourselves with it, signing our hearts with it, when tempted, and saying with St. Philip Neri: "Lord let me not prove a traitor to Thee."

The cross is given to us to sanctify us. Make it on awakening, before prayer, on entering a church, and it recalls you to yourself, and you give your heart to God. It dedicates all

you do. It sets the seal upon all your actions, words, and sufferings; it shows they are given to God.

And we need not wonder whence its power. From the Redeemer, "because by Thy holy cross Thou hast redeemed the world." It is the standard of our King. How zealous should we be to uphold the honour of the cross of Christ. By our piety, constant use of it, respect for it, let us preach its power and glory to the world. "In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost."

TEMPERANCE

WHEN HE WOULD HE CAN'T

What a terrible amount of indifference there is amongst us with regard to drunkenness! A little intoxication is looked upon as a simple thing, a mere weakness; while habitual drunkenness is a terrible thing, to be sure, but what the say?

"We are certainly safe from that." That brutal, red-faced sot who breaks his wife's heart or destroys her home, we despise, as we say: "We will never disgrace ourselves as low as that."

We know it well. How do they become such? No man ever became a drunkard intentionally. No man ever takes the glass in his hand and says to himself: "I have a good reputation now. I have good health, a loving wife, children to climb on my knees and put their loving arms about my neck, but this glass will be the first step to ruin and blast all this happiness. This glass I know will lead to another, and in the end my wife will become a broken-hearted woman, my children will walk the streets in rags and filth, my heart and reputation will be gone: but no matter, here it goes."

No man intends it. Drunkenness and the whole host of evils that follow in its train come on a family gradually. Warn a man who is drinking a little; tell him what is before him. He will say: "Do you take me for a fool?"

The worst drunkard lying in the slime of bestial degradation said that. No, it is not the fools that become drunkards. They know a little too much.

"I know myself," says a man. "I can take it or leave it."

The poor drunkard of today who says that long ago unfortunately in every case wound up by taking it. Many a time the man who had said "he could let it alone when he had a mind to," alas! did not have the power.

"Father," said a man the other day, "I'd give my right hand if I could quit it, but I can't."

"I can give it up," is the cry of the young man as he enters the outer circle, "but I won't."

"I would," is the cry of the despairing wretch in the vortex, "but I can't."—Zion's Watchman.

LIQUOR AND CIVILIZATION

Man is an animal that subsists by eating, drinking and breathing. No matter of what substance his spirit may be composed, he has found no way of expressing that spirit save through the body. Stop his breath for thirty minutes, his food for a month, or his water supply for two months, and his body dies.

If food and drink exercise such a potential influence over life itself, it is reasonable to assume that the character of particular foods and drinks exercises some influence over the particular characteristics of life. So true is this that we admit without argument the death-dealing qualities of certain drugs. No one would think of taking strychnine or prussic acid.

There are drugs which do not act so quickly, but whose effects, though more gradual, are none the less violent. Such, for instance, is morphine, and such are the intoxicating liquors.

When or where drunkenness originated nobody seems to know, but drunkenness has come to be a surprising factor in civilized life. Much of the immorality, degeneracy and beastliness of modern times is directly traceable to its influence.

Not only does it unbalance the individual, giving him a warped view of his duty, and obligations toward society, but its general effect is to make people careless and improvident, and this effect is sometimes transmitted from father to son without the habit itself.

It is impossible to say just how much of the insanity, criminality and debauchery of today is attributable to the grog shop of yesterday, but probably a great deal, and the worst of it is that this same process is bound to stultify the character and mentality of future generations.—Waco (Tex.) News.

SOLDIER'S LOVE OF CRUCIFIX

Among the rows of wounded the priest finds a Scotch Presbyterian, who craves comfort and consolation from the minister of God. "Ye gave," he said, "a wee Christ upon the Cross to yon Catholic fellow. Have ye, father, e'en one for me? Eh, it's strange! I've seen a whole village smashed, and a whole kirk, by the German shells, but the great Christ upon the Cross stood untouched. His arms spread out, His head leaned wearily, His face turned up to cry His Father's mercy on us men that killed Him. And all the shells couldn't break Him; and I mind that He said, 'When I am lifted up, I'll draw all to Myself.' Father, pray Him to draw me.

Father, ye'll mind to ask Him to make me His ain laddie!"—From advance sheets of "French Windows" a new work by Monsignor Bickerstaff-Drew, senior chaplain of the British forces.

HOW COULD THEY BE?

"It is a striking and suggestive fact that a glance down the list of local divorce court cases that appears every day (except Sunday) in the daily press shows that the names of the parties given out display very few whose surnames begin with Mac or O," says the Catholic Standard and Times. "Neither do the tribe of Kelly and Burke and Shea cut much figure in these doleful chronicles of domestic failures and misfits. This fact, which is quite notorious, is powerful evidence of the tenacious way in which the children of the Green Isle cling to the faith."

SPIRITISM AGAINST CHRISTIANITY

Edward F. Murphy, M. A., in America

The ranks of Spiritists are alarmingly swelling, as was to be expected since Sir Oliver Lodge and Maurice Maeterlinck lifted their torches to light the way to the land of shades. The War has so overwrought European nerves that, to save themselves from slipping into utter despair, people simply must grasp at a doctrine confirmative of a further existence. It is too painful to believe that the millions of brave young men who flourished on the Continent only yesterday are quite annihilated to-day. Could their heroism and sacrifice possibly end in dust?

In emphatic negation, Maeterlinck has affirmed the conservation of spirit: the valorous souls of dead heroes live on in the bodies of those that are left behind, inspiring and supplementing courageously. However, this is more poetic than scientific; and the modern intellect, still tinctured with positivism from the past century, asks for material proof even of the spiritual. Men want the survival of personality badly, but, even so, they are solicitous that science prove it.

According to Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, the most recent prominent witness, the dual desire is now gratified. No longer do we need the misty tomes of misty theologies. Up-to-date Spiritism is self-sufficient. It assures Europe, weeping for her children and hitherto refusing to be comforted, that immortality is their portion; it makes widows hear the loved voice again, and mothers whose hands grope in darkness clasp once again those of the vanished child. Of course, Sir Oliver Lodge, who claims in his latest book, "Raymond, or Life and Death," to hold communication with his dead soldier-son, commends Sir Arthur, who strongly asserts that "we should now be at the close of the stage of investigation to assume the period of religious construction."

The sorry probability is, that the religious renaissance which promises to be the chief blessing of the great upheaval, will be much hurt by this new and popular cultivation of "spirits." But if it is effectively demonstrated in these days which try men's souls, that the Church offers just as comforting and much more certain evidences of a realm where our loved ones live again, than does Spiritism, many of the distracted folk, who are fleeing for solace to a religion based on fables, may revert to that which Christ established on a rock. Now is the acceptable time for Catholics and Christians in general to expand their best efforts in exposing the weakness of Spiritism and proposing the truth, strength, and beauty of the old doctrine.

Admittedly Spiritism bristles with difficulties, in spite of the unqualified approval of these two English poets. They believe that spiritistic phenomena are genuine. In this, respect it is to be accorded them, if not credence. But granted that the alleged marvels are the work of intelligent, invisible agents—and this is a tremendous concession—is any proof of the survival of personality afforded thereby? Spirits which never inhabited a human body may be the actors, instead of the souls of our dead. To be sure, the phenomenon of materialization, or induced apparition, which should conclusively establish the identity of spirits, is now very much at mediumistic command and, consequently, scientific demand. But science is still hampered; for the law from which mediums generally concede no exception, is that the place be dark in which the materialization occurs. Deception is well associated with darkness. "Give me light," exclaimed the old Grecian warrior, "and Ajax wants no more!" Similar is the cry of that brand of science which is not too credulous to be scientific. Until there is permission to strike a match or press an electric button "ad libitum," scepticism is just.

The further fact that materialized spirits actually wear clothes—may, can be photographed!—produces further diffidence. Spirits which are material enough for this, are material enough not to be spirits. Again, a great obstacle to apparitions as spiritistic evidence of discarnate existence, is that they deal with the living as well as with the dead. Evident as it is that a body is only where it is, common-sense tells us that such apparitions of living persons are mere hallucinations.

But since such is true of the living, who will ever be sure that it is not true of the dead?

So Spiritism must depend on the "messages" which it receives, if it persists in trying to prove a future life. And even here it is decidedly weak. For, according to Lodge, telepathy is the means of communication between us and the unseen world. But if telepathy is possible at all, why can it not be between living persons, as well as between the living and those who have passed beyond the grave? Now, if there can be such communication among the living, when can we ever be certain that the so-called "spirit" messages come from the dead?

And even if the messages were proved to be spiritistic, as Lodge and Doyle maintain, they may be of little benefit as evidenced in a future life. The "sine qua non" of such evidence is clear and systematic proof of the identity of discarnate souls. No one would feel complimented or comforted to have communed with a devil. As Hyslop, our American investigator, remarks, "Spiritism to be trusted must first give messages that represent super-normal knowledge, must afford facts that illustrate and prove the personal identity of the person represented as communicating." But these extremely important conditions seem unfulfilled. Separated from the body, the soul, as Hyslop admits, forgets terrestrial concerns or remembers them imperfectly. If this is so, we can hardly expect disembodied agents to prove satisfactorily that they are really not spirits of darkness and perversity, but our own dear departed. As for the required supernatural knowledge, one sees in the "messages" only a chaos of errors and mundane trifles. Revelations from the immortal spheres? Rather emanations from the limitations of earth. He that is of the earth is earthly and speaketh of the earth. A flower of spirit-thought plucked from that singular totem, "Light from the Spirit World," may pardonably be presented: "Wisdom is not knowledge, and knowledge is not wisdom. Wisdom is not folly and folly is not wisdom. Those who have not wisdom must get it where it is to be found." Ye philosophers, mongers of the abstract, get to a logic of lucidity incomparable!

These facts weaken the whole structure of Spiritism: the spirits of individuals, yet alive but supposed to be dead, have actually communicated, unknown to themselves. The orthodox Spiritist piously protests that evil spirits sometimes regale themselves with a little impersonation. Deception in the other world as well as in this? Yes; for the spirits themselves, when detected in error, sometimes make full confession.

Where there is evidence of deception, how can there be indication of truth? It is apparent that the spirits of Spiritism are evil. Their raucous laughs, outrageous lies, flippant diction, and frequent blasphemies, proclaim them imp rather than the personalities of our virtuous dead. Is it with such that men will numerously enter into alliance? God forbid! How different is the wild future life which Spiritism preaches from that which Christianity teaches—a peaceful, ordered existence wherein souls, far from reveling in banalities and inanities, see God face to face and enjoy every rational pleasure which communion with the Divine Source of Reason signifies. Science has not succeeded in proving that there is life on Mars. Why does it presume to deal with the far more distant realm of spirit and declare that it has lifted the veil? But if science has indeed reached another world, that world seems to be the lower one. Can consoling and convincing proofs of a future life come from the abyss?

Are the unscrupulous and mendacious spirits of Spiritism to be preferred to the testimony of Christ, of the martyrs' blood, of the centuries' conviction, of the doctors' scrolls? Are such arguments to be flipped to the rear or to the waste-basket, because Lodge, Maeterlinck and Doyle propose now ones? A Christian is urged to the suspicion that, if there is any truth in Spiritism, it is the Prince of Liars who is putting it there. Would he not exercise all his best forces to unmake or mar the great revival of Christianity? Quite naturally he might be expected to be busy these days when England is bending the knee, France saying the "Confiteor," Germany crossing herself, and the tear-laden eyes of the world turning to the stars. Perhaps in Spiritism he finds and is playing his trump card, "that the light of the Gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should not shine unto them." Is the coming of Spiritism "according to the working of Satan, in all power, and signs, and lying wonders, and in all seduction and iniquity to them that perish; because they receive not the love of the truth, that they might be saved?" Holy Scripture sounds a warning: "God shall send them the operation of error, to believe lying; that all men may be judged who have not believed the truth." It behooves Christians earnestly to hurl at Lucifer's present-day spiritistic scheme, if his it be, javelins of argument and prayer.

ONE GATE INTO THE CHURCH
The Catholic Church is a city to which avenues lead from every side, towards which men may travel from any quarter, by the most diversified roads by the thorny and rugged ways of strict investigation, by the more

flowery paths of sentiment and feeling; but arrived at its precincts, all find that there is but one gate where they may enter, but one door to the sheepfold—narrow and low, perhaps, and causing flesh and blood to stoop in passing in. Men may wander about its outskirts, they may admire the goodness of its edifices,

and of its bulwarks, but they can not be its denizens and children if they enter not by that one gate of absolute, unconditional submission to the teaching of the Church.—Cardinal Wiseman.

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A copy of the booklet referred to above will be mailed free on request, and The Coca-Cola Company especially invites inquiry from those who are interested in pure food and public health propaganda. Address
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