

FIVE MINUTE SERMON

BY REV. WILLIAM DEMOUY, D. D.

NINETEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

RENEWAL OF SPIRIT

"Brethren: Be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and put on the new man, who according to God is created in justice, and holiness of truth." (Eph. iv. 23.)

From the fact that we are all sinners it follows that we must, at least periodically, endeavor to effect a reform within ourselves. Sin disposes us more and more to sin, and unless we "renew ourselves," we are liable to come under the influence of our enemy, or become a slave to habit. Even God's grace must find us somewhat disposed for its reception and its continuation. Human effort never can be dispensed with in the work of our salvation. When we sin we fall from our original state, and the rising to it again entails a special effort. As we are left weak after sin, we must use a tonic as a means of arriving once more at a state of spiritual strength equal, if possible, to the state in which we were when most perfect. If we fail to recover lost ground in this respect, we continually grow more languid until we are wrecked almost beyond repair. Sin leaves an impression on man—soul and body. He is prone to forget this too often. It is a fact that never are we the same after sin as we were before falling into it. We can receive as much grace as we had before, by doing penance and returning to virtue, but with it all we still remain scarred. The fight after falling into sin is stronger than previous to the lapse, and this alone should teach man that he can not escape from the clutches of sin without its mark being left upon him. He should not, however, be discouraged by this fact, but should take it as a warning to return to the path of virtue as quickly as possible and to be more careful than ever before lest he deviate again. It should make him grow braver in his fight, and give him more courage to do the things God commands and to shun what He forbids. Man carefully must guard against human respect and he must remember that he alone will be accountable for his soul. No excuses are valid in God's sight when we, as rational beings, are called upon to do His will and afterward to render an account. Man must be most conscientious when facing his duty to God and working out his salvation.

The victims of habit are hard to recall to the path of duty. Sin has made such inroads into their nature that they effectually feel inclined to nothing else. A strong will—a will that has been trained by stern discipline—and an abundance of God's grace, are the only medicines to apply to these sad cases. Many are sometimes very willing to hear edifying things and in their minds are anxious to do them, but this willingness and this good will are not enough. They will not heal the wound, nor curb an unruly nature. To expect mere good will to accomplish this is almost like wishing a stream that rushes through rocky valleys where it does little good, to divert itself and take its course toward the arid desert, where its moisture would make the sands blossom with vegetation. The mere wish, and abundant wish about how it can be done, will not alone effect it. But action and labor can effect it. So it is, too, with the course of nature. Not only must its direction be changed, but it also must be purified after it has been polluted by bad habits. Definite action on our part with the assistance of God's grace will do this. It may take years to obtain the result desired, but the acquisition will be worth the effort. Nay, it is necessary—no matter how long nor how strenuous the work.

But it is not only those who are in the clutches of bad habits who must recall themselves to duty and bring about continual reforms in their lives; it is the work of the virtuous as well. We have an injunction from God to perfect ourselves even up to the day of judgment. There is no plane of virtue at the level of which we can always remain. We must go higher and higher. The lamentable fact that so many virtuous people live, year after year, committing the same minor faults, comes from this neglect to strive after perfection. They lead a wavering virtuous life, to use the mildest terms. This, while it may be pleasing to God, is not all that He looks for from them. We never are free from the danger of sin, on account of our corrupt nature, but our greatest safeguard and strength is in virtue. When we possess virtue, therefore, the danger of offending God is not close to us; so that, instead of having to fight against sin, we have the opportunity of advancing in perfection. God expects us to take advantage of it, and instead of wasting each successive day in the commission of the same minor faults, we should rather spend it in reforming and renewing ourselves. If we were to do this, then no day would be a loss, although perhaps it might not always be a gain, in virtue. Such action would, at least, be a very efficacious step toward an increase in righteousness.

Christians, young and old, occasionally at least, should rouse themselves and see whether they are progressing. If, not though they think they are standing still and can save their souls

while doing so, nevertheless they must renew themselves and advance. Salvation is worked out only by advances, never by the so-called holding of one's ground. In virtue we must advance. As, from a physical standpoint, an increase in age is inevitable; so, from a moral standpoint should growth in virtue necessarily come. Too many have gone backward simply because they were satisfied to arrive at a certain degree of sanctity. They thought further advance to be impossible, or else to be attained only by saints. Certainly the saints did extraordinary things; but a continual increase in virtue and merit should not be considered anything out of the ordinary; it is simply what God demands of us and what the very nature of salvation exacts. In regard to virtue, we are as a child in regard to maturity. A child must use the means adapted to give it strength and growth, such as food and exercise, and it must continue this always trying to keep life at its best. So must we always consider ourselves children as regards our salvation, and day after day use spiritual nourishments to increase our growth in virtue and grace—and this growth must be added to incessantly. There is a sharp difference, however, to be noted between our physical and our spiritual development. It is this, namely, after a certain period our bodies deteriorate; with our souls this never should be the case. They should grow stronger and stronger in virtue until God sees fit to crown us with glory in the world beyond.

How people give their salvation the serious thought due it; otherwise more frequently they would renew themselves in spirit and advance more rapidly in grace. They should plan, as regards their spirituality, as they do regarding temporal things. The world advances in material things with rapid strides, because the greater part of human thought and endeavor is bent toward this advancement. But little effort is made to bring the world to a deeper spirituality. Each individual, however, must do it for himself. If he does not, he is lost.

TUBERCULOSIS RAPIDLY DECLINING

Vital statistics prove it. Tuberculosis is not now considered the absolutely fatal disease it was twenty-five years ago, if it is taken in hand early. The modern treatment is not drug treatment, but dietetic, sanitary and hygienic. If proper foods, cleanliness, fresh air and sunshine can cure tuberculosis they surely can prevent its onset. And if these can prevent the onset of such a terrible disease they surely can also prevent the onset of most other diseases. And, since food is that out of which bodies, good or bad, are made, food must surely be the most important. And Food Science agrees that the most essential foods are the unchanged foodstuffs of nature. Science lays a large share of the blame for so much disease upon the extensive use of white flour and refined "ghost cereals" from which the mineral salts, fats and vitamins have been foolishly refined away, and without these there can be no permanent health.

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PITTSBURGH PILGRIMS

MEMBERS OF PARTY ARE CONGRATULATED BY HOLY FATHER

By Mgr. Enrico Pucci (Rome Correspondent, N. C. W. C.)
Rome, September 14.—When a group of forty pilgrims from the Diocese of Pittsburgh were received in audience by the Pope recently, His Holiness' attention was attracted by the acapulars of the Union of Pious Laymen and of the Laysisters of St. Francis Romana, worn by these American visitors to the Eternal City. His Holiness was then informed that the pilgrims had all become members of that order during their stay in Rome. Some photographs taken at the time the pilgrims made their vows were exhibited to the Pope, and he commented favorably upon them.

His Holiness addressed the pilgrims and, inasmuch as the audience took place near the feast of the Assumption, recalled that it was at Pittsburgh that the first chapel in honor of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin was erected in the United States. He then congratulated the pilgrims that on the site of that chapel there now stands a fine Cathedral.

The Pope asked the pilgrims to preserve always the good resolutions made during their Holy Year visits to Rome and called particular attention to the necessity of spreading the faith and combating immorality in all its manifestations.

The occasion on which the Pittsburgh pilgrims took their vows as members of the Laymen of St. Benedict and St. Francis Romana was the five hundredth anniversary of the entrance into religious life of

the noble Roman lady Frances Pontani, who later was canonized under the name of St. Frances Romana, and their vows were taken in the same ancient church in which this saint made her profession. This is the Church of Santa Maria Nova, popularly called the church of St. Frances Romana. It is served by the Benedictine monks of Monte Oliveto Maggiore, who also attended it five hundred years ago. The church is one of the most beautiful in Rome. It rises between the Forum and the Colosseum a few steps from the Arch of Titus and in the midst of the finest monuments of pagan Rome. It is, in fact, actually built upon the ruins of a Temple of Venus, the apex of which is still perfectly preserved in the cloister of the Monastery which is attached to the church.

AMERICAN CHILDREN CONFIRMED IN ROME BY EMINENT PRELATE

Two American children, in Rome with the recent Holy Year pilgrimage from the Diocese of Pittsburgh, had the privilege of making their First Communions and receiving the Sacrament of Confirmation under circumstances most unusual for those living at such a great distance from Rome.

They received the Sacraments in the Monastery founded by St. Frances Romana at "Tor de' Specchi," and the prelate who confirmed them was the famous Polish Archbishop Cieplak, well known as the victim of Bolshevik persecution of religion at the time of the notorious trials of Catholic prelates in Moscow several years ago.

MISSION AND VISION OF SOCIAL WORKERS

Social workers must find their major compensation in the vision realized, the Rev. Dr. William J. Kerby, Professor of Sociology at the Catholic University, admonished his hearers in an address before the Associated Charities of Washington, D. C. Kerby, one of the most eminent authorities in the country on the various aspects of charity and social service, spoke on "The Place of Social Work in the Community." In the course of his address he gave a succinct definition of social work and of the function of the social worker.

"Any thorough-going study of men and of professions that have made their influence felt in the direction of the larger benevolences of life will show four outstanding factors," he said. "A vision, a message taken out of that vision, courageous obedience, and a theory of compensation in the terms of the vision realized."

"Life is broken into a thousand fragments. Each man and each profession will be forced to concentrate upon those fragments, largely to the detriment of a wider view of life. Business, the professions, teaching, art, pleasure, each with many sub-divisions, are fragments of life. Not one of them can be understood in larger relations nor made into an object of reverence and inspiration except when it is seen in its place in the whole. Men and movements must strive to gain a wider vision of life in order to establish the value and the relations of these fragments, in order to discover that spiritual values are ultimate; the dominion of the soul is universal; and the reverences of life rest on its completed vision."

"Guided by this principle of interpretation, we can estimate the functions and the value of medicine, of law, of art, of pleasure, of manufacturing, of brick-laying and carrying of mortar. These activities when seen as isolated and unrelated, mislead the world. When seen in their diminished place in the summing up of life, they serve and ennoble the world."

What, then, is the place of social work in the community? If we include theory and practice in the term social work, I think that we might call it the philosophy of failure. Urged by a noble vision of humanity, social workers go about picking up the failures of civilization. They force us to remember the sanctity of life, the dignity of human feeling. Social workers study these failures profoundly, and then turn and interpret to medicine, to education, to law, to industry, to the State, to religion, to culture, the processes that cause these failures and they inaugurate and champion social policies that will reduce the quality and quantity of them when they cannot be prevented.

"This process taken in all of its parts leads to the development of a supplementary social constitution whose purpose it is so to modify and humanize institutions as to reduce the social causes of distress to a minimum and to strengthen the idealistic forces of life which serve in the formation and development of character."

"Social workers must get their vision of social work out of this fundamental view. They must make their interpretation of that vision out of their insight, their resources and their opportunities. They must obey that insight in the spirit of its reverences and the wider sanctities of life, and they must find their major compensations in the vision realized."

"I attach little importance to the misunderstandings, the misrepresentations, the epithets that offer resistance to the progress of social work. They are obstacles, but time deals summarily with them. Social work is now established beyond all doubt. Its dignity and its power are worthy of its impulses. Our main concern should be that we, as its representatives, are worthy heralds of our vision."

PORTO RICAN COLLEGES BREAK ALL RECORDS

San Juan, Porto Rico, Sept. 21.—Trinity Academy at Rio Piedras, which also serves a dormitory for young Porto Rican women attending the Normal school and taking special courses at the University, which is directly opposite the Academy, reports a full enrollment for the year with a large waiting list. This encouraging news from the Sisters Servants of the Blessed Trinity who conduct the institution insures the permanent success of an undertaking which has been sedulously fostered by the Right Rev. George J. Caruana, Bishop of Porto Rico.

The College of St. Augustine, also in Rio Piedras, announces a much larger attendance than in former years and the institution of the Capuchin Fathers in San Juan known as the Academia Catolica is so crowded this year that in order to accommodate all the applicants in its high school department double sessions have to be held.

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