

FIVE MINUTE SERMON

BY REV. WILLIAM DEMOUY, D. D.

FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

RETURNING TO THE FATHER

"I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world; again I leave the world and I go to the Father." (John xvi. 28.)

Would that the world realized and felt the truth of these words of Christ, and applied to them itself! Christ in all His greatness, in the wonder of His power, in the depth of His wisdom, in the clearness of His knowledge, humbly recognizes whom He came—from God, His Father—and to Him again would He return. He could have spoken of Himself only, since He is God, equal to His Father, and was with Him when He created everything. In a word, He had supreme dominion over all things; but His glory was to know that He was doing the will of His Father, who sent Him, and that He would return again to Him. Who does not note His wisdom? After all, what was the mystery, in itself, that He bore? It was great because united to a God, but it was not His glory in the full sense of the word; it was only assumed in order that His Father's glory might be manifested, and that man might have a chance to partake of it.

If, for a moment, we contrast man with Christ, we see immediately man's pride and folly. He is living not as he should, completely for his Father, but for himself, or for the things around him. Never do we hear him, especially when rising to worldly greatness or when receiving earthly honors, humbly profess that he came from God, and that to return to God is his greatest ambition and principal aim. No! He loves to magnify his deeds, and to show his apparently wonderful strength and power. He seems to forget that God sustains him and is his life and strength, more than the trunk of the huge oak is the life and strength of its limbs and branches. As the branches cut from the tree wither and become lifeless, so would man die if cut away entirely from God. It is not pessimism to say that man continually endeavors to show his independence and to become self-sufficient. He lives in a world of plenty, and few things openly point to the Lord of the harvest. The origin of all these things, their powers to fructify and endure, he scarcely ever considers. They are practically matters of fact with him. He should stop to consider what he would be, if God had placed him somewhere in emptiness. What could he bring forth? Nothing; he would soon expire. Or he should ponder again what would become of him, if he were born without reason or left it, as happens so many. He would be useless to himself and to the world. He could not restore reason. But who gave him this great wonder? God. If man had given it to himself, he could renew it if it should wear out, or become incapable of action. We might contemplate for hours all the so-called great powers of man, and we would arrive at the same conclusion; namely, that without God, man never could possess them, or put them into action.

We are too prone to forget that we must leave this world; and we seldom ask ourselves whither we are going. Christ fully realized this fact, and spoke of it in the Gospel. He knew that He must go; but more than this, He knew where He was going. He realized this, because He felt that He was doing His Father's will. Moreover, since He came from God, He must return to Him. All men, likewise, must leave the world, and they should all say, each one individually, "I came from God, and to God I must return." But the second part of this statement is true only under certain conditions. If I am living such a life as will lead me to God, and continue to persevere in it, eventually I shall arrive in His presence. But if I am living otherwise, I shall indeed return to God, but only to see Him as a stern judge, and then be banished forever from Him. We always should bear in mind that the day will come when we shall be helpless and in need of God's assistance more apparently and more certainly than we need it now. We have heard the beautiful athlete, in their pride and blindness deny God and make a mockery of belief in Him; yet later, when he had done so; but in death he was helpless. The same spirit that rose in rebellion against its Maker most bow in penitence, suffering servitude while the body rots in the earth. As we can see from history, how futile are the deeds and how useless the life of him, who tries to perform his actions without God's help, and endeavors to live separated from Him! If you doubt the truth of this, study how God has conquered by death (if you will admit nothing more beyond) those who defied Him and His help in life. Those who live for God give their lives up to God; those who live not for God must have their lives snatched from them.

The majority of the people in this country believe in God, but many, as we mentioned before, do not extend

their belief far enough. Herein lies the danger. There must be no limitation to our acknowledgment of God, and no occasion can arise when we are not bound to show our belief in Him. Our interest must be such that, like St. Paul, we live, not ourselves, but Christ liveth in us.

GENERAL INTENTION FOR MAY

RECOMMENDED AND BLESSED BY HIS HOLINESS POPE BENEDICT XV.

MARY, CONSOLER OF THE AFFLICTED Every year, with rare exceptions, the general intention for the month of May asks us to recall one or other of the privileges of the Mother of God; for, while the members of our world-wide League are devoted to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, they should not forget that a tender heart also throbs in the bosom of His Blessed Mother. This year we are urged to appeal to her as a consoler in affliction. Who will say that the invitation is not opportune? In these years of affliction and misery are crushing many a human heart, and the call is loudly heard for some powerful intercessor near God to ease the pressure which, as the aftermath of a horrible war, is bearing down upon the world. In Europe thousands of homes remain shattered, thousands of widows and mothers are still shedding tears, millions of little children are starving, poverty and hardship are stalking through the land, and no one knows where it is all going to end. Man sees putting their faith in the powers of the earth, in Leagues of Nations, and Supreme Councils, combinations in which God seems to have been left out. But the months are passing and disappointment is following disappointment in rapid succession, until at least the victims, millions of them in deep despair, are asking to what tribulation they appeal for help and consolation in their affliction? On whose powerful arm may they lean to draw them out of the present chaos? The answer is heard throughout the Catholic world: "Turn to Mary Consoler of the Afflicted!" St. John Damascene assures us that she is the best consoler to those who suffer anguish of heart and that we shall receive from her what we seek in vain from men. Several reasons might be given for this assertion. In the first place, a true consoler should know what suffering is; secondly she should be moved to compassion at the spectacle of suffering; thirdly, she should have the power to alleviate suffering, even to remove it entirely. These conditions are fulfilled in the Mother of God.

Mary knew what it was to suffer. If she was favored with the most glorious privileges ever granted to a creature, she was also tortured in a soul more than any other creature. From the moment her Divine Son was born in Bethlehem down to the hour of His cruel death on Calvary, Mary's life on earth was one continual anxiety, a slow martyrdom. The prediction of the holy man Simeon was amply fulfilled that a sword of sorrow would pierce her immaculate heart. Our Blessed Mother drank of the bitter cup of suffering.

Because she suffered, Mary is tender; she is compassionate for others; her sympathy far surpasses the sympathy of earthly mothers; she knows what we suffer; she knows the source of our suffering and its depths. She sees tears glistening in the eyes of those who are dear to her; she hears their sighs and complaints.

But, with all this knowledge, can she help us? Is she willing to help us? Undoubtedly. Saint Bernard tells us that no one has ever appealed to her in vain. From her seat beside her Son in Heaven her power is limitless. As Queen of Heaven she can obtain what she wishes. Christ our Lord will not refuse His Blessed Mother the favors she asks for her children of adoption. Often it suffices merely to utter her name to be consoled. But her intercessory power is reasonable. When she acts, she consults our spiritual welfare. If she does not always free us from earthly crosses, it is because she knows that many of the crosses that God places upon our shoulders are for our own good and are not lightly to be cast aside. Our vision is limited; our views are often not God's views. What the world calls crosses—such as poverty, sickness, misfortunes, tears—are not always crosses in God's sight. They may be sent to us to purify our souls, while preparing for another and better world. Why then ask to be freed from them? Why ask Mary to do what she knows would be contrary to the plans which her Divine Son has carved out for us? And yet we have the testimony of the saints to prove that, if she does not choose to remove our crosses, or console us in our afflictions, or soften our earthly trials, she at least lightens their weight by strengthening us in patience and in resignation.

True to the title of Consoler of the Afflicted, which we give to our Blessed Mother, Mary brightens life in this valley of tears. She is, in fact, our life, our sweetness and our hope. To her, therefore, we should turn, poor children of Eve, and ask her, as our gracious Advocate, to look down on us with eyes of tenderness, to watch over us in our various stations of life, and after our exile

here below to lead us to our heavenly home. When the moment of our dissolution comes, we shall view things in a different light. We shall then understand that what seemed heavy crosses and afflictions were simply evidences of God's ineffable goodness, leading us as family but gently towards our true home, where we shall see Himself and His Blessed Mother face to face. Is it necessary to ask our members to spend the present month meditating on Mary as Consoler? She who so often pressed to her bosom the Sacred Heart of Her Divine Son will not fail to console fully her adopted children.

OUR LADY'S MONTH

It is very difficult to fathom the meaning of the mystery of the Incarnation. This mystery, they seem to forget, was a union—a hypostatic union, as it is rightly termed—of the Divine nature with the human nature; and if they were able to realize the true import of that tremendous fact, they then would not have the least difficulty in comprehending also the other mystery of the Immaculate Conception—since it must follow as best from fire that the God of all holiness, purity and truth could never be united, hypothetically or in any other personal sense, with a nature sullied by the inheritance of disobedience.

WILL MY SOUL PASS THROUGH IRELAND

(Published by Request)

"O Soggarth Aroon! sure I know life is fleeting; Soon, soon, in the strange earth my poor bones will lie; I have said my last prayer, and received my last blessing, And if the Lord's willing I'm ready to die. But, Soggarth Aroon, can I never again see The valleys and hills of my dear native land? When my soul takes its flight from this dark world of sorrow, Will it pass through old Ireland to join the blessed band?"

"O Soggarth Aroon, sure I know that in heaven The loved ones are waiting and watching for me, And the Lord knows how anxious I am to be with them, In those realms of joy, 'mid souls pure and free; Yes, Soggarth, I pray, ere you leave me forever, Relieve the last doubt of a poor dying soul, Whose hope, next to God, is to know that when leaving 'Twill pass through old Ireland on the way to its goal." "O Soggarth Aroon, I have kept through all changes The thrice-blessed shamrock to lay on my clay; And, oh! it has minded me often and often, Of that bright smiling valley, so far, far away. Then tell me, I pray you, will I never again see The place where it grew on my own native sod? When my body lies cold in the land of the stranger, Will my soul pass through Erin on its way to our God?"

"Arrah! bless you, my child! sure I thought it was heaven Your wanted to go to the moment you died; And such is the place on the ticket I'm giving, But a compton so Ireland I'll stick to its side; Your soul shall be free as the wind o'er the prairie, And I'll land you at Cork, on the banks of the Lee, And two little angels I'll give you, like fairies, To guide you all right over mountains and seas."

"Arrah, Soggarth Aroon! can't you do any better? I know that my feelings may peril your grace; But, if you allowed me a voice in the matter, I won't make a landing at any such place. The spot that I long for is sweet County Kerry; Among its fair people I was born and bred; That Corkies I never much fancied while living, And I don't want to visit them after I'm dead."

"Let me fly to the hills, where my soul can make merry In the North, where the shamrock more plentiful grows—In Counties of Cavan, Fermanagh and Derry I'll linger till called to a better repose. And the angels you give me will find it inviting To visit the shires in the island of saint; If they bring from St. Patrick a small bit of writing, They'll never have reason for any complaints."

"A soul, my dear child, that has pinions upon it Need not be confined to a province so small; Through Ulster and Munster and Leitrim and Connaught, In less than a jiffy you're over it all. Then visit sweet Cork where your Soggarth was born; No doubt many new things have come into vogue— But one thing you'll find—that both night, noon and morn, As for certain back, there's no change in the brogue."

"Good Mother, assist me in this, my last hour; And Soggarth Aroon, lay your hand on my head, Sure, you're Soggarth for all, and for all you have power, And I take it for penance for what I have said, And now, since you tell me through Ireland I'm passing, And finding the place so remarkably small, I'll never let on to the angels while crossing, That we knew a distinction in counties at all."

OUR LADY'S MONTH

All the months and all the years belong to God, and some of these are more especially his, in human regard, by reason of the beautifully mystic happenings related to them. May and October are peculiarly dear to the Catholic heart because they are dedicated to the Virgin Mother of God, and June to St. Joseph, her chaste spouse and temporal protector and provider. November is mournfully prized, too, for the reason that so many of the holy souls await our pious pleadings to Mary that she may obtain from her Divine Son their early enfranchisement.

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This particular age is one in which the lesson of Mary's sweet humility is invaluable as a lesson for those "men of good-will" who are really desirous of bringing about a harmonious agreement between science and religion. True science is modest; presumptuous science demands from God an answer as to why, how and for what purpose He created, if He create, the visible universe. When Mary, the white soul and ingenuous, demanded of the Angel Ambassador how could the fact which he foreshadowed be brought about, under the conditions of her holy life, she did not question as to the process which he intimated. It was enough for her to be assured that the power of God was to do it. This was all sufficient. She was able at once to realize the awful grandeur and glory of the distinction which was to be hers and prophetically applied to proclaim aloud her sublime ecstasy of soul over the tidings, in the words of eternal truth, "Behold, all generations shall call me blessed." The Handmaid of the Lord was to be blessed on earth and blessed forever in Heaven as well—as the only mortal being that ever was so honored.

Similar was the faith of the Disciples when our Divine Lord instituted that greatest of all mysterious ties between Creator and creature—the mystery of the Eucharist. When He made them the amazing assertion that the bread He offered them was His body and the wine His blood they knew that He stated what was perfectly clear to Him in effatuation, though unrealizable by them save by the eyes of faith. He had previously spoken, "hallowed words" to them, as they said—things hard to believe—but they had nearly all been made clear by fulfillment. His body and blood were to be the cement for His Church, to last and keep together inseparable all the masonry, until the end of the world.

Mary's glory is her childlike trust and belief. It placed an eternal diadem of more than angelic lustre upon her brow in the court of Heaven. So, too, the Disciples' faith. They asked for no scientific explanation of the marvel propounded to them, but they trusted Him Who gave it out. Science could not, never can, explain it—for science has its limitations, though scientific may not think so.—Catholic Bulletin.

THE PURPOSE OF THE STATE

The State, or civil society, is not a voluntary or optional association, such as a trade union or a social club. It is a necessary society, a society which men are morally bound to establish and to maintain. This obligation arises from the fact that without a political organization and government, man cannot adequately develop his faculties, or live right and reasonable lives. God has so made human beings that the State is necessary for their welfare. "Man's natural instinct," says Pops Leo XIII, "moves him to live in civil society, for he cannot, if dwelling apart, provide himself with the necessary requirements of life, nor procure the means of developing his mental and moral faculties.

To all these theories, which either frankly mark the State an end in itself, or tend to do so by exaggerating its authority and scope, we oppose the Catholic doctrine as expressed by Pops Leo XIII, toward the close of his Encyclical, "On the Condition of Labor." "Civil society exists for the common good, and hence is concerned with the interests of all in general, albeit with individual interests in their due place and degree." In this statement we find that the end of the State is not itself, either as an abstraction, or as a metaphysical entity, or as a political organization, but the welfare of the people; second, that the welfare of the people, "the common good," is not to be conceived in such a selfless or general or organic way as to ignore the welfare of concrete human beings, individually considered. A brief analysis of the

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phrase, "common good," as interpreted by Catholic authorities, will enable us to see specifically and precisely what is the true end of the State.—John A. Ryan, D. D., in Catholic World.

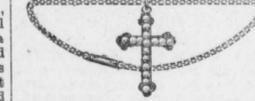
SHUNNING THE SERMON

Why is it that so few Catholics are willing to listen to sermons? From year's end to year's end they attend the low Mass in order to avoid listening to the Word of God. Not for them has St. Paul written, "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." No wonder there are nominal Catholics by the thousands who have little faith and less ability to explain their belief since they shun hearing the Gospel preached to them. And of those who do attend High Mass out of mere mechanical routine, how many profit by what they hear? They go to sleep. Present in body they are absent in mind. They think of their business, of household matters, of the dress and mannerisms of those in the next pew, or of the decoration on the altar, paying little or no heed to the substance of the priest's remarks. Others, instead of applying to themselves the salutary words of the preacher, look like the lady Tom Daly



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writes about, employ themselves in turning over in their own minds the names of their acquaintances whom they think the cap fits. They put up a sort of moral umbrella and allow the showers of grace to fall upon their neighbors. Others, again, are dissatisfied with sermons on the common doctrines of the Catechism. They want something "new." As if there could possibly be anything new in the duties of man to God, to one another, and to themselves. All this is wrong—very wrong. The man or the woman who shuns

the sermon, or when he hears one, unmercifully criticises the preacher, picks flaws in what he says, should we believe (let the theologians correct us if we err) make such a thing matter for confession. The most common-place sermon ever preached cannot fail to help us if only we but have the receptive mind. No Catholic can have proper understanding of his religion who weak by weak shuns the Sunday sermon. Think on these things my brethren of the laity.—Michigan Catholic.

OLD AGE

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