

FIVE MINUTE SERMON

Rev. F. P. HICKER, O. S. B. SEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

THE CHURCH CATHOLIC AND APOSTOLIC

"Go ye into the world and preach the Gospel to every creature." (Mark xvi. 15.)

No better known word exists, my dear brethren, than "Catholic." The spelling may vary a little, but its sound and root are unmistakable in many languages. Like the word itself, so the Church, that bears that name, is unmistakable. It is universal, as the word Catholic signifies, it is found everywhere, it has worked its way throughout the whole world. Imitations there are and there have been, but they are few and far between, those who are willing to be deceived. The genuine Catholic Church is recognized by the whole world. Its enemies even, however bitterly they may hate it, certainly cannot ignore it.

From the lips of its Divine Founder the Church received the commission to be Catholic. "Go ye into the world and preach the Gospel to every creature." And it has been faithful to that commission ever since. It is marvellous to follow the journeyings of the Apostles. Filled with the Holy Spirit, they hastened to carry the good tidings throughout the world. Their sound hath gone forth into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world. (Ps. xviii. 5.) The men who covered together for four of the Jews, when filled with the Holy Spirit and commissioned to preach, traversed the known world of those days, founded sees in every country and laid down their lives in various lands.

And their successors followed on and ruled the world from the Catacombs. Ten persecutions raged against the Church, and yet within fourteen years from the last persecution, the Emperor Constantine had given liberty to the Church, in the year 325, how many Bishops could assemble at the First General Council? Three hundred and eighty-eight. How amazed the world must have been! This Religion that had been stamped out? The Council was convened at Nice in Bithynia, and saw what a Catholic was as time went on. True there have been storms and hurricanes that have tried it, but like some noble tree, a giant of the forest, though branches have been torn from its trunk, it is still alive, the same old tree, flourishing and throwing out new branches, and its roots spreading, claiming fresh ground each year. And in our own day there are Bishops in communion with Rome, and holding their powers from the Pope in every land upon which God's sun shines down. And under these bishops, priests, and all these priests believing the same truth, preaching the same doctrine, saying the same Mass, administering the same Sacraments, Catholic in every way is the holy Church of Christ.

"Go ye into the world and preach the Gospel to every creature." They to whom these words were spoken were the Apostles, and they were told to preach the Gospel. My dear brethren, the Gospels had not been written then. What they had to preach was not the written Gospel but the good tidings of the Redemption of Christ. And how had they this knowledge? From the Holy Ghost whom Christ had said, "He will teach you all truth," (John xvi. 13), and "He will teach you all things and bring all things to your mind whatsoever I shall have said to you," (John xiv. 26.) And when the Apostles added fresh preachers to themselves, as Barnabas and Timothy and others, these learned the word from the Apostles, and so the Tradition, the handing down of the teaching of Christ by word of mouth, by teaching and preaching. Clinging to this tradition makes the Church Apostolic. What other Church, save the one, can claim this privilege, this mark of authenticity? We can trace back the history and origin of every sect and church, and their antiquity long subsequent to the time of the Apostles. And we find their author is a man, and not the Divine Founder of the Catholic Church, Jesus Christ our Lord.

So we children of the true Church see the importance of holding fast to the teaching and the traditions of the Apostles. What does St. Paul say? "But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach a Gospel to you besides that which we have preached to you, let him be anathema." (Gal. i. 8.) And see him, as St. Luke tells us, "confirming the Churches, commanding them to keep the precepts of the Apostles and the ancients." (Acts xv. 41.) From the beginning there have been proud and self-sufficient men who have started doctrines and

ideas of their own. They did not escape St. Paul's notice; he says, "There are some who trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ." (Gal. i. 7.) But their errors have never prevailed except locally and for a time.

In these days of indifference, when one is called a bigot, unless he admits that one Church is as good as another, when believing what one likes, and nothing hard and fast, is mistaken for charity and largeness of mind, we cannot be too strict in holding fast in every point to the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church. "Therefore, Brethren, stand fast; and hold the traditions which you have learned." (2 Thess. ii. 14.) Let us rally to these strong and stirring words of St. Paul. Pray for earnest faith. Be on your guard against vain words and insidious sneers. Reverence every tradition and teaching of the Church. Remember that by your life you can honor or dishonor the Divine Founder of the Catholic and Apostolic Church.

TEN-YEAR-OLD THEOLOGIAN

It is the boast of the Catholic Church that she teaches her children their religion, a boast that rests on the solidest foundation.

The Church is making extraordinary sacrifices in our country to educate the children in the faith. Our Catholics pay their share of the taxes which keep the Public schools going; and yet they joyously contribute to the support of the parish schools. They realize that religion cannot be barred from the school without loss to the development of the child. The many hours passed in the classrooms are a mighty element in the spiritual life of the child. Church is important; home is important, but the trinity is incomplete; church and home are ineffective without the school. Education without religion must be lacking in an essential. It is unfortunate that circumstances in our country make it appear to our legislators that it is impossible to devise a school system which might admit and teach religion; but such is the fact, and facts, like mules, are stubborn things.

The Catholic Church calls upon her members to shoulder a double burden rather than endanger the religious training of the children. As a consequence of this anxiety and sacrifice of the Church, Catholic children are trained in the doctrines of their faith. These little ones know their religion and astound the questioner. They understand the doctrines of Christianity and appreciate the responsibility of salvation. They disclose a knowledge of moral obligations almost uncanny if it were not the inspiration of a trained and holy childhood.

The other day a boy of ten years of age was called as a witness in an important case in the New Brunswick court. The judge and the lawyers doubted the ability of the boy to testify. They questioned him as to the responsibility of salvation. "Tommy" Lally, a product of the local parish school, acquitted himself with credit and received his doctorate in theology from the spectators of the scene.

The New Brunswick Home News, a secular local newspaper, thus describes the incident: "Thomas Lally, ten-year-old son of John P. Lally, of Richardson street, was called as a witness before Judge Daly and a jury in the Middlesex court yesterday in the trial of Harry J. Van Horne, charged with manslaughter. As is usual when a witness of tender years is called upon to testify, Judge Daly put several questions to young Lally to determine his qualifications.

"Go ye into the world and preach the Gospel to every creature." They to whom these words were spoken were the Apostles, and they were told to preach the Gospel. My dear brethren, the Gospels had not been written then. What they had to preach was not the written Gospel but the good tidings of the Redemption of Christ. And how had they this knowledge? From the Holy Ghost whom Christ had said, "He will teach you all truth," (John xvi. 13), and "He will teach you all things and bring all things to your mind whatsoever I shall have said to you," (John xiv. 26.) And when the Apostles added fresh preachers to themselves, as Barnabas and Timothy and others, these learned the word from the Apostles, and so the Tradition, the handing down of the teaching of Christ by word of mouth, by teaching and preaching. Clinging to this tradition makes the Church Apostolic. What other Church, save the one, can claim this privilege, this mark of authenticity? We can trace back the history and origin of every sect and church, and their antiquity long subsequent to the time of the Apostles. And we find their author is a man, and not the Divine Founder of the Catholic Church, Jesus Christ our Lord.

By Judge Daly: "How old are you?" "Answer: 'I'm ten years old.'" "What book was that placed in your hand when you were sworn?" "That was the Bible." "What is the Bible?" "It is the Word of God." "And who is God?" "He is the Creator and the Lord of all things." "Where is He?" "He is all over." "Is He here on earth?" "Yes, He's all over." "Can you see Him?" "No." "Where else is He besides being on earth?" "He is in Heaven." "Could you see Him up there if you went there?" "Yes, you can see Him there, I believe." "What happens to you if, after putting your hand on the Bible and asking God to listen to you tell the truth, you don't tell the truth?" "It's a mortal sin." "And where do you go if you die in mortal sin?" "To hell." "And if you are not guilty of mortal sin and tell the truth and die, where do you go?" "You go to heaven, but if you have any venial sins on your soul, you go to purgatory." "With the Court's comment, 'You're all right Tom,' young Lally was accepted as a witness. The boy's father is a section foreman on

the Pennsylvania Railroad."—The Newark Monitor.

SPIRITISM

In view of the widespread interest which present world conditions have reawakened in the system, it behooves us as Catholics to be on our guard against that dangerous form of superstition known as Spiritism. Under this name we recognize that art by which communication is established with the spirits of departed souls, from whom knowledge is gained of things hidden from human perception. By no means a new discovery, the system has nevertheless a new appeal for those who have suffered, through the War, the loss of relatives or friends, with whom they would fain regain communication. The propagators of Spiritism, known as "mediums," promise this, known as "return," usually, for a generous fee, and it is not difficult to understand why the art, or the business, is flourishing in this country, as well as across the seas.

IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

Spiritism, as we have said, is not new. Neither is the stand which the Catholic Church takes in its regard a new position of opposition. Among those practices condemned by God Himself, as revealed in the Book of Deuteronomy, that of "seeking the truth from the dead" is explicitly mentioned: "Neither let there be found among you anyone . . . that consulteth sooth-sayers, or observeth dreams and omens: neither let there be any wizard, nor charmer, nor anyone that consulteth pythonic spirits or fortune-tellers, or that seeketh the truth from the dead." To dabble in Spiritism, therefore, is to sin against the First Commandment. For the sincere Christian this is sufficient; no further argument or condemnation is necessary.

WHERE CONFUSION REIGNS

To set down even a brief outline of Spiritism, its nature or its claims, would require more than a single article. So many and so diverse are its phenomena, and so innumerable the explanations offered for its accomplishments, that men of science, both within and outside the Church, have written volumes in its regard. Attempts have been made to explain how, through spiritistic mediums, hidden things have been revealed; how, through the intervention of no visible human agency, writings have appeared on paper or on tablets; how spirits have been summoned how replied to questions put to them, and who, having been called by name, responded that they were "angels," "saints" or certain deceased souls; as yet, however, these authorities have neither been able to offer any definite explanation of the entire field, or to refute the claim of the Church that spiritistic phenomena are due either to fraud, or to the action of evil spirits, whether devils or lost souls.

NOT FOR CATHOLICS

A local advocate of Spiritism endeavored recently to bolster up an argument for its worth with the statement that there are lots of good Catholics who attend spiritistic seances. The determination of "good" Catholicity should hardly be entrusted to one altogether unfamiliar with Catholicity itself. Even the most elementary knowledge of the Church's teaching recognizes a Catholic as one of that congregation "who profess the Faith of Jesus Christ . . . and are governed by their lawful pastors, under the visible head." No other Church than the Catholic has any definite doctrine on the subject with which Spiritism deals, i. e., that of communicating with the dead. And the Catholic Church condemns any such attempt as an unlawful endeavor to escape from the conditions of our earthly probation, and as, at any rate, risking intercourse with evil spirits, God's enemies.

A RECENT PRONOUNCEMENT

It is now scarcely more than a year since the Holy Office made clear its stand with regard to Spiritism. In a decree dated April 27, 1917, the following question and answer was given forth: "Whether it is allowable, through a medium or without a medium, with or without the aid of hypnotism, to take part in spiritistic conversations or manifestations of any kind, even where they have the appearance of propriety and piety; either by making inquiries of souls or spirits, or listening to their answers, or merely looking on—even under the tacit or express protest of having nothing to do with evil spirits? The answer is in the negative, all around." No instructed Catholic can therefore dabble in Spiritism without incurring what is, objectively, grievous sin. The dealing in friendly intercourse with damned souls or with the devil is clearly just as great an act of disloyalty to God and to His Church as dealing in friendly intercourse with those against whom we have declared war would be at present an act of disloyalty to the American government.

NO OTHER EXPLANATION

But supposing the spirits invoked are not all evil spirits? Does the Church deny the possibility of intercourse between the living and the souls of the faithful departed? On the contrary, not only does she admit that this can be, but she records herself, and points to the records of Sacred Scripture showing that such communication has frequently taken place. She does not admit, however, that the blessed spirits in heaven or purgatory are placed by God at the

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beck and call of every neurotic creature who poses as a medium or who seeks to make a livelihood out of traffic with ghosts. If God has permitted, or does permit, souls of the departed to communicate with the living, the advance is made from the other side of the veil; in the case of Spiritism, however, there is an intrusion from this side, a trespass, so to speak, on God's domain. And such encroachment is an insult to God, who is trifled with in being tempted to make miraculous revelation of the secrets of eternity outside the ways that He has pleased Him to choose.

DANGEROUS IN ITSELF

Even though there were no ecclesiastical prohibition in the matter, it is acknowledged that Spiritism is mischievously dangerous from another point of view. Were it nothing more than mere fraud and humbug, it is certainly a most pernicious agency for racking the nerves and brain, undermining the moral sense, and causing the physical as well as spiritual ruin of its devotees. One of the most prominent English critics of the system has lately declared: "My main object in this article is seriously to warn the public to think twice, and again twice, before they embark on these perilous spiritualistic seas of speculation. . . . Let them beware; for three of my friends, men of eminence who really believe in Spiritualism, have told me that they have forbidden the very name of it, or any allusion to it, to be mentioned in their homes; have forbidden their wives and children to touch it, as if it were a thing accursed. And why? Because, not being really known and explainable, it puts their minds on the rack; and by the 'black magic,' which is always a part of it, so often leads to insanity and death."

PROVIDED FOR US

If we would seek to know those things which are hidden from human perception, we have but to look to the teachings of Christ and His Church. Infallible utterances have been made, not by professional agents, worthy neither of our credence nor our support, but by Him Whose revelations have been made with all the fulness that it has pleased His Infinite Wisdom to leave us. Our holy religion is our consolation in the anxieties and difficulties we have concerning the life beyond the grave. Neither Spiritism nor any other substitute deserves our notice.—Catholic Transcript.

GUARDING YOUTH

Some parents find it hard to believe that any danger threatens their own children. They are willing to admit that the most outrageous things may happen to the children of others. They read of the sad cases that are published from time to time, moralize upon them and wonder how such things could be if parents exercised proper care. It never occurs to them that their own children enjoy no special immunity.

There is no sense in denying the fact that these are dangerous days for our young people. With the multiple, necessary activities occupying the attention of the community, there is logically a weakening of the supervision exercised at ordinary times. It is also a lamentable fact that there are many unprincipled youths about who realize the situation and try to take advantage of it. The burden of protection devolves upon the parents. They are primarily and principally responsible for their children. They have no right

to shirk this duty and throw it upon priest, teacher or public officials.

The manner of fulfilling this responsibility can be summed up in two words, strict chaperoning. Young girls of sixteen should by no means be permitted to promenade the streets, to visit beach resorts and other places of amusement, without proper escort. This escort means the parent or some one in whom the father and mother have good reason to place the utmost confidence. To neglect this plain and necessary measure and then wonder at unfortunate happenings is criminal and stupid.

Parents cannot afford to take anything for granted in these matters. The fact that they have brought up their children well is no guarantee against evil. Nor is the fact that parents have never noticed any tendency towards evil in the children a reason why they should forego parental vigilance. It is a commonplace that the parent the last one to learn of the wickedness of a child he has thought innocent.

The duty of conservation is being taught the community. This should include the conservation of the young and there is but one way to ensure this—watchful protection.—Boston Pilot.

PROBLEMS FOR THE SUMMER MONTHS

Rosary Magazine

More than one Catholic parent sees with something very much akin to dismay the closing down of schools in the month of June. Vacation time means a time of freedom for the youngsters who during ten months of the year are carefully disciplined and watched over in the school room.

First of all, parents make a profound mistake if they try to deprive children who have tried to do their duty during the school year of a reasonable amount of amusement and recreation. There is a deep truth in the old adage that all work and no play has a deleterious effect upon the growing boy or girl. Even men in their maturity need to be taken out of the rut of every-day life to get new ideas and an added zest for their work. The man who never takes a vacation is probably the one who never needs one, for the simple reason that he never exerts his energies to their full limit.

But if no play is dangerous for the lad, too much play is equally harmful. The fact that vacation is limited to two months does not save a child from dissipating all the lessons of thrift and application which he has learned during the other ten months of the year. There is nothing which eats away the sterner and more robust qualities of mind so quickly as the spirit of unlimited, unbridled amusement.

Hence it is that Catholic parents will do well during the summer months to give each one of their children some little task to do each day. This will act like a rein to keep them from throwing themselves headlong into mere play. An hour's study each day during vacation will not hurt any child. A little serious application to household tasks, or even business tasks, will make the growing-up generation realize that life, after all, is a serious thing and that the only one who succeeds is the one who is willing to take pains. The fact that so many of our young men are away at War during this coming vacation makes it doubly imperative that parents insist upon the obligation of their children doing something useful and worth while.

TROUBLE AND PRAYER

Have you felt that curious unrest that envelops you when in time of distress you have tried to carry your burdens to One who has promised us that if we ask we shall receive? Your mind whirls from one thought to another and often strange thoughts, words and bits of disjointed sentences. You try to force yourself to calmly consider your great need so that you may the better petition the Almighty God to lift the sorrow from your soul and to give you peace. Though you desire that favor more than anything in the world, you cannot concentrate your thoughts upon it and again your heartaching desire is buffeted about like wisps of grass in a storm. You begin to feel that God has hid His face from you and that He has found you unworthy of His care. In this thought you have descended into the despair that well nigh destroys faith. Waves of horrible doubt seem to rise about your feet and hopelessness makes lead of your heart. You feel that God has been very hard to you in denying you health and means. But if you have the will to struggle you will reach a plane of thought that is to be compared to a beautiful upland where fragrant flowers and cooling waters seem to bloom for you and those you hope to lift out of trouble has written, "The darkest hour is just before the dawn." This old, old saying has comforted many a sad heart. "The severer the storm, the sooner the sunshine," bears an old and familiar bit of optimism that never fails to cheer. A less quoted saying but none the less comforting one is this: "God never shuts the door on your hopes, but He opens the door to something better." We have heard that the greatest first water diamond of the world rolled about in a hardened cake of clay waiting for the determined hand to find its wonderful secret beauty. All these say-

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ings, and they are truths, show us that God loves those who persevere, even though brought low in everything necessary to life. Try! Try! The last effort may disclose the hidden diamond.—Catholic Sun.

FRENCH PRIESTS

Enemies of the French Church succeeded in having the priests drafted into the ranks like all other citizens, hoping, it is said, that the clergy would show the white feather and lose the respect of the French people. But it seems that just the opposite has happened. The priest has confounded all prophecies as to his courage and effectiveness, and defeated the very means that were designed to accomplish his downfall. Indeed, he wins a tribute from a Church of England bishop that in the words of the Tablet (London) summarizes one of the resounding facts and revelations of the War. He is "the admiration of the world at large and the confusion of the anti-clericals." It is only in France, we are told, that priests are called to the colors to fight, as well as to act as hospital orderlies, as stretcher-bearers, and as chaplains. The legislation which has brought them into the firing line was "induced less by military necessity than by a spirit of hostility to religion and the Church." The aim in drawing them into the military body of the nation was "to attack the power of the clergy by drying up their sources of recruitment." Thus:

"It was thought that a term of barracks life would destroy vocation, and that the mere prospect of it would serve to reduce the number of candidates for the ecclesiastical state. But there the enemies of religion were deceived. Some vocations were wrecked, but most passed through the ordeal unscathed; while the priests in the ranks had an influence for good upon their comrades which was altogether unexpected. That was in the days of peace, when war was unthought of by the men who placed the burden of arms upon the clergy, and who were seeking to 'purify' the commissioned ranks of the army of the officers who were even so much as suspected of leanings toward religion. But the cur's and the seminarians have shown their spirit and mettle in war, and war wringings have brought them before the eyes of all as a body of matchless devotion to duty, self-sacrifice, and patriotism.

"Far from sealing the source of clerical recruitment, or exposing the clergy as the incapables and poltroons they had been represented, the test of war has shown them to be heroes, both on the field and in the hospital, wherever, in fact, there was danger to be encountered or devotion needed in the cause of country and of their fellow men. They have been tried by fire and have not been found wanting."

General Humbel pays the priests this tribute:

"They have shown themselves, by turns and at once, valiant soldiers, because ready to die, they have no fear of death, and sublime priests because before action and during and after it they were at the disposal of their comrades in arms to give them the best means of removing fear. Stories in the papers, the mentions in despatches, the list of promotions, and of the Legion of Honor and of military medals, have shown us our priests at work, giving facts about them an example of bravery, encouraging the men by the serenity of their attitude, teaching them how to die by sweetening the sacrifice of life, dressing their wounds, blessing and absolving them before the assault, offering the Holy Sacrifice in the open air with their red trousers showing below their vestments, traversing the space between the trenches to bring in the wounded, and listening to the last wishes of the dying.

Facts from the notes of eye witnesses to support the General's tribute have been published by René Gaël in a book bearing the title, "The Priests Under Fire." From this the Tablet calls some citations:

PROMINENT CATHOLICS "DOING THEIR BIT"

General Ferdinand Foch, Commander-in-Chief of the Allied Armies, is a Catholic and has a brother a Jesuit.

Sir William Robertson, until recently British Chief of Staff, is a Catholic.

Admiral Benson, head of the American Navy, is a Catholic.

General Petain, hero of Verdun, is a Catholic.

Admiral Lord Walter Kerr, of the British Fleet, is a Catholic.

Charles M. Schwab, Director General of American Shipbuilding, is a Catholic.

Edward N. Hurley, Chairman of the United States Ship Construction, is a Catholic.

Edward R. Stettinius is head of the Munition Department.

John D. Ryan is head of the Aviation Department.

Charles P. Neil is Chairman of the Railroad Board of Adjustment.—Truth.

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