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DISCOURSES
TO MIXED CONGREGATIONS.
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DISCOURSE XII.

PROSPECTS OF THE CATHOLIC MISSIONER.

A strange time this may seem to some of you, my brethren, and a strange place, to commence an enterprise such as that, which, relying on God's mercy, we are undertaking this day. In this huge city, amid a population of human beings, so vast that each is solitary, so various that each is independent, which, like the ocean, yields before and closes over every attempt made to influence and impress it, in this mere aggregate of individuals, which admits of neither change nor reform, because it has no internal order, or disposition of parts, or mutual dependence, because it has nothing to change from and nothing to change to, where no one knows his next door neighbor, but every where are found a thousand worlds, each pursuing its own functions unimpeded by the rest, how can we, how can a handful of men, do any service worthy the Lord who has called us, and the objects to which our lives are dedicated? "Cry aloud, spare not!" says the Prophet; well may he say it! no room for sparing; what cry is loud enough, except the last trump of God, to pierce the omnipresent din of turmoil and of effort, which rises, like an exhalation from the very earth, and to cleave the dense mass heaved up behind the public thoroughfare in a maze of buildings known only to those who live in them? It is but a fool's work to essay the impossible; keep to your own place and you are respectable; tend your sheep in the wilderness, and you are intelligible; build upon the old foundations, and you are safe; but begin nothing new, make no experiments, quicken not the action, nor strain the powers, nor complicate the responsibilities of your mother, lest in her old age you bring her to shame, and the idlers laugh at her who once bore many children, but now is waxed feeble.

And this is another thing, the time; the time of coming hither! now, when you rest on no immovable centre, as of old, when you are not what you were lately, when your life is in jeopardy, your future in suspense, your Master in exile; look at home, you have enough to do at home. Look to the rock whence ye were cut, and to the quarry whence ye were chopped! Where is Peter now? *Magni nominis umbra*, as the heathen author says: an aged cause, noble in its time, but of a past day; nay, true and divine in its time, as far as any thing can be such, but false now, and of the earth now, because it is failing now, bent with the weight of eighteen hundred years, tottering to its fall; for with Englishmen, you should know, success is the measure of principle, and power is the exponent of right. Do you not understand our rule of action? We take up men and lay them down, we praise or we blame, we feel respect or contempt, according as they succeed or are defeated. You are wrong, because you are in misfortune; power is truth. Wealth is power, intellect is power, good name is power, knowledge is power; we venerate wealth, intellect, name, knowledge. Intellect we know, and wealth we know, but who are ye? what have we to do with the ghosts of an old world and the types of a former organization?

It is true, my brethren, this is a strange time, a strange place, to be beginning our work. A strange place for Saints and Angels to pitch their tabernacles in, this metropolis; strange, I will not say for thee, my Mother Mary, to be found in; for no part of the Catholic inheritance is foreign to thee, and thou art every where, where the Church is found, *Porta manes et Stella maris*, the constant object of her devotion, and the universal advocate of her children,—not strange to thee, but strange enough to him, my own Saint and Master, Phillip Neri. Yes, dear Father, it is strange for thee, to pass from the bright calm cities of the South to this scene of godless toil and self-trusting adventure; strange for thee to be seen hurrying to and fro across our crowded streets, in thy grave black cassock and thy white collar, instead of moving at thy own pace amid the open ways or vacant spaces of the great City, where God guiding thy young meditations, thou didst for life and death fix thy habitation. Yes; it is very strange to the world, but no new thing to her, the Bride of the Lamb, whose very being and primary gifts are stranger in the eyes of unbelief and pride, than any details of place or conduct which follow from them. It is no new thing in her, who came in the beginning as a wanderer upon earth, and whose empire is a continual conquest.

In such a time as this, did the prince of the Apostles, the first Pope, advance towards the heathen city, where, under a divine guidance, he was to fix his seat. He toiled along the stately road which led him

straight onwards to the capital of the world. He met throngs of the idle and the busy, of strangers and natives, who peopled the interminable suburb. He passed under the high gate, and wandered on amid high palaces and columned temples; he met processions of heathen priests and ministers in honor of their idols; he met the wealthy lady, borne on her litter by her slaves; he met the stern legionaries who had been the "massive iron hammers" of the whole earth; he met the busy politician with his ready man of business at his side to prompt him on his canvass for popularity; he met the orator returning home from a successful pleading, with his young admirers and his grateful and hopeful clients. He saw about him nothing but tokens of a vigorous power, grown up into definite establishment, formed and matured in its religion, its laws, its civil traditions, its imperial extension, through the history of many centuries; and what was he but a poor, feeble, aged stranger, in nothing different from the multitude of men, an Egyptian, or a Chaldean, or perhaps a Jew, some Eastern or other, as passers by would guess according to their knowledge of human kind, carelessly looking at him, as we might turn our eyes upon Hindoo or gipsy, as they met us, without the shadow of a thought that such a one was destined then to commence an age of religious sovereignty, in which the heathen state might live twice over, and not see its end!

In such a time as this, did the great Doctor, St. Gregory Nazianzen, he too an old man, a timid man, a retiring man, fond of solitude and books, and unpractised in the struggles of the world, suddenly appear in the Arian city of Constantinople; and, in despite of a fanatical populace, and an heretical clergy, preach the truth, and prevail, to his own wonder, and to the glory of that grace which is strong in weakness, and is nearest its triumph when it is most despised.

In such a time did another St. Gregory, the first Pope of the name, when all things were now failing, when barbarians had occupied the earth, and fresh and more savage multitudes were pouring down, when pestilence, famine, and heresy ravaged far and near,—oppressed, as he was, with continual sickness, his bed his Pontifical Throne,—rule, direct, and consolidate the Church, in what he argued were the last moments of the world; subduing Arians in Spain, Donatists in Africa, a third heresy in Egypt, a fourth in Gaul, humbling the pride of the East, reconciling the Goths to the Church, bringing our own pagan ancestors within her pale, and completing her order, and beautifying her ritual, while he strengthened the foundations of her power.

And in such a time did the six Jesuit Fathers, Ignatius and his companions, while the world was exulting in the Church's fall, and men "made merry, and sent their gifts one to another," because the prophets were dead which "tormented them that dwelt upon earth," make their vow in the small Church of Montmartre; and, attracting others to them by the sympathetic force of zeal, and the eloquence of sanctity, went forward calmly and silently into India in the East, and into America in the West, and, while they added whole nations to the Church abroad, restored and re-animated the Catholic populations at home.

It is no new thing then with the Church, in a time of confusion or of anxiety, when offences abound, and the enemy is at her gates, that her children, far from being dismayed, or rather glorying in the dangers, as vigorous men exult in trials of their strength, it is no new thing for them, I say, to go forth to do her work, as though she were in the palmy days of her prosperity. Old Rome, in its greatest distress, sent her legions to foreign destinations by one gate, while the Carthaginian conqueror was at the other. In truth, as has been said of our own countrymen, we do not know when we are beaten; we advance, when by all the rules of war we ought to fall back; we dream but of triumphs, and mistake (as the world judges) defeat for victory. For we have upon us the omens of success in the recollections of the past; we read upon our banners the names of many an old field of battle and of glory; we are strong in the strength of our fathers, and we mean to do, in our humble measure, what Saints have done before us. It is nothing great or wonderful in us to be thus minded; only Saints indeed do exploits, and carry contests through, but ordinary men, the serving-men and privates of the Church, are equal to attempting it. It needs no heroism in us, my brethren, to face such a time as this, and to make light of it; for we are Catholics. We have the experience of eighteen hundred years. The great philosophers of antiquity tell us, that mere experience is courage, not indeed of the highest kind, but sufficient to succeed upon. It is not one or two or a dozen defeats, if we had them, which will reverse the majesty of the Catholic name. We are willing to take this generation on its own selected ground, and to make our intension of purpose the very voucher for our divinity. We are confident, zealous,

and unyielding, because we are the heirs of St. Peter, St. Gregory Nazianzen, St. Gregory Pope, and all other holy and faithful men, who in their day, by word, deed, or prayer, have furthered the Catholic cause. We share in their merits and intercessions, and we speak with their voice. Hence we do that without heroism, which others do only with it. It would be heroism in others, certainly, to set about our work. Did Jews aim at bringing over this vast population to the rites of the Law, or did Unitarians address themselves to the Holy Roman Church, or did the Society of Friends attempt the great French nation, this would rightly be called heroism; not a true religious heroism, but it would be a something extraordinary and startling. It would be a peculiar, special, original idea; it would be making a great venture on a great uncertainty. But there is nothing of special, nothing of personal magnanimity in a Catholic's making light of the world, and beginning to preach to it, though it turn its face from him. He knows the nature and habits of the world; and it is his immemorial way of dealing with it; he does but act according to his vocation; he would not be a Catholic, did he act otherwise. He knows whose vessel he has entered; it is the bark of Peter. When the greatest of the Romans was in an open boat on the Adriatic, and the sea rose, he said to the terrified boatman, *Cæsarea vehis et fortunam Cæsaris*, "Cæsar is your freight and Cæsar's fortune." What he said in presumption, we, my dear brethren, can repeat in faith of that boat, in which Christ once sat and preached. We have not chosen it to have fear about it; we have not entered it to escape out of it; no, but to go forth in it upon the flood of sin and unbelief, which would sink any other craft. We began this our work at the first with Peter for our guide, on the very Feast of his Chair, and at the very Shrine of his relics; so, when any of you marvel that we should choose this place and this time for our missionary labors, let him know that we are of those who measure the present by the past, and poise the world upon a distant centre. We act according to our name: Catholics are at home in every time and place, in every state of society, in every class of the community, in every stage of cultivation. No state of things comes amiss to a Catholic priest; he has always work to do, and harvest to reap.

Were it otherwise, had he not confidence in the darkest day, and the most hostile district, he would be relinquishing a principal note of the Church. She is Catholic because she brings an universal remedy for an universal disease. The disease is sin; all men have sinned; all men need a recovery in Christ; to all must that recovery be preached and dispensed. If then there be a preacher and dispenser sent from God, that messenger must speak, not to one, but to all, he must be suited to all, he must have a mission to the whole race of Adam, and be cognizable by every individual of it. I do not mean that he must persuade all, and prevail with all, for that depends upon the will of each; but he must show his capabilities for converting all by actually converting some of every time, and every place, and every rank, and every age of life, and every character of mind. If sin is a partial evil, let its remedy be partial; but, if it be not local, not occasional, but universal, such must be the remedy. A local religion is not from God. It must indeed begin, and it may linger, in one place; nay for centuries it may remain there, so that it is expanding and maturing in its internal character, and if it professes the while that it is not yet perfect. There may be deep reasons in God's counsels, why the proper revelation of His will to man should have been slowly celebrated and gradually completed in this elementary form of Judaism; but it was ever in progress in the Jewish period, and pointed by its prophets to a day when it should spread over the whole earth. Judaism then was local, because it was imperfect; when it reached perfection within, it became universal without, and took the name of Catholic.

Look around, my brethren, at the forms of religion now in the world, and you will find that one and one only has this note of a divine origin. The Catholic Church has passed through the whole revolution of human society; and is now beginning it again. She has passed through the full cycle of changes, in order to show us that she is independent of them all. She has had trial of East and West, of monarchy and democracy, of peace and war, of imperial and feudal tyranny, of times of darkness and times of philosophy, of barbarousness and luxury, of slaves and freemen, of cities and nations; of marts of commerce and seats of manufacture, of old countries and young, of metropolises and colonies. She arose in the most happy age which perhaps the world has ever known; for two or three hundred years she had to fight against the authority of law, established forms of religion, military power, an ably cemented empire, and prosperous contented populations. And in the course of that period, this poor, feeble, despised Society was able to defeat

its imperial oppressor, in spite of his violent efforts, again and again exerted, to rid himself of so despicable an assailant; in spite of calumny, in spite of popular outbreaks, in spite of cruel torments, the lords of the world were forced, as their sole chance of maintaining their empire, to come to terms with that body, of which the present Church is in name, in line, in doctrine, in principles, in manner of being, in moral characteristics, the descendant and representative. They were forced to humble themselves to her, and to enter her pale, and to exalt her, and to depress her enemies. She triumphed as never any other triumphed before or since. But this was not all; scarcely had she secured her triumph, or rather set about securing it, when it was all reversed; for the Roman Power, her captive, which with so much blood and patience she had subjugated, suddenly came to nought. It broke and perished; and against her rushed millions of wild savages from the North and East, who had neither God nor conscience, nor even natural compassion. She had to begin again; for centuries they came down, one horde after another, like roaring waves, and dashed against her base. They came again and again, like the armed bands sent by the king of Israel against the Prophet; and, as he brought fire down from heaven which devoured them as they came, so in her more gracious way did Holy Church, burning with zeal and love, devour her enemies, multitude after multitude, with the flame which her Lord had kindled, "heaping coals of fire upon their heads," and "overcoming evil with good." Thus out of those fierce strangers were made her truest and most loyal children; and then from among them there arose a strong military power, more artificially constructed than the old Roman, with traditions and precedents which lasted on for centuries beyond itself, at first the Church's champion and then her rival; and here too she had to undergo conflict, and to gain her triumph. And so I might proceed, going to and fro, and telling of her political successes since, and her intellectual victories from the beginning, and her social improvements, and her encounters with those others circumstances of human nature or combinations of human kind, which I just now enumerated; all which prove to us, with a cogency as great as that of physical demonstration, that she comes not of earth, that she holds not of earth, that she is no servant of man, else he who made could have destroyed her.

How different again, I say, how different are all religions that ever were from this lofty and unchangeable Catholic Church! They depend on time and place for their existence, they live in periods or in regions. They are children of the soil, indigenous plants, which readily flourish under a certain temperature, in a certain aspect, in moist or in dry, and die if they are transplanted. Their haunt is one article of their scientific description. Thus the Greek schism, Nestorianism, the heresy of Calvin, and Methodism, each has its geographical limits. Protestantism has gained nothing in Europe since its first outbreak. Some accident gives rise to these religious manifestations; some sickly season, the burning sun, the vapor-laden marsh, breeds a pestilence, and there it remains hanging in the air over its birth-place perhaps for centuries; then some change takes place in the earth or in the heavens, and it suddenly is no more. Sometimes, however, it is true, such scourges of God have a course upon earth, and affect a Catholic range. They issue as from some poisonous lake or pit in Ethiopia or in India, and march forth with resistless power to fulfil their mission of evil, and walk to and fro over the face of the world. Such was the Arabian imposture, of which Mahomet was the framer; and you will ask, perhaps, whether it has not done that, which I have said the Catholic Church alone can do, and proved thereby that it had in it an internal principle, which, depending not on man, could subdue him in any time and place. No, my brethren, look narrowly, and you will see the marked distinction between the religion of Mahomet and the Church of Christ. In truth Mahometanism has done little more than the Anglican communion is doing at present. That communion is found in many parts of the world; its primate has a jurisdiction even greater than the Nestorian Patriarch of old; it has establishments in Malta, in Jerusalem, in India, in China, in Australia, in South Africa, and in Canada. Here at least you will say is Catholicity, even greater than that of Mahomet. O, my brethren, be not beguiled by words: will any thinking man say for a moment, whatever this objection be worth, that the Established Religion is superior to time and place? well, if not, why set about proving that it is? rather, does not its essence lie in its recognition by the State? is not its establishment its very form? what would it be, would it last ten years, if abandoned to itself? It is its establishment which erects it into a unity and individuality; can you contemplate it, though you stimulate your imagination to the task, abstracted from its churches, palaces, colleges, parsonages, revenues, civil precedence, and