

FIVE MINUTE SERMON

LOW SUNDAY

"Thomas answered and said to Him: 'My Lord and my God.'" John xx 28.

In commenting on to-day's gospel, St. Gregory says very beautifully: "Do you think that it happened accidentally that the Apostle Thomas was first absent, and, after he came, heard; and having heard, doubted; and having doubted, touched; and by touching obtained faith?" No, all this did not happen accidentally, but by the grace of God; for in a very wonderful way God in His mercy, allowed the wounds of our unbelief to be healed by the Apostle who, because he doubted, touched the actual marks of His Divine Master's wounds. St. Thomas, by his want of faith, did more towards helping us to believe than did the other Apostles by their faith, since he was brought back to faith by touch, and this fact encourages us to cast aside all doubt and strengthens our faith. Therefore, our Lord permitted this disciple to doubt after the Resurrection, but He did not let him continue to do so. He wished Thomas to be a witness to the truth of the Resurrection, because, in consequence of his doubts, he actually touched the marks of our Saviour's wounds.

People might have been inclined to think that the Apostles' credulity led them to deceive themselves, or to be deceived, regarding the Resurrection had it not been impossible even to suspect St. Thomas of credulity. He said: "Except I shall see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the place of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe." But afterwards, being thoroughly convinced, he threw himself at Christ's feet, exclaiming: "My Lord and my God." Surely only one unwilling to believe could still refuse to admit the truth of the Resurrection! Thomas cried: "My Lord"—Thou art here! It is no illusion of my excited imagination no ghost, no apparition resembling Thee that I behold; Thou art here, with the same body which suffered the torture of the Cross and the agony of death. "Thou art here," said the very fact that Thou art here present, I know Thee, Jesus, to be indeed my God.—Thus spoke St. Thomas, and thus we, too, should speak with him.

Through Christ's Resurrection we recognize His divinity. The truth, so often and so plainly proclaimed, that He was God, was confirmed by all His miracles, for God would certainly never give one, who spoke untruths, power to work miracles. It is impossible for God, being all holy, to confirm falsehoods by miracles. Therefore, our Lord's miracles in general are a proof of His Divinity, but His Resurrection is the greatest and most glorious of them all; for Christ rose from the dead by His own power. He was not raised by some higher authority. By rising again He proved the truth of the words: "I have power to lay down my life, and I have power to take it up again; as the Father hath life in Himself, even so hath He granted to the Son to have life in Himself. I am the Resurrection and the Life." Every creature has life, not of itself, but given to it by its Creator; God alone has life in Himself; consequently Jesus is God. This doctrine of our Lord's Divinity is a fundamental doctrine in Christianity, and denial of it involves a denial of Christianity as a whole; for to deny that Jesus is God involves a denial that He spoke the truth, when He declared Himself to be God indeed, the Son of the Almighty Father. Let us always hold fast to this sacred truth, which is confirmed by the strongest proofs. Everything—all our faith and all our virtue—depends upon our belief in the Divinity of Christ.

Jesus is truly God. Of what avail is the learning of men, profound and attractive as it may appear? Every man, however wise, is not only capable of error, but does actually err in many respects.

History teaches us this truth; for we read of great men who have propounded famous theories, universally accepted and believed, and yet in course of time the errors underlying them have revealed themselves, and the theories have gradually been discarded, giving place to others, more recently put forward; until at last the mention of these men and their doctrines is enough to remind us how easy it is to make mistakes. We should indeed be in a sad plight had we to rely exclusively upon human learning. We should have no firm foothold, but only a fear of being compelled to deny to-morrow what to-day appears true and to curse what to-day seems most sacred. But, as it is, we rely not on the doctrines of men, but on the teaching of Him who, by His Resurrection, proved Himself to be God. What can make us waver in our faith? Nothing, for what we believe is the word of the eternal, unchanging Truth, and His doctrines are as true now as they were in the past and as they will be forever. Heaven and earth may pass away, but His words can never pass away.

Jesus is truly God. This truth strengthens us to do right. Even if men could teach infallibly what is right and true, their teaching would be of no avail, since the fairer colors in which they depicted virtue, the more painfully should we recognize our inability to attain to it, as they could not impart to us strength to do right. But He who teaches us is truly God, the Bestower of grace, the support of our souls, the vine of which we are the branches, and the strength of our hearts, without whom we can do nothing, and with whom we can do all things. God Himself

helps us to accomplish what He would have us do. How consoling and encouraging is this doctrine! Whoever recognizes Christ as truly God, can never cease to strive after perfection, knowing that he will not strive in vain, as, by aid of the grace given by our risen Saviour, it is possible for him to advance daily on the way of salvation.

My Lord and my God! In Thy Resurrection I recognize Thee as my true God, whose teaching and grace are given me for my salvation. Throughout my life I will acknowledge Thee as my God, by the firmness of my faith and perseverance in doing what is right. Amen.

TEMPERANCE

"TAKE THE PLEDGE FOR 1916"

Under the above heading the Lamp, that well known Catholic monthly devoted to Church unity and missions, which is published at Graymorn, Garrison, N. Y., by the Franciscans of the Society of the Atonement, publishes an editorial in its January issue the following article:

We may be wasting our editorial ink in doing so, but we are constrained nevertheless to recommend to every reader of the Lamp who is intertemperate in the use of intoxicants during the past year to take a pledge of total abstinence from all spirituous liquors for 1916; and having taken, to keep it.

Here are some of the reasons why it would be a splendid thing to do:

1. It would knock the stick out of the devil's hand as far as you are concerned for the next twelve months.

2. It would reduce your list of mortal sins probably 75% possibly reduce them to zero.

3. If you are a married man it would add immensely to the happiness of your poor wife and bring a different look into the eyes of your children when their father comes into the house.

4. Figure up the money saved, which would be at your disposal for home, church and charitable purposes.

The most brutal, hard-fisted and merciless tyrant we know about is Master Barleycorn. The harder any of his dupes work in his service the less he gives them in return, and when his fetters have thoroughly gripped the poor, wretched victim, he reduces him to utter poverty, begrudging him even the rags that clothe his nakedness and turning him out in the winter's snow to tramp, a homeless wanderer, from place to place with frozen, blistered feet, begging a crust of bread and a corner in any old shed out of the storm and night.

This is not exaggerated in the least. The editor of the Lamp has ways and sheltered too many of Master Barleycorn's slaves and castaways to think that he could overdraw the picture even if he tried. The abominations and desolations wrought by rum beggar description.

We know by experience that for tens of thousands of well-meaning men the only perfect emancipation from the slavery of strong drink is total abstinence.—St. Paul Bulletin.

SOWING AS THEY REAP

We learn from a correspondent that a prominent man of Oklahoma City who has always boasted that he was free born and could drink all he pleased, filled his young children with egg nog on all occasions and freely served it to everybody in his own home, had the pleasure of seeing his eldest son, now a young man, locked up in the city jail for being heavily drunk at a so-called respectable watch party on New Year's eve.

Those who seem so surprised at the modern prevalence of women drinking, need not be so. When fathers, husbands and brothers insist on keeping liquor and serving it in their homes with their womenfolk as "waitresses," they need not feel astonished if women first learn to endure, then pity, then embrace the habit.

We don't believe there is a woman in the world who has the same respect for a man, once she has seen him under the influence of liquor, that she had before—it matters not who he is or what his station. If women feel this way towards men, what disgust there must be in both men and women who see a woman drunk or even drinking freely.

The man who teaches his children and wife to drink, telling them never to get drunk, uses about as much sense and logic as the simpleton of a parent who gives his baby matches to play with and then spansks it for starting a fire.—Catholic Advance.

SEEING GOOD IN OTHERS

The truth that everybody should observe as he progresses through this uncertain world is that there is good in everyone; that no man lives who has not in his nature somewhere some good, and it is the duty of everybody to find that out the first thing; and very often he will find that the good is the major part of the man's makeup. To discover the good qualities of another is not only a service to that other but to oneself also.

Indeed, a man who will not see any good in others is himself a mean man. His heart is cold and his brain is soant. But if he sees whatever worth there is in others, his sympathies enlarge and his views broaden. There is the great good in seeing good in others—it makes a man of one and lifts him above the sordid levels of life.

If we wanted to test the manliness of a man, we would get his opinion

of his neighbors. If there was one of them in whom he saw no good we would mark him down. We would hardly expect him to see the same good in all, but if he would analyze his observations closely and seek an equilibrium of conditions he would find no serious difference among them; not so much difference as to raise a feeling of more dislike than friendliness.—Ohio State Journal.

THE THREE MARRIAGE RINGS

To estimate the debt that woman owes to the Church it is of importance to understand clearly what has been accomplished for her within the matrimonial state. However much material necessities or the lure of external occupations may call forth woman from the home, it still remains true that the great majority of her sex, sooner or later, will find their paths converging into the wedded life.

Marriage, though Divinely planned from the beginning, has not always existed under the same conditions. Scanning the pages of impartial and authentic history, we find that woman's place in society has varied according to the religious conditions under which she has lived. Three marriage rings, one of silver, one of iron, and one of gold, can fittingly be taken to symbolize respectively her position under pre-Christian revealed religion, under paganism, and finally under the protecting mantle of the Church.

First of all came the silver nuptial ring. It was fashioned in beauty and purity by the hand of God Himself from a star of heaven's blue. Sparkling in it were two precious jewels of "purest ray serene," unity and perpetuity. It represented an inviolable and inseparable bond, existing between only one man and one woman, "two in one flesh," until death should them part. "This now is bone of my bone, and flesh of my flesh," exclaimed Adam, "she shall be called woman because she was taken out of man. Wherefore a man shall leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they shall be two in one flesh."

This primal ordination of Almighty God, made in an Eden of unalloyed delight, our Divine Lord reconfirmed:

"Therefore now they are not two, but one flesh; what therefore God has joined together, let no man put asunder." Inviolable unity and perpetuity unto death were to be under the New Testament, as "from the beginning," the two principal properties of Christian marriage. Never again were they to be set aside. They were to be most potent factors in assuring to the wife her sacred rights and lifting her up to her true position of dignity by the side of man.

Wrought in the fire of God's love, the jeweled silver ring was fashioned by power of Divine omnipotence, after the design of His infinite wisdom. But man sinned and was cast forth from Paradise. His intellect was darkened and his will weakened by transgression, added to transgression. Centuries rolled by, and little by little the splendor of that silver ring was tarnished, the jewels were ruthlessly torn from their settings and cast away. Polygamy arose and the gem of unity was wrenched from God's circlet. On woman fell the shame and degradation, but man was of necessity dragged down with her.

Divorce, too, appeared upon the earth. With reckless hand it plucked from out the silver ring its second gem, the clear and priceless jewel of perpetuity. Woman was the loss again, hers the bitterness, the hardship and the pain, but man once more shared with her in the deplorable consequences. Not because God willed it should be so, did Moses grant the bill of divorce. When the Jews objected to Christ's doctrine which forbade the evil of divorce, and quoted in their favor the Mosaic permission, Our Lord gave the explanation why such a concession had ever been made to them: "Because Moses by reason of the hardness of your heart permitted you to put away your wives; but from the beginning it was not so." Nor was it to be so henceforth under the new Dispensation of Divine Love. "What therefore God hath joined together, let no man put asunder," was the commandment that Christ gave the world. The lost jewels had been found again, and Christ restored them to their rightful place. Woman's indeed was directly the gain, but all humanity was lifted up with her.

Yet woman's lot among the Jews, even at the greatest religious decline of that nation, had still remained enviable when compared with the fate of her hapless sisters, bowed down to earth under the cruel bondage of paganism. Not only had God's silver ring been tarnished and its jewels lost, but the very preciousness of its pure metal had been debased with the change of religion into idolatry. A ring of iron was the ring of wedlock now, a fetter of slavery, the fitting symbol of man's relentless inhumanity to woman.

Sad, inexpressibly sad, is the tale of her degradation under paganism, the iron reign of cruelty, selfishness and lust, where the law of might is right. "Come therefore, and let us enjoy the good things that are present, and let us speedily use the creatures as in youth," is the cry of sodden idolatry as of scoffing atheism.

"Let us fill ourselves with costly wine, and ointments: and let not the flower of the time pass by us. Let us crown ourselves with roses,

before they be withered; let no meadow escape our riot. Let none of us go without his part in luxury; let us everywhere leave tokens of joy; for this is our portion and this our lot. Let us oppress the poor just man, and not spare the widow, nor honor the ancient gray hairs of the aged. But let our strength be the law of justice: for that which is feeble, is of no use to be nothing worth."

Under this last clause came woman, such was her wifely portion. No longer the cherished helpmate of man, made like him in God's image, called equally with him to work out an eternal destiny, she had now become the flower of the time, the feeble creature without honor or dignity, the thing found to be nothing worth. Exceptions but confirmed the rule.

Christ came. He took into His hand the tarnished silver ring, and sadly lifted up the iron circlet that the Gentile woman wore. How pitifully dark and lustreless! In His compassion and great tenderness He would not rest content with merely restoring them to all their former beauty. His love was infinite and His power was no less. His purpose was Divine. He would transmute them into purest gold, and in that splendid setting, such as the world had never seen before, He would replace the jewels plucked away and lost. Woman had been the greatest shame and sorrow, hers was now to be the greatest joy and honor.

Jew and Gentile were alike to be received into His Church, and there was to be in it but one bond for man and woman united in His name. It was to be a ring of gold, a sacred, sacramental bond, inseparable as "from the beginning," existing between one man and one woman only, and she was henceforth to be loved and cherished unto death. It was to remain forever the precious, priceless image of the mystic and inseparable union between Christ and His one and only Church, the Divine Bridegroom and the Spouse begotten from His opened Side.

Such is the golden marriage ring, rich with the luster of its jeweled beauty, which Christ has left to woman in the Church founded by Him upon Peter: "This is a great sacrament; but I speak in Christ and in the Church."—Joseph Husslein, S. J., in America.

Love of God is the wondrous angel of life that rolls away all stones of sorrow and suffering from the pathway of duty.

INSPIRING FAMILY LIFE

Time was when the family prayer was never omitted under any pretext. Then, good will and harmony dwelt beneath the parental roof. The joys of one were the joys of all, as the sorrow and reverses of one were the common lot of all. But times have changed. A false independence has seized the younger generation. Old traditions are no longer kept sacred. Secrecy and concealed self-reliance have shattered former confidences. And as a result of all this, unity of aim and ambition in all the members of a family are seldom found. Prayer is a momentary consideration, correspondence with one's religious duties often as a matter of routine. The old and revered customs are passing. Says the Holy Name Journal:

"Is there a sadder thing in life than a family drifting apart? The same roof shelters them at night; they gather about the same table; family occasions may find each member present, somewhat bored, somewhat anxious to hasten away to other interests, still all with love enough to develop an anxious feeling in case of sickness, and tears at death; but oceans could not separate families as completely as a lack of interest, the lack of loving study so necessary to helpful, intelligent, loving, inspiring family life."

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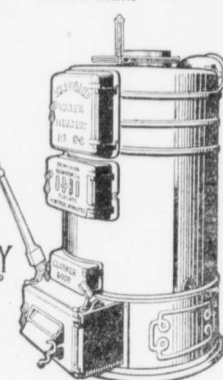
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