

FIVE MINUTE SERMON

THE THIRD SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

TEPIDITY

"Lord, my servant hath at home sick of the palsy." (Matt. vii. 8.)

As leprosy is frequently, my dear brethren, spoken of as the figure and type of sin, so palsy represents tepidity. As the man afflicted with the palsy lieth at home powerless of limb, unable to move, dependent on friends for food and comfort, so the tepid man is sluggish in the service of God, useless, and at a standstill in virtuous work and all that concerns his salvation. It is the opposite to the fervour of Divine love. Tepidity is a languid and miserable dejection, which causes a man to have no zest in prayer, or in any spiritual or virtuous exercise.

Tepidity commonly arises from sloth, which is fed on idle leisure; has a repugnance towards and curtails anything, prayer or services, which is for God; flies self-denial, hates work, but loves comfort, self-indulgence, and the good things of life. So to the tepid man, the Divine things have no savour, and even become loathsome, but foolish and vain things are a delight. Spiritual bread begets a loathing, sinful poison, so it is pleasant, a craving.

And the growth of tepidity is rapid, though insidious and unnoticed. The palsied man, lying useless, makes no note day after day, that his limbs grow more powerless; that movement is more and more an impossibility; that each day he might be called more truly a living corpse.

Death is a release to the palsied, but there is no release for tepidity, unchecked. Its effects are mortal sin, an evil life, repentance put off time after time, callousness to sin, and a bad death, when God's patience is worn out. St. Jerome says: "Through tepidity man loses all the gifts of grace and Divine love, is saturated with vice, loses his time—the time for repentance—becomes the sport of the devil, and is eternally lost."

It is in our very nature to be tainted with this vice. And its growth is so imperceptible, its effects so urgent ruin, that it is of the most urgent necessity that we do our utmost to free our souls from this spiritual palsy. Let us cast off this accursed vice, and become prompt, strenuous, and fervent in the service of God before it is too late.

To enable us to do this, remember the honor and privilege it is to be called on to serve God. A soldier does not regard the hardships, the danger to life and limb, when chosen for some heroic task, but the glory and honor of having been chosen, and the still greater glory if he is successful.

Miserable creature comforts, paltry pleasures, satisfy, or, rather, pretend to satisfy, a tepid man in this life, and he forgets to lift up his eyes and see the eternal reward awaiting those who obey the Church, practice virtue, and are earnest in every good work for the sake of their Divine Master. For St. Paul, says St. Paul, "that the suffering of this time are not worthy to be compared with the glory to come." (Rom. viii. 18.) Oh the joy and the eternal glory rewarding the light, the short labors of this life!

And remember, above all, the necessity to begin at once. Do not plan for the future, but lay your hand to any good work waiting for you. Begin, and begin strenuously, do not fear, do not delay. Remember how abundantly and lovingly God comes to the help of those who call upon Him, and seek Him with all their hearts. Implore His aid; begin like men, at once, lest delaying, you sin afresh and perish. "Know ye that no one hath hoped in the Lord and hath been confounded. For who hath continued in His commandment and hath been forsaken, or who hath called upon Him and He despised him? They that fear the Lord will seek after the things that are well pleasing to Him." (Eccles. ii. 11, 12, 19.)

And, lastly, break with sin, guarding against even small and habitual falls. They lead, if carelessly indulged in, to mortal sin. And after being warned and forgiven by God so often, even our most mortal sin, the outcome of tepidity once again, might anger God so much that death might be allowed to overtake us. And death in even one mortal sin is eternal ruin.

If tepidity is spiritual palsy, and we are powerless to move and cannot go to Christ, who is the good friend, the centurion, who will go and bring Him to us? The centurion did not ask our blessing. He came to his servant, and expressed his unworthiness when our Lord had said: "I will come and heal him." The centurion, then, is the embodiment of humility and faith. These are the graces we need, and then we shall be cured of tepidity. Humility arising from the knowledge of our sad state. Helpless, powerless of ourselves, waiting hour after hour for the approach of death, surely we can be humble and cry for mercy. "This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him." (Ps. cxlii. 7.) And faith we need—faith in the goodness and willingness of our Blessed Saviour. "I will come and heal him." It all depends on our faith. "As thou hast believed, so be it done to thee." O Lord, there is urgency in our request. The sight of the past fills us with fear. Years we have spent idly, uselessly, languidly,

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ushing in tepidity. How short the future may be, we know not. We cannot trust it. It is now at once that we must turn to Thee, and in all our humiliations and in all our Divine things have no savour, and even become loathsome, but foolish and vain things are a delight. Spiritual bread begets a loathing, sinful poison, so it is pleasant, a craving.

HOME AND MOTHER

THE MOST BEAUTIFUL THING IN LIFE IS A MOTHER'S LOVE

A man may own a handsome and well furnished residence and yet may not possess a home—that is, a home in its best and purest sense, where domestic felicity reigns supreme: for only amid such surroundings can we find the happy home.

So understood, there is no sweeter word in the language than "home," and one has well said, "Few words lie nearer the heart than the word 'home.'" To those of us who were trained in good homes, how deep, how heartfelt is the pity we feel for those who were deprived of that moral and social stimulus that is concomitant of the happy home!

"Where is your home?" A little boy was asked by an acquaintance. "Where mother is," the little fellow replied, as he looked lovingly across at her.

The little boy's philosophy would be endorsed by many of maturer age. Undoubtedly the mother of a family, the mistress of the house, has much to do with the "tone" or quality of home life. The author of the epistles of an old and distinguished family says: "Of our mother I cannot think of anything to say. She is just the mother—our own dear, patient, loving little mother; unlike everyone else in the world, and yet it seems as if there was nothing to say about her by which one could make anyone understand what she is."

Washington Irving must have known the full and abiding faith of the true mother heart when he wrote: "A father may turn his back on his child, brothers and sisters may become inveterate enemies, husbands may desert their wives, wives their husbands. But a mother's love endures through all; in good repute, in bad repute, in the face of the world's condemnation, a mother still loves and still hopes that a child may turn from his evil ways and repent; still she remembers the infant smiles that once filled her bosom with rapture, the merry laugh, the joyful shout of his childhood, the opening promise of his youth; and she can never be brought to think him all unworthy."

The instruction received at the mother's knee, and the paternal love and blessing, together with the piety and sweet souvenirs of the fireside, are never entirely effaced from the soul."—Buffalo Echo.

PRAYER OF MARSHAL FOCH

Beating the man who brought victory to the Allies and saved the world from materialistic forces and the fruits of man made religion seeking the destruction of Christianity, the following beautiful prayer in time of war, truly Catholic, was written at the request of a French lady by Marshal Ferdinand Foch, supreme commander of the armies of the United States and the Allies. Styled the "Grey Man of Christ," General Foch is known the world over as a dutiful child of Holy Mother Church. The prayer follows: "O Eternal Father, God of armies: I offer Thee the Most Precious Blood of Jesus Christ, Redeemer and Prince of Peace, at whatsoever hour of day or night, in whatsoever spot on earth it may be, when this Thy good gift flows upon Thy alters: in atonement for my sins; for all the needs of Holy Church; for the consolation of the souls in purgatory; for the conversion of unbelievers and of sinners; for the dying now and throughout the day. I offer it also for the expiation necessary for the dreadful dead of war; for our poor soldiers and sailors; for their families; for those who command and for those who obey; for those who live and for those who fall; for those who suffer and for those who die; for wounded, for sick, for

afflicted, mind or body; for all poor prisoners, and for all helpers of each and every degree. "By the saving virtue of the Blood of the Lamb, ever living, yet ever immolated by the holy faith and hope and charity given by Him, O God, our God, hear our prayer! O grant that each one may do, by Thy grace, his duty as he ought, strong and brave, casting away despair! O grant, Father of mercy, all compassionate, that Thou Thyself be with us, to Thy glory and the salvation of our souls! O hear our cry for France, for her friends and for her enemies, too, within and without! O Thou from heaven help us, and by Thy Holy Spirit send true peace on earth, and good will amongst men; that all may love Thee, and by Thy sweet sake that all may love their fellowmen! Amen. Heart of Jesus, have pity on us all! "Queen of heaven, hear our cry!"

DIVORCE

It is not a rare thing for the evening paper, in its recountal of the day's happenings, to record a list of granted divorces quite as long, if not longer, than the accumulated list of marriages of two or three days. The divorce question in the United States has been an alarming one for some time, and its dangers have been pointed out by men and women who, while not of the Catholic faith, emphasize that the Catholic doctrine with regard to marriage and its indissolubility, is the only remedy for the hideous disease which is eating away, with cancerlike growth, the life of the family and of society.

While treating of the Sixth Commandment, which lays such emphasis on the sacredness of Christian marriage, it cannot be out of place to say a word with regard to this foul, moral plague, the origin of which can be traced to a widespread disregard, or indeed, defiant contempt, for the law of God and the teaching of the Church which speaks in His Name.

Every person who calls himself a Christian must recognize that marriage is not merely a human contract. It is that, too, but only in a certain sense. Inasmuch as the well being and prosperity of human society as a whole is dependent on the regulation of the families that go to make it up, certain measures are obviously necessary to preserve the order and harmony of the family units. Viewed in this sense only, the various regulations in various communities concerning the union of individual couples, the formalities for obtaining a license, etc., the laws of inheritance and the division of property, give matrimony the nature of a civil contract, in the guarding of which the State must have a hand.

But, first and foremost, matrimony is a Sacrament. It is the sacrament by which Christian man and woman are united for life in the bond of lawful marriage. Its holiness is traceable to its very institution by God Himself, who, after He had made man and woman, joined them together with the injunction: "Increase and multiply and fill the earth." And when the Son of God, the regenerator of human society, gave forth His teaching regarding matrimony, He inaugurated new principles in its regard. "Have ye not read," He told the Pharisees, "that he who made man from the beginning made them male and female?" and He said: "For this cause shall a man leave father and mother and shall cleave to his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. Therefore they are not now two, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let man not part asunder."

Having been made a Sacrament, one of the seven channels by which the Blood of Christ was to be poured into the souls of His faithful, Matrimony, together with the other mysteries of God, was given over to the guardianship and custody of the Church, who alone can claim the right of declaring what are the conditions for constituting a true and valid marriage in the sight of God. When it attempts to touch the bond of marriage, the essence and substance of the union between Christian man and wife, the civil power is interfering in a matter outside the limits of its authority. It is acting beyond its jurisdiction, and the Church, however insistent she be that unto Caesar shall be rendered the things that are Caesar's, will suffer no tampering with a matter that is peculiarly and directly God's. Hence her unchangeable attitude in the question of divorce.

The Catholic Church teaches that where Christian marriage has taken place and has been consummated, that is, where the lawfully married parties have been living together as man and wife, nothing but the death of one or another of them can dissolve the bond and set them free to marry again. In her eyes, therefore, those so-called "divorced" persons who marry again are not living in lawful wedlock, but in sin, the sin that is expressly prohibited by the Sixth Commandment, whatever decree may have been issued by any civil authority, or whatever the civil law may say to the contrary.

We are speaking here of what is known as "absolute divorce." Quite another thing is what is sometimes termed "limited" divorce, more generally referred to as "separation," in which there is no dissolution of the marriage bond, but a temporary or permanent separation of the married parties from married life. It is possible that conditions may arise where

further cohabitation between the parties to a marriage becomes undesirable, or even morally impossible. In justification of the step that she may see fit to take in such cases, the Church, through the Council of Trent decreed that "if any one shall say that the Church errs, when she, for many causes, decrees a separation of man and wife in respect to bed and dwelling-place for a definite or an indefinite period, let him be anathema." Such is the separation mentioned by St. Paul in his letter to the Corinthians, in which he demands: "If she depart, that she remain unmarried, or be reconciled to her husband." There is here, of course, no relation to what is known in the world today as divorce, for here the marriage bond remains intact and indissoluble.

The permanence of marriage, set down by the natural law for the whole human race, and confirmed and ratified by Divine ordinance, has been maintained by the Church from the beginning. However weighty have been the forces brought to bear against her stand, the Church has always refused to sanction the setting of those who have been joined by God in a fully completed marriage. Had she been ready, in the sixteenth century, to profane the Sacrament of Matrimony by allowing Henry the Eighth to enter the second of his many "marriages," she would perhaps have avoided the separation of England from its allegiance to the True Faith. She preferred, however, to suffer the loss that she has since endured, rather than countenance a violation of the marriage bond.

Incidental to our consideration of the Sacrament of Matrimony, reference was made in these columns to the conditions under which that Sacrament could be validly received. Through some essential flaw in the marriage contract, the Church eventually decrees that there has been no marriage, i. e., that the contract has been null and void from the beginning she is not countenancing divorce, but rather emphasizing the holy and solemn nature of Christian marriage, of which she alone, and always, has been the stout and consistent champion.

As Catholics we cannot place too high an estimation upon the sanctity of marriage, the holy nature of which is so frequently overlooked in the world today, that married life is being brought more and more into degradation. Nor can we fail to see that the one great hope of society, threatened as it is more and more by the evils of divorce, lies in that conception of Matrimony which is so uniquely and characteristically Catholic.—Catholic Transcript.

SANCTIFICATION OF THE NEW YEAR

Here we are at the end of another year. Like all that end, forgetfulness will soon enshroud it, and on the morrow of its last day with radiant countenance and light heart friend will greet friend, neighbor will exchange bright smiles and good wishes with his neighbor, promising themselves long and happy years filled with endless joys. But for every earnest and thinking man the thought of the past year is a very serious one, since just that much more of his life has passed away with it.

The closing year means a numberless, priceless graces of Heaven. It is the Heart of God incessantly showering upon us a rain of love and benefits that far outnumber our days.

For Eucharistic souls, the closing year is more especially the immolation of the August Victim of our Altars, unceasingly renewed day and night, bringing with it the unparalleled application of His reparation and infinite merits. It is, moreover, the total gift of Himself that Jesus makes in the Most Blessed Sacrament to an innumerable multitude of souls, an ineffable gift that is for each and every one, and a vast source of light, strength, holiness and devotedness—an infinite gift that exhausts all the liberality of the God Man.

Let us be thinking of these seriously before bidding adieu to this year that is gliding into eternity. Let us begin by a glance toward Heaven, a glance that will carry with it our whole soul with this thought: "Thanks!" And in those days when all who love one another visit one another, when the most forgotten benefits are recalled, let us endeavor that the Divine Benefactor, He the first, the most loving, the most constant, may not be the most forgotten.

If we are grateful, a far different sentiment will fill our heart. We shall weep over the past year—we shall weep not so much for the life that is escaping from us, as for the uselessness of that life.

Let us today examine whether its current is carrying us. Let us make a moral inventory of all our thoughts and actions, examining them in the light of the Gospel, weighing them in the scales of conscience, seriously asking ourselves: *Quid hoc ad salutem?* Of what value is all this for eternity? So many thoughts have passed through my mind, so many dreams, so many plans, so many cares! But the thought of God—has it had a place among all this mental labor—the first place, soaring above all others? Of what value is all that for eternity? So many sentiments have engrossed my heart! Can I without blushing acknowledge them all to be for God and my own conscience? Alas! how many thoughts against

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humility and charity in which nature dominates or the supernatural is entirely absent! Of what value is all that for eternity?

So many words have crossed my lips! Have they profaned those lips that should pay to God the so well earned homage of adoration, gratitude, and prayer? Of what value is all that for eternity?

And my actions, all that fills up my hours, my days—what now remains of them before God? Of what value is all that for eternity?

Oh, how worthless! If at this moment, we could retreat from our life all that has not been for God and according to God, what would remain? And yet, perhaps tomorrow, an account of it will have to be rendered!

Let us at the feet of Our Lord shed bitter tears, we who have mingled so much self love with His love, so much tepidity with His service, harkened so little to His inspirations, given so little return for His graces, showed so little courage to follow Him, above all to Calvary and upon the way of discouragement and sacrifice!

Let us above all, weep at this hour over the remembrance of our want of thought, our negligence, our fidelity, even our ingratitude toward Our Lord truly present through love for us in the Most Blessed Sacrament.

Let us deplore the hours of adoration too frequently made without preparation or fervor, and the time spent in Communion in which routine has taken the place of love, and which, consequently, have been without consolation for the heart of Our Lord, and without profit to our own soul.

After shedding tears of regret, let us now, beginning the New Year, ask God for a heart of good-will. Oh, how good, how infinitely good is our God, and His mercy is never exhausted! It "endureth forever" even in the face of ingratitude. From those hands that we have forgotten, from that heart that we have despised—behold a new year, which means new graces. A new fountain has jetted up from His bosom, and to it He invites us in these words of inexpressible tenderness: "Come to Me, My friends, come to Me! You who thirst, I shall refresh! You who hunger, I shall nourish! You who suffer, I shall relieve!"

Woe to him who again turns a deaf ear to the voice of the Father of our days and the Master of our years! God is not obliged to allow Himself to be always despised. Time it is true, is always for mercy. He is just, but this year may bring us to the threshold of that kingdom and into the hands of that justice into which it is terrible to fall!

Then, while a little light still shines upon us, let us walk on. While a patient God, because He loves us, allows us a little time, let us do good without deterring it until the morrow—for tomorrow belongs to God alone—without waiting for the evening which, it may be, shall never reach, without putting off till that fatal night on which, "no man can work."

Among the tears of Jesus mentioned in the Gospel, the most bitter were shed over the abuse of time allowed by mercy; "Jerusalem, ah! if thou didst know the value of the time that remains to thee, and the graces that I am still bestowing upon thee!"

May Jesus never weep over us! Let the first moment of the New Year be His, and may the last find us still faithful! It will bring to us many blessed hours laden with graces and favors. Ah, when these beneficent clouds pass over our heads, may they pass not over indifferent souls! May prayer attract them! May they rain on hearts, become good ground! May they fructify by patience and for the eternal year! Thus the New Year will be a good year.—The Sentinel of the Blessed Sacrament.

The more unhappy I am, the more I trust in the mercy of my Lord, my God.—St. Francis.

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The yoke is sweet indeed and the burden light but for all that there is a yoke and a burden. There is something to be borne by us, some difficulties to be overcome, some disappointments, some agonies in the garden, some cross-carrying in the busy streets, some loneliness, some betrayals, some jeers. We are free, yet have called ourselves followers, and He will take care that we do follow Him.—Bede Jarrett, O. P.



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