

## A GRAND SERMON

BY REV. FATHER MCCALLEN, S.S., OF ST. PATRICK'S.

The Feast of Pentecost—The Descent of the Holy Ghost—Almsgiving—The Decoration of God's Temple.

"And when the days of Pentecost were accomplished, they were all together in the same place. And suddenly there came a sound from Heaven, as of a mighty wind coming; and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. . . . and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost." (Acts II., 1-4).

On this solemn day of Pentecost, beloved brethren, did the Holy Spirit of God descend on the Apostles and on their disciples of the first infant church, in the little upper room at Jerusalem, to begin on earth a work which is only to end when the last sanctified soul is brought face to face with God in eternal glory. It is impossible in one short discourse to portray adequately the action of the Holy Spirit in the Divine economy of the Church—enlightening minds; moving hearts; strengthening weak human wills; making holy the immortal souls which have been redeemed by the blood of Jesus Christ; teaching all truths; preserving and protecting the precious deposit of Faith; and abiding with the church forever. What I wish to do is to call your attention briefly to the action of the Holy Spirit in two of His temples here on earth—one this material temple in which you worship, the other the spiritual temple of your souls. Of the first we may truly say what was said of the first little church of Jerusalem, that the Spirit of God "fills the whole house where you are sitting; and of the second, in the words of St. Paul: "The temple of God is holy, which you are." (1 Cor. III: 17).

Now these thoughts are of intense practical interest at all times, but especially on such a feast as that of Pentecost, and in the circumstances in which we now find ourselves. At the present moment, the priests and people of this parish are engrossed in the one thought and desire of making this material temple worthy of the God who dwells in yonder tabernacle, and of the Holy Ghost, whose action herein never ceases. At the same time our desire must ever be to make both body and soul worthy temples of the living God. With regard to the decoration, the beautifying of this material temple, you have no need of my exhortation to take up and carry on the grand work to successful completion; for you are proving that this new appeal, which has been made you has been received like all those which preceded it, with that enthusiastic zeal and generosity which by common consent of the people of Montreal, have always been adjudged the noble heritage of the members of this St. Patrick's parish. In some places it is the rich, principally, who, by munificent donations towards God's works, relieve the poor almost entirely of what ought to be the grateful burden of church building and church decoration. In other places, the rich seem to forget their duty and their privilege, and leave to those less wealthy but more generous the task of making God's home on earth as beautiful as their moderate means will allow. But with us it is not so! Here rich and poor, young and old, all do their duty; all realize their privilege; no one shirks his responsibilities.

Is this flattery, or is it fact? Let us see. You have already been told of the little boy, five years old, who, receiving a penny, came in all the simplicity of childish innocence, and, addressing your pastor, said: "Father, here is a cent to paint your church with." When I heard this touching incident, my thoughts travelled back many hundred years, and I beheld in spirit a poor widow going up to the temple of Jerusalem, and casting her mite into the treasury. And I saw the Divine Master calling His Apostles aside, and heard Him commending her generosity: "Amen, I say to you, this poor widow has cast in more than all they who have cast into the treasury. For they all did cast in of their abundance; but she of her want cast in all she had, even her whole living." (Mark XII., 43, 44) I have no doubt God will bless that child and all the children of this parish, who are putting aside their offerings that they too may help to decorate the parish church.

The Rev. speaker then quoted other facts of donations made to the Bazaar by

people of moderate means, by those who were wealthy, as well as by the male societies of the parish, and continued:

Thus from all sides comes the cheering news that young and old, rich and poor, men and women, are enthusiastically engaged in God's work. And those not of our Faith, now, as in the past, are seconding the efforts of their Catholic neighbors to make the Bazaar a success, some of them with a princely generosity beyond all praise; while the ladies under whose auspices the work is being carried on are untiring in their efforts, as they always are when such labors are committed to their charge. Am I not then free from flattery, when, in presence of such facts, I say to you to-day, you need no exhortation from me to excite either good will or generosity on your part towards the Bazaar.

But may I not, usefully, on this solemn day of Pentecost, tell you how noble, how appropriate, how pleasing to God are your efforts to beautify the temple in which the Spirit of God dwells, and in which His Divine action is constantly exercised? What a consolation for the little children, the poor, the men and women of moderate means, the rich, to be able, with the psalmist, to say, and to say truly and practically: "I have loved, O Lord, the beauty of Thy house and the place where Thy glory dwelleth." And is this not really God's house? Does not Christ dwell in yonder veiled sacrament as really and truly as He does in His unveiled presence at the right hand of His Father? Are not the holy words of Scripture which form the basis of all our instructions, of all our exhortation, from this pulpit, dictated by the Spirit of God? And does not the action of that Divine Spirit accompany our poor human words, and vivify and warm and fructify the blessed seed thus sown in your hearts? Is it not the grace of the Holy Ghost that removes in Baptism the stain of original sin, and through Penance cures the no less cruel wounds made by actual sin in souls? Does not the Divine Spirit descend in Confirmation, bearing to your children his sevenfold gifts? Does not that Spirit, after the Real Presence in holy communion is gone, dwell in your souls by His grace, as in His chosen temples? Is there a good thought that rises in your minds, a prayer that issues from your lips or a resolution that proceeds from your wills, in this holy place, which is not suggested, accompanied, and perfected by the action of the spirit of God? Oh! is not this a noble undertaking in which we are engaged of making this church a fitting place for the spirit of God to live and act and accomplish his Divine work! "I have loved, O Lord, the beauty of Thy house and the place where Thy glory dwelleth."

Speaking of the value of sacrifice in almsgiving, the Rev. speaker recalled what he had previously suggested as a means of raising money for the decoration of the church. If the two thousand men of the parish, he said, were during the month of May to forego but one cigar a day, and put aside the value in cash, the sum thus realized would be for each individual \$1.50 or a total of \$3,000 on June 1. If the two thousand ladies of the parish would consent during this same month of May to spare in the price of material for dress or of vain and superfluous ornamentation a similar sum of \$1.50 each, we would have other \$3,000 or a total of \$6,000, the result of a little sacrifice made for God's own sake. Further, if the two thousand men would consent to continue the same sacrifice from June till Christmas, they would be able on that day to offer as a gift to their new born King \$8,000 a month or in the six months \$48,000, and if the ladies during the same period only spared in their purchases one-half of that amount—75 cents a month, or \$4.50 during the six months—their Christmas gift to our Lord would be \$9,000, making a grand total of \$27,000. This sum, added to the \$6,000 saved during May, would make in all \$33,000. With this we could fresco the entire church and surround the outside property with an iron railing as well as adorn the grounds. Then we might say good-by to bazaars. No one would be the poorer, but richer, spiritually at least, and I will go farther and add, temporally also; for God will not be outdone in generosity, but will reward a hundred fold the sacrifices made for his sake.

And it would after all only be giving to God what he has a right to demand. "What shall I return to the Lord for all he has rendered to me?" He has given

me life, health, a happy home. He has guarded, protected, increased my little savings. Is it too much that I should take a part of that life and health and devote them to gathering offerings for the glorious work of adorning His home on earth? Is it too much for me to set aside a little portion of my earthly possessions to enrich His earthly poverty?

Again, what a consolation do we not find in the thought that we wish God's home on earth to be more beautiful than our own? Just as David, who, being prevented, by the many wars in which the people of Israel were engaged, from building a temple to the Lord (this privilege in God's providence being reserved to Solomon, his son), felt ashamed that while he dwelt in a palace the Ark of the Lord rested under a tent, so may we feel ashamed that other heavy burdens that had to be borne have delayed this our work of church renovation. "Dost thou not see," complained this great king, to Nathan, the prophet, "dost thou not see that I dwell in a house of cedar, and the Ark of God is lodged within skins?" (II Kings VII., 2.)

When I look, O Lord, do I seem to hear the men of means exclaim: when I look on my own home and view its tinted walls, its handsome furniture, its well appointed drawing room, its rich table service; when I remember that to Thee I owe all, that Thou hast given all, and with the rapidity of the lightning flash canst take all away; when I recall Thy greatness and my own lowliness, Thy sanctity and my own sinfulness; when I contrast the richness of my home with the poverty of Thine, I feel that love, gratitude, and the high sense of strict duty will make the sacrifice, of some portion of that which Thou has so abundantly given, easy and agreeable; because, "O Lord, I love the beauty of Thy house and the place where Thy glory dwelleth."

But, dear brethren, while these are, as they ought to be, your sentiments, do not forget that other temple of your souls, dearer to God than the material temple whose decoration you so generously undertake. This church has been built with human hands and will one day crumble to pieces; but your souls are the direct work of the Divine Architect and Builder, who has made them to His own image and likeness and endowed them with immortality. Time will work its ravages on these material walls which surround you; the beautiful colors which will adorn them, will lose their lustre, become dimmed, and fade away. But if you place no obstacle to the Divine action of God's Holy Spirit, your souls will always shine with undimmed lustre, always glow with the luminous presence of the divinity, always attract the benignant regard of the God who made them, always send forth in exterior practice and conduct to edify the neighbor, the reflection of the Christian virtues in which they abound, and by which they are embellished, till, by the continued action of the Divine Spirit, and your own co-operation, every blemish has been removed, the slightest stain blotted out, the last spiritual ornament added, the last finishing touch given to the spiritual building. And then, God, whose temple it is, will find it too holy for sinful earth and transport it to the inner sanctuary of His own great temple in heaven.

Let each one of us, as we make our offering to this great work of church renovation, do so through love, for the beauty of God's house, and the place where his glory dwelleth, knowing, that by so doing we shall have a better right to claim from Him an eternal home in Heaven. Let us also invoke the Divine Spirit to take up his dwelling in our souls as in his rightful temple; let us beg Him to illumine, instruct, strengthen, beautify and enrich them with his sevenfold gifts, till in God's appointed time they may be borne by angels' hands to the very throne of God, there to adore and bless and praise the Divine Spirit, whose help and grace have brought them to the bliss and joy of Heaven.

## ST. PATRICK'S CHURCH.

FIRST COMMUNION AND CONFIRMATION—IMPRESSIVE CEREMONIES.

On Thursday morning, at 7.30 o'clock, over 200 children and nearly 50 adults received Holy Communion for the first time; the task of instructing and preparing the children for this great event in their lives was undertaken by the Rev. Martin Callaghan, S.S. In the evening

the Sacrament of Confirmation was administered by His Grace Archbishop Fabre. The occasion was one of grand solemnity and the sight was a very beautiful one. The little girls, all arrayed in their emblematic white dresses, with long flowing veils, and the boys, neatly attired in black, with each a first communion badge on his breast and a white ribbon bow tied on his arm, made the scene most touching and edifying. There was a very large attendance of the friends and relatives of the children, every seat in the church being occupied.

Two hundred and thirty-five communicants received Confirmation; fifty-one of these were adults and forty-five of the fifty-one were converts; there were also nineteen little children from the Orphan Asylum.

Father Martin Callaghan commenced the services with an address to the children upon the subject of the significance of the great sacrament which they were about to receive. Mrs. Sadlier, the well known Catholic writer, and Mr. A. Wood acted as sponsors for the communicants. Canticles were sung during the service, the Rev. Fathers James and Luke Callaghan singing the solo parts and the whole congregation joining in the choruses. The Rev. Father Quinlivan delivered an appropriate sermon, addressed mainly to the children and adults who had just spent the happiest day of their lives. By Baptism they had been admitted to the fold of the Church; by Confirmation they had been confirmed in their faith. Some of the rev. father's young hearers, many of them he hoped, had preserved themselves in the sinless condition in which baptism had left them. How happy they should be! How they should strive to preserve that stainless purity of soul up to the end. Those who had fallen from grace could always,

NO MATTER HOW GRIEVOUSLY THEY HAD SINNED,

obtain that pardon which God, in His infinite mercy, extended to all repentant sinners; but notwithstanding this, let them remember that when the bloom of baptismal innocence had once departed, it could never be entirely restored. Two men might be to all appearances equal in bodily strength. They might have the same apparent power of endurance, the same agility, the same skill in defending their persons against attack. Yet, on examination, it was found that the body of one was free from mark or blemish, while the other's was covered with scars, the traces of deep wounds now healed, but not to be entirely removed. The power of the former of these men to resist assault would, on a sufficiently severe test being applied, be found superior to that of his less perfect brother. As it was with the body, so it was with the soul. The soul unspotted with sin could better resist the attacks of the enemy than could that whose armour had once been pierced. Let the rev. gentleman's hearers, then, avoid all occasions of sin as they would the pestilence. Let them avoid places devoted to sinful amusement as they would houses infected with some fell disease. The Rev. Father concluded with a reference to the beauty and happiness of the sacerdotal and monastic professions. Among no people, perhaps, so much as among the Irish, was the calling of the priest so highly honored, and happy indeed were the Irish parents whose son or daughter devoted himself or herself voluntarily to a life in the service of God. Parents were urged to encourage and foster any inclination which their children might manifest in favor of a religious life. But no attempt should be made to force their inclinations. As it was bad to deny a child permission to follow the priestly calling, if he had a vocation therefor, so it was bad to attempt to force a child into the ranks of the clergy, against his own will.

After the sermon, Miss Mary Kennedy sang a hymn "To Mary" in excellent style. Benediction was then given, the Rev. Luke Callaghan acting as soloist and singing the "O Salutaris." On Sunday, the children who had made their first Communion on Thursday, together with some other children, in all three hundred, took the total abstinence pledge until they were 21 years of age. The Rev. Martin Callaghan administered the pledge and explained its nature to the children.

To call in question God's power to perform a miracle is not blasphemous only, but idiotic.—Jean Jacques Rousseau.