

FIVE MINUTE SERMON

BY REV. WILLIAM DEMOUY, D. D.

FIFTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

THE CERTAINTY OF DEATH

"And when he came nigh to the gate of the city, behold a dead man was carried out; and a great multitude of the city wept with him: whom when the Lord had seen, being moved with mercy towards her, he said to her: Weep not." (Luke vii, 12, 13)

The prophets of old cried out that the world was desolate of spiritual wealth, because people did not think within their hearts. In modern times, if a prophet lived, perhaps he would not lament over the world's lack of thought, but over the kind of thought in which it indulges. Nowadays people think even more than they did in the times of which the inspired of God spoke, but they think of things alien to those of God. No one will deny that the world is more strenuous today than ever before in the history of mankind. With the advance of science, has come increased thought; with improved methods of communication, thought has also increased; with new enterprises, new thought has developed. We are more methodical today than our ancestors ever dreamed of being. All our traffic and travel is carried on in a systematic way. System rules more or less everywhere. The world realizes that without order, success is uncertain and progress impossible. Only a slight glance at the modern world will convince one of this method existing everywhere.

But this order in all things has not come about by chance. It has cost lives of energy and thought. Men have labored incessantly in its accomplishment; others have continued where their predecessors left off, until rules have been laid down that are inviolable. The work has not stopped, nor will it ever cease. With the knowledge that thus far has been gained and the successful methods that have been adopted, the life of the world's order and system will last a time no more. It will be improved upon, added to, and perhaps carried out differently; but the fundamental idea always will remain the same. Men have created something in worldly order that for us and our successors is and will be inevitable. The consequence is that he who conforms to this established order will, as a rule, meet with success; he who fails to comply with it must expect disaster, or at least failure. Sometimes failure will come even when all order has been complied with, but this is because no works of man are infallible. We enter a train with confidence that we shall reach our destination. As a rule we do reach it, but occasionally we are disappointed. Perhaps the train brings some to their ultimate destination—to eternity. We go aboard one of the mighty ocean liners, expecting that we shall reach the shores of the land beyond the seas; but sometimes we are disappointed, though generally safety is our lot. So in all things human and in the order of all man's works, there is a great degree of certainty but no infallible security. However, the more this order is observed, the more certain is a successful issue assured.

In the great order of God, there is a certainty in His mind and established laws that are infallible. What appears to us as defects are but exceptions to His order. He intended these variations when forming the world and establishing the order thereof. These defects or inflections may be permitted to punish man, or they simply may be to teach him that he has not here a lasting city. If everything in life succeeded to our complete satisfaction, and man always acted to our liking, we would never have a desire for a better land. We would be of the world, and completely worldly. An all-wise God has not only given us commands, but He has prepared for us a way of keeping them. The surroundings in which we are placed, since the fall of Adam and Eve, are blessings to us. We are not to remain here. Why then should we have everything for which the heart yearns? Not only are we not to continue on earth always, but while here we must prepare for another place, and this preparation is carried on better the less we have to do with the world, and, as a rule, the less our worldly success.

How few people think of this order of God, certain to us as to execution but uncertain as to time and manner! People go forward, meeting success when it comes, and facing failure when it is inevitable. This must be, we admit. Success will come sometimes, and at other times failure. But whether success or failure be our lot, we should gain. The plain truth is, however, we often merit by neither. Why? Because we have not thought within our hearts; because we have not, in our intention and by our efforts, submitted to the infallible law of God. In other words, we have not had that spirit of resignation demanded of us by God, and even taught us by experience. And this spirit of resignation will come only to those who think out the truth of God's established order.

What a disappointment death generally is to those who are dear to the one who strikes! We have an example of it in today's Gospel, but we may believe the widow was not giving way to unavailing grief, as Christ deemed her worthy of His pity and assisted

ance. This helps us to form a true idea of death and some of its consequences. After the sin of our first parents, God decreed that man must die. This decree is infallible, but the time of its fulfilment in each individual is not certain. How much, then, should we realize the certainty of death and feel that at any moment it could come to us or to our dear ones! Naturally, it may cause the pangs of sorrow to enter the human heart, but in the depth of the soul of the faithful Christian there will be found conformity to God's will and patient resignation to His infallible decrees.

Would that the world would think more of this great truth, and that people would hold themselves always prepared for it! Let us not wait until the danger appears, to make our preparation; and let us remember that once death has come, if we are not prepared to meet it ourselves, nor to see our dear ones meet it, the consequences in either case will be lamentable. Today we live, tomorrow we may die; let us live today as if we were to die tomorrow.

COURAGE

The district nurse was making her rounds to alleviate the miseries of suffering humanity. In her hand she carried the proverbial little black leather bag containing the necessary supplies for her gentle ministrations.

With practiced step she ascended a steep flight of wooden stairs leading from the entrance of a dingy brick tenement where some ten or twelve families made their homes in an unfamiliar land.

The district nurse knows much about the lives and thoughts of the great multitude who make up a large percentage of our city population. She has listened to many strange sad tales; she has witnessed many heroic struggles on the part of suffering and disappointed ones. She is expected not only to soothe physical pains but even to console and advise those who need mental or spiritual succor. This is it frequently her noble task to do.

On this mild evening in April the district nurse was making her rounds as usual. She paused on the second landing of the dingy brick tenement and knocked at a certain door. There was a faint response: "Come in!"

Within the small but scrupulously neat kitchen a little group, sad eyed, dejected, sat quietly about. In a corner was a little wicker carriage covered over with a white veil. Beneath the veil, the district nurse knew well, was a dead child. The mother tearless, wide-eyed with sorrow, sat with toil worn hands, an unusual circumstance. She was young and this was her first bereavement. The district nurse did not say many words; there are times when words are superfluous. But the pressure of her hand and the unfeeling sympathy of her presence surely did more. She understood that there was a Comforter present in the humble place, He Whose majestic figure hung on the plain black wooden cross on the wall. The bereaved mother sat looking into His eyes, into wide wounds made by men, and she could not weep for the dead child. Perhaps all unconsciously there came to her the echo of words once spoken by this dying Saviour when He would comfort and strengthen those who mourned: "Let not your heart be troubled."

The district nurse with moist eyes, passed out and left the living and dead.

She ascended a second flight of stairs, more carefully this time, for the shadows were deepening and there was no light in the place. Again she knocked on a door.

A childish voice cried shrilly: "Come in!" She opened the door, and a bright smile crept into her pensive face. Again a little group sat about the stove. They were not merry after the usual manner of children. The mother of these three small children was young, quite young. She was possibly not more than ten years old. She sat over her little brood like a vigilant mother hen that gathers beneath her wing her helpless ones, protecting them from invasion of any sort.

The children were poorly dressed, but neat and clean. Possibly you would have said that they were too thin, too pale, but you could not help feeling that the very young mother did all she could for them. But here was confidence and trust and courage in the face of seemingly insurmountable obstacles.

The very young mother was wide eyed, but not with sorrow. You would have said that she was planning, devising ways and means to meet the many household problems which come to mothers and especially to those who have little of this world's goods.

The entrance of the district nurse was greeted with exclamations of unrestrained joy. For she was known and loved in this humble dwelling.

Her visit was of necessity brief, but in those few moments it was possible to crowd a very great deal. All the little joys and happenings of the day were faithfully rehearsed in turn by the little ones, the while the district nurse with practised hand was attending to a pair of very blue eyes that were a trifle inflamed.

When she rose to go, the little mother insisted upon showing the



recent acquisition to the linen drawer where a neat little pile of snowy sheets, towels, etc. presented itself for inspection. To be sure the material was not so fine and there was scarcely sufficient to make a very grand showing, but it was the faint vestige of respectability, nay, of affluence if you will, and therefore, a source of pride and consolation.

If one had been able to see inside of the young mother's head doubtless he or she would be very much astonished. Plans, such plans, gigantic they might seem, for the future of the little brood, for their welfare when the time should come for them to go forth into the great cold wide unfeeling world where each one must elbow his way to gain and keep footing.

For herself—possibly there were few plans at all. For in souls such as this child there is born a triumphant courage.

You need not go far to seek the source of it. On the kitchen wall there hangs a very crude highly colored print of the Sacred Heart of the Saviour. You cannot but recall the beautiful prayer sung by the Poet in Evangeline: "Sacred Heart of the Saviour, O inexhaustible Fountain! Fill our hearts this day with strength and submission and patience!"

It is only those who come into intimate contact with souls that labor and are heavily burdened, who realize how deep is the source of that admirable patience and courage so often displayed, edification and inspiration to us who are apt to bemoan our little discomforts in the daily fret and jar of things.—The Pilot.

THE APOSTASY OF MODERN SOCIETY

In these evil days the world seems to have risen up against God and His law. Philosophy, science, literature, the market place and the forum, the amusements of the people, and sometimes the home and the school have strayed from well trodden ways, and ventured out by paths that lead away from truth and righteousness. This vagrant, erring spirit is unfortunately discerned at times in the relations existing today between parents and children. The rising generation must not forget the reverence and obedience it owes to parents, and parents in their turn must not be oblivious of the responsibility they owe Almighty God for the proper care and direction of their children.

It is not right to place all the blame for youthful depravity upon parents. But the solemn fact remains that when children go wrong the first impulse of public opinion is to blame the parents. And in some cases public opinion is right. The War, the freedom of the age, the movies, the revolt against authority may all be pleaded as excuses for wild youth, but they are only excuses not reasons.

The discerning student, who has a sense of spiritual values, and is seriously concerned about the problem, will draw his own conclusions. If he sees boys and girls in their teens, on the streets at night, frequenting haunts of questionable character, consorting with dangerous companions, and manifesting a spirit of unrestraint, he cannot be blamed for placing the responsibility largely on the parents.

It is high time for parents to take counsel with themselves and tighten up on the restraints of authority. Almighty God in giving them children has placed upon them the duty of educating, guiding and controlling them. He will exact a fearful penalty from them if that duty is not fulfilled.

The signs of the times indicate too clearly that there is too much liberty given to children. The more freedom a child gets, the more he takes. The unwise parent who begins by catering to childish whims will end by surrendering all right and authority. Children must be curbed, and their young wills trained to obedience. In this the parent must call upon the religious motives and the sanctions of the moral law to enforce his teachings. Honor thy father and thy mother was not written into the decalogue for no purpose.

Catholic parents have God behind them in their efforts to train their children to obedience. But they must not expect Almighty God to do everything for them. They themselves must do their part. And that part in our degenerate days consists in exercising watchful supervision and strict discipline over all the actions of their children.

Parents should know where their children are and with whom they associate. Evil companions always corrupt good morals. And there are always many evil companions to turn children from virtue. Find out who are your children's friends. Find out where they go, what

amusements they enjoy, and what books they read. Keep them off the streets at night. If some parents could see the sights that are of too frequent occurrence on the city streets and in the public parks, they would tremble for the safety of their children and tremble too for the dread reckoning that Almighty God will inexorably exact from those who neglect the moral training of His little ones.

Parenthood implies a tremendous responsibility. Fathers and mothers have received from God the duty of training their children. The State and the school and the church may aid in the child's training, but no human agency can absolve parents from the primary duty which is theirs of seeing that their children, like the child Jesus in Nazareth, increase "in age and wisdom and grace before God and man." Good parents are needed today. Catholic parents who know their duties, realize their responsibilities, and are conscious of their right to exact obedience from their children should give the example. The home is the cradle of human society, the starting point of every city and State, the nursery of every virtue and the ante-room of Heaven.

This ideal of home is being attacked on every side today by well intentioned but shortsighted reformers who place the end of man in this world instead of the next. The apostasy of the modern world from God can be averted only by the concerted efforts of all to return to the fundamental principles of the old fashioned morality. But in this attempt to restore a recreant society to the house of its Father, God, parents must do their necessary and inescapable duty.—The Pilot.

THE END OF A NURSE'S DAY

Seven o'clock. And the nurse's work, Was done for another day; She heaved a sort of a tired sigh, And put the charts away.

Then sat for a moment and bowed her head Over the little white desk—"I wonder," she said to herself, "After all, Am I really doing my best?"

Perhaps I could have begun the day, With a brighter, cheerier smile, And answered the bells with a "right away," Instead of an after a while.

And I might have listened with sweeter grace, To the story of six's woes; She may be suffering more perhaps, More than anyone knows.

And I might have refrained from that half-way frown (Although I was busy then) When that frail little body, with sad, blue eyes, Kept ringing, again and again.

And I might have spoken a kindlier word, To that heart of that restless boy, And stooped a moment to help him find The missing part of his toy.

Or perhaps the patient in eighteen A, Just needed a gentler touch. There are lots of things that I might have done, And it wouldn't have taken much.

She sighed again—and brushed a tear. Then whispered—praying low "O God, how can you accept this day, When it has been lacking so?"

And God looked down—He heard the sigh, And saw the shining tear; Then sent His angel messenger, To whisper in her ear.

Perhaps you could have done better today, But, ah: the Omnipotent One, Seeing your faults, doesn't forget The beautiful things you've done.

He knows, little nurse, that you love your work In this big house of sorrow, So gladly forgives the lack of today For you will do better tomorrow.

And the nurse looked up with the tenderest smile, "Tomorrow I'll make it right!" Then added a note in the order book Be good to them tonight. —A.

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, it is the best and most natural way of living; should we not fear and reverence the God that made us, that preserves us, and provides all things for us?—Neale.

The man who is loyal will be with you when you are up, and he will be with you when you are down, because he has in him that which is finer than wealth or glory. He has in him an appreciation of the finer things of life, a regard for his fellow beings.

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