

FIVE MINUTE SERMON

BY REV. WILLIAM DEMOUY, D. D.

SEXAGESIMA SUNDAY

THE CHURCH OUR GUIDE

"The seed is the word of God; and they by the wayside are they that hear; then the devil cometh and taketh the word out of their heart, lest believing they should be saved." (Luke vii. 16.)

Today the Church puts before the people for their edification, Christ's parable of the sower and the seed. Our Saviour made this parable embrace all classes of men, and it truthfully depicts to us how men have been and are affected spiritually. It has nothing to do with their temporal welfare, but relates solely to the good of their souls and their forthcoming reward. This kind of a Gospel is needed in our times. We are living in an age when men's minds are turned more toward temporals than spirituals—or, at least, when they are loath to sacrifice the things of body for the benefits of soul. In many the material has supplanted the spiritual; nay, many have never known either the spiritual or its demands. The offerings of the present time are in most cases pagans themselves through life. Nay, it is even difficult to hold many who have been born and reared more fortunately. The lure of the pleasures of this life claims many of them. They consider the Church's voice gruff and her commands foolish. The enemy of their salvation has many means at his command by which he can lead them away—he can tempt and taketh the word out of their heart, lest believing they should be saved.

For Christians, therefore, the work of conservation—or, as it is commonly called, perseverance to the end—should be one of the foremost things in their minds and one of the principal ends of their spiritual endeavors. And, needless to say, it requires a rational effort on the part of man. He should not blindly and vainly expect to be given this all-important gift. The work of salvation in a person who has the use of reason requires the most fixed and firm intention as well as meritorious acts. We must not perform our spiritual duties forgetfully or mechanically. They must be guided by our intention, as the modern vehicle is guided by the hand that steers it. God's desire is that we fully realize why He has put us upon earth, and how we must attain our end. We must never lose sight of this fact. If we do we soon shall find that we are groping in darkness, like the traveler by night who has wandered from the path that would lead him to his destination.

No matter how fervent the Christian, nor how strong his faith, this truth of the necessity of perseverance ever should be before him. Many have fallen, who once were pure and good and faithful, because they had become careless about their salvation. Some have thought that it would be easy to return, but alas! they are still far away. Sin blights, it weakens, it blinds. It inflicts, moreover, a wound on the soul from which it is difficult to recover. He who plays with Satan has ever afterwards a strong inclination to return to his hovel. There are some plants in the world which, if we touch, poison us to such an extent that we scarcely ever completely recover from the effects. Satan and grievous sin are the poisonous spiritual growths which if we place ourselves in contact with them, will often poison us for life, or at least leave us so weakened that a relapse is easy. People often seem to forget that some things carry in their train effects that are inevitable, or so nearly inevitable that only a special intervention on the part of God could prevent them. Fire is sure to burn, for it is its nature to do so. No one can deprive it of this quality. Sin has effects that will inevitably follow; the more serious the sin the more terrible the effect. He who is seriously burned has but a slight chance for life; in a like manner he who has sinned grievously finds it difficult to free himself from the effects of his act. The words of Holy Writ, "he who loves the danger shall perish in it," express the truth concisely for us.

When Catholics consider this truth, they necessarily must see that they must not expose themselves to all the temptations that are rampant in the world. Satan is dancing at many a scene that a shameless element further and a lax society permits. If Catholics do all that civil laws permit, there is no chance for their salvation. Yet there are many who believe they are justified in doing whatever the State permits. But they who do so are following the devil. He who thinks that he can indulge in certain things which the law tolerates is placing his salvation at stake. The Church alone is the Catholic's guide. He who is deaf to her commands and exhortations, even when she forbids things that other churches permit, will never be among those in whose hearts the word of God takes deep root.

The Church's vigilance over her children and the interests she manifests in their spiritual welfare are made known in the commands she gives and in the prohibitions she establishes. Behind them all is not only the wisdom of an experienced guardian, but also the light of the Holy Ghost and the infallible truth of God. Christ's words, "he who hears you, hears Me," are as true

today regarding the Christian's adherence to the Church as they were of the earlier brethren's complete submission to the apostles and their teachings. The Church's laws are all made for her children's safety and welfare. Without them, they would be thrown continually into dangers that would in time bring about their complete spiritual destruction. As it was the star of Bethlehem, and no other, that guided the Wise Men to the manger of Christ, so it is only the Church that directs Catholics to the haven of eternal safety.

HELPING THE SICK THROUGH THE WINTER

Winter weather is serious weather, especially to the aged, ailing or the unfit. An undertone system needs more than the ordinary stimulation to make life bearable when the thermometer hovers around zero.

Roman Meal is especially valuable for invalids, little children, and old people, as an item of diet for cold winter months. It is acid blood that causes that "all in" feeling. Acid blood is caused by acid foods. Acid foods are white flour, refined cereals, fats, meats, and sweets.

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POINTS OF CHURCH LAW FOR LAYMEN

By the Rev. T. Slater, S. J.

A PRIEST'S BLESSING

The essential rite of the Sacrament of Holy Orders consists of the imposition of hands and prayer. To this essential rite the Church has added many subordinate ceremonies. They serve to bring out more clearly the dignity, the office, and the duties of the priesthood. Although they do not cause grace by their mere application to a rightly disposed subject as the Sacraments do, yet they are not mere ceremonies. They are sacramentals, sacred rites which have been instituted by the Church in imitation of the Sacraments. They do not give sanctifying grace, but they obtain actual graces from God if they are properly administered and properly received. They do this through the prayers and merits of the Church. She is the well-beloved Spouse of Christ, and her prayers are always acceptable to God and are heard by Him. The sacramentals which have been instituted by the Church are very numerous. She is anxious to do all she can for the spiritual and temporal good of mankind, and especially of her children. They are divided into consecrations and blessings. In consecrations use is made of Holy Oil, which itself is a sacramental. Consecrations with Holy Oil are reserved to Bishops, but sometimes priests are empowered by the Holy See to administer them in special cases. Examples of such consecrations are the consecration of churches, altars, bells, chalices, abbots, and kings. Blessings without the use of Holy Oil may be administered by priests unless they are reserved to the Pope or to others. Examples of such blessings are the blessing of candles, ashes, palms, holy water, the priest's blessing at the end of Mass, the blessing with incense of rosaries, medals, statues, the blessing of houses, the blessing of women after childbirth. Some of these blessings are constitutive, others are invocative. Constitutive blessings, like consecrations, make the person or thing blessed sacred. They take them out of the sphere of what is profane and place them by the authority of the Church in that which belongs to the service of God. Sacred persons and things should be treated with reverence, says Canon 1150, and should not be devoted to profane or improper uses. Merely invocative blessings do not make a person or thing sacred; in the name of the Church they ask God to grant some spiritual or temporal favor to what is blessed, or to those who use it in accordance with the intention of the Church.

THE ORDINATION OF PRIESTS

Among the sacramentals which are used in the ordination of priests one of the most striking is the anointing of the priests' hands with Oil of Catechumens blessed by the Bishop on Holy Thursday. The ordaining Bishop kneels before the altar and intones the "Veni Creator." He then rises, sits down on his chair with his back to the altar, and those who have just been ordained kneel before him one by one and lay their hands open and placed together on the Bishop's lap. With the Oil of Catechumens the Bishop anoints the palms of the

open hands, drawing a cross from the thumb of the left hand to the index finger of the right and from the thumb of the right hand to the index finger of the left. While doing this he says the following prayer: "Vouchsafe, O Lord, to consecrate and sanctify these hands by this anointing and by our blessing." The ordinand answers, "Amen." The Bishop continues: "That whatever they bless may be blessed and whatever they consecrate may be consecrated and sanctified in the name of Our Lord Jesus Christ." The ordinand again answers "Amen." The hands are then joined and bound together with a napkin till the ordination is finished, and then they are washed. Thus by a sacred rite appointed by the Church, using the authority of the Church, the Bishop dedicates and consecrates the priest so that he becomes an instrument of blessing others in the Church's name. When he uses the form of blessing appointed by the Church, it is the Church who blesses by means of his ministry. As the effect of the Sacraments does not depend on the faith or virtue of the minister of them, so the effect of the blessing of a priest does not depend on the faith or virtue of the priest. The Sacraments derive their efficacy from the merits of Christ, the sacramentals derive theirs from the merits of the Church, the Spouse of Christ. It is this faith which causes good Catholics to show special reverence to the consecrated hands of a priest. They kneel down and kiss the hands of a newly ordained priest; in Catholic countries a priest is greeted by kissing his hand. Out of respect for the anointing of the palms of his hands when he was ordained, a priest's hands are anointed on the back when he receives Extreme Unction on his death-bed.—Catholic Times and Opinion.

its place and honored by the monks, the community prospered. Later it was placed in the Church of St. Mary and it has been called a miraculous statue. Copies of it have been made, and the devotion to the Little Infant Jesus of Prague has spread to every country.

THE INFANT JESUS OF PRAGUE

DEVOTION DATES FROM YEAR 1620

Prague.—Devotion to the Infant Jesus of Prague dates back three hundred years to the battle of White Mountain, which was fought near Prague, November 8, 1620, when the Austrian Emperor, Ferdinand II, gained an important victory over the united heretical armies. Father Dominic of Jesu-Maria, the Carmelite Superior, played an important part in this battle. He carried aloft a picture of the Nativity of Christ in view of the soldiers and so encouraged them to fight for their Faith that the day was won.

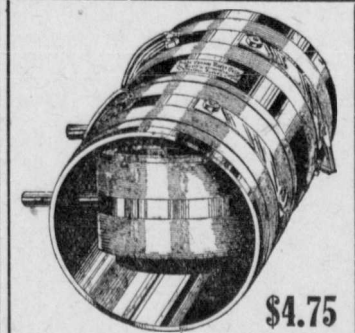
GRATITUDE FOR VICTORY

Ferdinand, in gratitude for this victory, founded a number of Carmelite monasteries throughout Bohemia and also the Church of St. Mary of Victory in Prague which contains the statue known as the "Infant Jesus of Prague" and which was dedicated in 1624.

The statue is nineteen inches high and represents the Infant Jesus with His right hand raised in blessing, His left hand holding a globe and on His head a crown of precious stones. The statue is always seen clothed in a robe of satin and many of the robes have been votive offerings.

The statue came originally from Spain and was brought to Bohemia by Maria Mauriquez de Laura in whose family it was regarded as a priceless heirloom. The statue was given to her daughter, Princess Polixina, who in turn gave it to the Carmelite Monastery where it was set up and honored by the monks until 1681 when impending war forced many of the citizens to flee from Prague. The Carmelite monastery was plundered and the little statue was thrown down behind the main altar where it remained until 1687 when it was discovered by Father Cyrilus after a diligent search.

The monastery was in hard straits at this time, but as soon as the miraculous image was returned to



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