

FIVE MINUTE SERMON

BY REV. WILLIAM DEMOUY, D. D.

TWENTY-FIFTH SUNDAY
AFTER PENTECOST

CHARITY AND OUR ENEMIES

"Brethren: We cease not to pray for you, and beg that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will, in all wisdom and spiritual understanding." (Col. 1:9)

These glorious words of St. Paul have been re-echoed through the ages down to the present day. The priests of the Church must say them to the faithful in the same sense, for the Church, in her liturgy and in the Mass, requires her ministers to pray for the people. Nay, it is the principal duty of the ordained minister to offer up the sacrifice of the New Law to God for the people; and they need do nothing more than assist at this great sacrifice with attention and in a devotional attitude. They cannot offer up the sacrifice themselves. It is only the priest who can do so—he who is especially chosen by God and ordained by one of the successors of the apostles to whom Christ first gave the power to offer up His sacred body and blood. The Mass is said not only to glorify God and in recognition of His supreme dominion over us, but also in expiation for the sins of man and as an offering agreeable to God, for the people. It is also a prayer of supplication; all blessings needed by the people for their spiritual and temporal welfare are asked for from God. In a word, the Mass is the most perfect prayer, containing all the kinds of supplication; and, for this reason especially, we say that the words of the text are as truly addressed by the Church to Christians of today as they were by St. Paul to the earlier brethren.

How Catholics should rejoice at this fact! The knowledge of such a truth, too, should do much to make them daily express their gratitude to God for the greatest blessing He has given them—membership in the true Church. It was always the plan of God to have men help one another. One of the principal ends He intended in instituting marriage was mutual help. The history of man thus far also shows us how one must help the other. What an impossible life would be that of the individual who tried to run his span alone, unaided! We can not conceive such a state, and no rational man would ever attempt it. But God intended us to help one another in the spiritual life also; nay, as it is the more important of the two, He expects more mutual help among men spiritually. In fact, in the Gospel does He not extol those works above all others? What was the work of Christ but a work principally for our souls? His Church is an institution for the salvation of souls? And what He has done for men, He wishes men, proportionately, to do for one another. Some are to do it because of their office as the consecrated of the Lord; others because they have dedicated their services to Him; and still others from simple duty and charity. Now, one of the principal ways in which this help is to be given is by prayer. Why? Because the greatest help one can have comes from God, and this favor God grants principally through prayer. He has told us so, and His responses to prayer have confirmed our belief in His promise. What greater help can come to man than that which comes from God, and, if it is obtained principally through prayer, how necessary it is for us to use this means for carrying out the command to help one another! St. Paul had much reason for telling the people that he and his followers prayed unceasingly for them, and he was conferring a great and never-ending benefit upon man by letting him know this fact. He knew that it would be confirmed in the Church, and that it would be practised among the people themselves—one praying for another.

It is necessary for people to realize that real charity exists among them in the proportion that they fulfill this great precept. Our enemies may hate us, but this does not rob us of the opportunity of exercising charity toward them; we can—nay, we must—pray for them. The lack of charity on the part of others should make it blossom forth abundantly in us. Contrast, for instance, the charity of Christ with the wickedness of His enemies, and that of the martyrs with the hatred of their persecutors. These are the examples we must strive to imitate.

How much need have Catholics today, also, of this generous spirit of charity! We can not help noticing the lack of it on the part of most of our enemies. They are not helping us, especially not by prayer. They are endeavoring to destroy us by means unworthy of any one who professes the name of Christian. Their work is a work of hatred; it is—not in reality at least in desire—a work similar to that employed by the enemies of Christ and by the cruel persecutors of bygone ages. They are not doing their worst, because a higher civilization will not permit it in all cases; but, judging from their threats and their manner of attacking us, they would do worse if they could. In fact, we have had very recent examples of its being done in a country not far distant from us. We always have believed, too, that, in other countries where governments have fought Catholics, the law of expulsion would give way to the law of extermination, were it not that the modern world

would have branded it a disgrace; not that expulsion of innocent people is not a disgrace to a nation, but because the more or less indignant do not consider it such.

Catholics never could depend upon the word of rulers, nor the guarantees of constitutions. In some instances both have been kept; but it often requires only a moment to change the whole situation. And how sadly both are often interpreted! Even in this country we are guaranteed freedom of conscience and worship, yet our government will allow the most unprincipled men to use its mail service in an attempt to bring about our extermination, or at least expulsion. What must be said of these men and societies that are ever at our throats? To say the least, there is no respect, no duty. Instead of using the Gospel method of helping and of saving one another, they are afflicting themselves with the scribes and Pharisees. But we must not do this. God is our help and our safety. Charity, which unites us to Him, makes us all powerful; and that charity demands of us, as a duty, that we pray even for our bitterest enemies, that they may, if such be possible, be filled with the knowledge of the will of God in all wisdom and spiritual understanding.

WEEKLY CALENDAR

Sunday, October 30.—St. Marcellus, the Centurion in the legion of Trajan, who refused to take part in the impious ceremonies ordered for the celebration of the feast of the Emperor Maximian Hercules in 298. He declared his faith in Jesus Christ, the eternal King and was at once committed to prison. Later he was beheaded.

Monday, October 31.—St. Quintin, martyr, was a Roman descended from a Senatorial family. He preached the faith in Gaul and at Amiens was seized, thrown into prison and loaded with chains. He was condemned to barbarous torture and finally beheaded on October 31, 287.

Tuesday, November 1.—The Feast of All Saints, set aside by the Church to venerate all who have died in grace, and who are now in Heaven. It is a holiday of obligation in the United States.

Wednesday, November 2.—The Feast of All Souls, set aside by the Church in order that the faithful may offer up their prayers for the souls suffering in Purgatory.

Thursday, November 3.—St. Hubert, the patron saint of hunters. He was devoted to worldly pursuits, especially to the chase, in his youth, but later renounced them and served God alone. He became a bishop and penetrated the most barbarous places of Ardenne, converting many and performing numerous miracles. He died in 727.

Friday, November 4.—St. Charles Borromeo, Archbishop of Milan, who did much to counteract the spread of Protestantism. During the great plague he refused to leave Milan and was ever at the side of the sick and dying. He was created cardinal in 1560 at the age of twenty-two.

Saturday, Nov. 5.—St. Bertille, abbess, born of one of the most illustrious families in the territory of Soissons, despised the world and earnestly desired to renounce it. She entered a monastery at Brie and was acquitted herself with such great charity and edification that she was chosen prioress. In 646 she was appointed abbess of the abbey of Chelles, which she governed with vigor and discretion until her death in 692.

THE DAY OF JUDGMENT

The Missionary

Some years ago a group of Unitarians and Universalists were asked to account for the barrenness of their churches. It was alleged that their denominations were dying out. They replied that if they had not propagated great religious bodies, they had accomplished their purpose by making most Protestant denominations Unitarian and Universalist. It is undoubtedly true that in the Protestant world little reference is made to the doctrine of eternal punishment. People that are losing their grip upon the gospel do not wish even to hear of the Day of Judgment. No mention of hell must be made where congregations are recruited from those who regard religion as a soothing influence on earth rather than a revelation of eternal verities. If there be no hell there is no Day of Final Judgment, because there is no irreconcilable difference between right and wrong and no need of any ultimate manifestation of such difference.

All Protestant denominations have not lost their grip upon the great dogmas of heaven and hell or of the Incarnation and Redemption. But it is only in the Living Church of Christ that the whole gospel is preached with fearlessness. Only in the Church is that courage to be found which defies the opinions of passing generations and proclaims without hesitancy every dogma of an inviolate Christianity. The vital truths necessary for clearing the way unto eternal life can never be discovered by human experience or adequately stated by merely human genius. Whatever be the judgments of the mere man, the revelation of the Law of God will stand forever, and the Living Church of God is alone competent to bring

them within our comprehension. Without these we must die the death.

In the month of November the Church emphasizes the judgments of God. All Saints' Day unfolds to the eye of faith the glory of the blessed. The sublimity of heaven and the joy of the saints are calculated to make us thirst after the "living waters" of salvation. All Souls' Day makes us mindful of those who have gone before us, but who are tarrying in the fires of Purgatory. It renews the bonds of love that link us to our beloved dead and at the same time it urges us to prayer for their deliverance. It also makes us conscious of how literally we shall render account for every fault—even "for every idle word." If the guilt of idle words or of half-intentional wrongs must thus be purged, there can be no astonishment at the fire which "consumeth not," the torture of which is everlasting. The Day of Final Reckoning seems very real to us Catholics during the month of November.

It is good for us to anticipate the inevitable. The Lord has declared that if we judge ourselves we shall not be judged. If our standards be those of the gospel and if we bring our every act to judgment, we may be confident that we shall walk in the fear of the Lord and keep in the way of His commandments. The thought of the blessed in the possession of the inconceivable treasures of Heaven should spur us on to emulate their earthly careers which merited so great a reward. The thought of those in Purgatory should make us attend to the so-called little faults which demand such expiation. The thought of the lost in Hell should make our very souls wither up with fear at the consciousness of our sinfulness.

The prayer of Cardin I Newman seems especially appropriate for these November days. With majestic rhythm and with eloquent piety, he thus begs our Heavenly Father to grant that these days suggest to us:

May He support us all the day long,
Till the shades lengthen,
And the evening comes,
And the busy world is hushed,
And the fever of life is over,
And our work is done!
Then in His mercy may He give us
a safe lodging,
And a holy rest,
And peace at the last!

THE ONE FOUNDATION
OF PEACE

As the international conference draws near, every Catholic will fervently implore the Giver of all good gifts to turn the hearts of the delegates to thoughts of peace. It is sad to reflect that after centuries of civilization, the nations can find no better means of adjusting their difficulties than war. War means that Governments must withdraw the people from the fields and the counting-houses, from the ranks of productive labor, and even from the schools, to set them at the task of killing. Victory rests with the nation that is able to kill and cripple the largest number. The ultimate question of right and wrong then becomes secondary. The nation that can bring the most powerful weapons of slaughter and destruction to the discussion, is always right in the judgment of war. And when the weary peoples look back upon the history of war, they are ready to acknowledge the judgments of Whitman and Sherman, and to admit with Franklin that there was never a good war or a bad peace. For the evils of war must bound up with war, and its good results, accidental.

But do the nations want peace? The answer to that must be affirmative if by "nations" we mean the people. As for governments, it is not easy to return an affirmative answer. The inter-governmental pacts following the last war, far from doing away with all occasions for future conflicts, intensified some old quarrels and made many new ones. Governments, as Bryce has recently observed, with the air of one who has discovered a new thing, must be bound by the laws of morality. When they are not, war always looms on the horizon. If my neighbor has stolen my property, and the law affords no redress, for the simple reason that there is no law to cover the case, I shall not continue in a state of active benevolence toward my neighbor. If I have good reason to suspect that he is only waiting his chances to steal more of my property, and to turn my family out of house and home, or suffer them to remain only by payment of a rent fixed by himself, I shall be more than human if I do not arm myself, and prepare to meet violence with violence.

The war has ceased, but the nations are still ranged against one another, with covetous eyes cast upon a neighbor's territory or commercial advantages, or banded together to suppress, in the name of freedom, the just aspirations of small nations and weak peoples. The cry is "peace, peace," but there can be no peace when nations counsel with peace on their lips, but with peace as far from their hearts as God is. May He before whom the nations of the world with their pomp and power are as dust, incline the hearts of men to His law, and on this firm foundation, give to suffering millions an abiding peace.—America.

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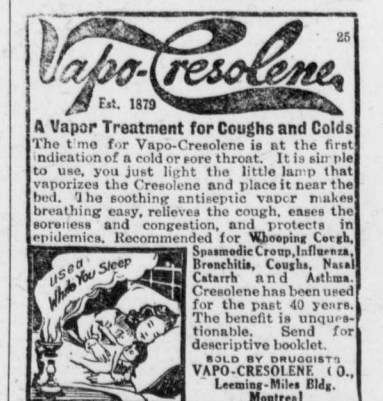
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