FIVE MINUTE SERMON

Rev. F. Heffner

TWENTY-SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

HUMILITY

"I will open my mouth in parables." (Matt. xiii, 35)

In ancient times it was the custom of wise men to use parables and examples to explain truths so as to make them easily understood by the people. Many eternal truths have been given to us by our Saviour in parables, and today's Gospel contains two such parables. We will select for our consideration, one of these, that of the mustard seed, and inquire as to what we may learn from it.

1. A holy writer says Christ compared the kingdom of heaven to the mustard seed because in order to acquire the virtue which is needed to enter the kingdom of heaven we must possess some of the qualities of the mustard seed. It is the most insignificant of all seeds. If we desire to enter the kingdom of heaven we must possess the virtue of humility. We must be insignificant in our own eyes and not deem ourselves great or important; we must be small before our neighbor, i. e., we must humble ourselves before the world and be satisfied with a lowly place. This virtue is so necessary that no pious deeds will be of any avail if we have not humbled ourselves. Humility procures for us grace, God is well pleased with us, and to the humble is promised a reward in heaven. Therefore, the pious Sirach advises us: "The greater thou art, the more humble thyself in all things, and thou shalt find grace before God" (Ecclus. iii, 20,) and the prophet assures us: "He hath regard to the prayer of the humble; and He hath not despised their petition" (Ps. ci, 18.) We see an example of this in Mary Magdalene. When she humbled herself and washed the feet of our Saviour, He gave her the comforting assurance that her sins were forgiven her. The publican in the Temple is another example. He admitted his sinfulness and in humility and penance begged for grace and mercy and he returned justified from the house of the Lord. The ruler at Capharnaum acknowledged with humility that he was not worthy that the Lord should enter his house and upon his return home he found his servant cured. You see how merciful God is toward the humble. Therefore, St. Gregory says: "He that gathers without humility, he that performs good deeds but is not humble, casts dust to the winds, for his efforts are in vain. For just as the dust is blown away by the wind, so does pride destroy the merits of virtue and good deeds. But just as the waters from the hill flow into the valley below, so all graces flow into an humble heart." Without humility it is impossible to enter the kingdom of heaven. At one time when the disciples came to Jesus and asked: "Who thinkest Thou is the greater in the kingdom of heaven?" He called unto Him a little child, placed him in the midst of them and said: "Amen, I say unto you, unless you be converted, and become as little children, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. xviii, 1-4.) You see, therefore, what abundant fruit this little mustard seed of humility brings forth. It brings forth grace and the blessing of God. It procures the kingdom of heaven for us. Although the vain world may mock and criticize the humble, let us endeavor to acquire this precious virtue, let us strive to keep before us the truth that we are weak and sinful; let us offer up all our good deeds for the greater honor of God.

2. The mustard seed, although small, grows to be a large tree, and this teaches us that goods deeds, no matter how small, may have great results. "There is, that buyeth much for a small price" (Ecclus, xx. 12.) What is this small price for which we may buy much? It is a drink of water, an alms, a little suffering for the love of God. For these small deeds Christ will give us eternal life as a reward. Why, then, are we so negligent in performing small deeds? Such a little seed which grows to bear abundant fruit is, for instance, the attendance at Mass on week-days, the attendance at afternoon and evening services. Another is the curbing of our anger, forgiving our enemies. Another is the restraining of our tongues from idle talk. Others are the alms given to the poor; the offering of our work to God; the frequent receiving of the Sacraments. Many people consider these things of little account. The woman in the Gospel had lost only one groat, yet she swept her house to find it, and having found it called her neighbors to rejoice with her. How anxious we are about a little money, because we know that great loss may arise from small defects., Should we not also, my dear Christians, be just as careful, if not more so, in regard to things eternal?

You see, my dear Christians, what can be learnt from the little mustard seed. Let us take the lessons to heart. Let us humble ourselves in all things and give God alone the honor and praise! Let us in future not neglect small things, as great results may come from them. We may not be able to perform great deeds which call forth the praise of the world, but let us with humility perform our little deeds for the love of God, and our reward shall be great. "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast and unmovable; always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that you labor not in vain in the Lord" (I Cor. xv. 58.) Amen.

TEMPERANCE

WHEN HE WOULD HE CAN'T

What a terrible amount of indifference there is amongst us with regard to drunkenness! A little intoxication is looked upon as a simple thing, a mere weakness; while habitual drunkenness is a terrible thing, to be sure. But we all say:

"We are certainly safe from that."

That brutal, red-faced sot who breaks his wife's heart or destroys her home, we despise, as we say:

"We will never disgrace ourselves as low as that."

We know it well. How do they become such? No man ever became a drunkard intentionally. No man ever takes the glass in his hand and says to himself:

"I have a good reputation now. I have good health, a loving wife, children to climb on my knee and put their loving arms about my neck, but this glass will be the first step to ruin and blast all this happiness. This glass I know will lead to another, and in the end my wife will become a broken-hearted woman, my children will walk the streets in rags and filth, my heart and reputation will be gone; but no matter, here it goes."

No man intends it.

Drunkenness and the whole host of evils that follow in its train come on a family gradually. Warn a man who is drinking a little; tell him what is before him. He will say:

"Do you take me for a fool?"

The worst drunkard lying in the slime of bestial degradation said that. No, it is not the fools that become drunkards. They know a little too much.

"I know myself," says a man. "I can take it or leave it."

The poor drunkard of today who said that long ago unfortunately in every case wound up by taking it. Many a time the man who had said "he could let it alone when he had a mind to," alas! did not have the power.

"Father," said a man the other day. "I'd give my right hand if I could quit it, but I can't."

"I can give it up," is the cry of the young man as he enters the outer circle, "but I won't."

"I would," is the cry of the despairing wretch in the vortex, "but I can't."—Zion's Watchman.

THE MODERN SCHOOL

The following letter is interesting and unfortunately contains more than a grain of truth. It is from the father of a fourteen-year-old girl who is "head of her class" in one of the metropolitan schools. The school building cost half a million dollars and is one of the architectural ornaments of the city. On its educational strength we may judge from the letter. This fond and proud father writes:

"Going to school these days is not like it used to be. My wife is a crackerjack mathematician, fine in geography, knows the poets and literary fellows and is an allround good conversationalist if backed into a corner and comes to a showdown. And when it comes to measuring swords in the three 'R's' or any of the several arts taught in the schools a generation ago, I'm not such little pumpkins myself. This little daughter of mine, however, who stands at the head of her class, is lost, gropes in the dark, when she is forced into a talk on general topics with either me or her mother.

"But what can be expected when nowadays schools open with a game of parchesi, instead of the old fashioned Lord's Prayer, and close with a swim in the tank in the school basement, instead of bounding the States and naming the capitals and the rivers on which they are located? Last night my little girl couldn't tell me five cities in New York States, and said Nevada was still a Territory, but she can make a parfait, do all sorts of tricks with Indian clubs, can float on her back in the water and gets 'E' each month in fancy dancing. As a fox-trotter, I'll back her against the field. Who wrote 'Evangeline,' who shot Lincoln, who succeeded Garfield, when did King Arthur flourish, how to spell separate,—matters of this sort—she is as ignorant as she is of the goings on of the ancient Babylonians."

Some may think that this criticism is exaggerated or unfair, yet it is in line with the findings of the National Educational Association assembled in annual convention. The conclusion reached after exhaustive study of the situation was that the "little red school house" is a failure. Little was found in the grade schools deserving of commendation. It was discovered that less than one-third of the children in the rural districts were able to meet the grades. They were turned out without any idea of how to make a living. The high schools are no better, according to the verdict of the association. They unanimously branded education throughout the United States as "generally bookish, scholastic, abstract and inadequate to meet the practical problems of life." These objections may be difficult to grasp, but the association found them serious. In fact, the whole system was declared to be centuries behind the times.

The teachers were also thoroughly grilled. They are not up to the standard. The vast majority of them are under twenty four years of age and not sufficiently matured to handle the serious problems of a teacher. The only bright phase that the association seemed to find was that the common drinking cup has been done away with and many of the schools are equipped with vacuum cleaners.

The truth is that our schools have become the clinic for fads and fancies. They may give a smattering of culture. The children may talk glibly on Punic wars, Elgin marbles, the binominal theorem and eugenics, but it would be better that they be able to construct a decent English sentence or write an intelligible letter. There may be reason for the public supporting schools to teach the children of all classes those rudiments of knowledge that are necessary for the average man and woman. There is no excuse in justice or public policy to treat our children like diletante and waste the people's money in giving an education which the majority have too much sense to even want.—Catholic Sun.

THE MAGIC OF THE ROSARY

(By P. A. B., in the Catholic News)

During these stirring times we are all urging our soldier friends and relatives to put a scapular and pair of beads in their kit. I should be pleased to see in print an edifying incident which I happened on recently, well worth recording. I have it from the lips of the principal party concerned, who today is an exemplary Catholic and a zealous member of the Holy Name Society right here in New Jersey.

I can well recall the good Father McKenna, O. P., Apostle of the Rosary and Holy Name, at one time saying that "there is something magic in the beads." I know too well by experience the truth of that saying. Years ago, when editing a little magazine, more than once I gave or mailed beads to some non-Catholic subscribers presuming they were members of our Church. In nearly every case it was a happy blunder, for they eventually became Catholics. The same thing occasionally happens on the missions which we conduct throughout the country.

Here is the incident which I now have reference to. I will tell it, as far as my memory goes, in the words of the one who witnessed it.

"Talking of army life, Father," he began, "it is a good thing that you priests urge the boys to take their rosary beads along. It will bring them more than mere luck, as I know too well by my own experience. Before the Spanish war I joined the Church and one of the first things I learned was to carry the beads in my pocket and to recite the Rosary daily, at least before I went to sleep at night.

"On that memorable first day of May, 1898, I was with Admiral Dewey in Manila Bay. Of course, we had narrow escapes and scares galore, but that was all in the day's work.

"But the biggest scare came whilst our transport was plowing her way home across the Pacific. We experienced the first typhoon. I never prayed more fervently than I did those terrible nights. I fear I did not give heed to the other boys' comfort and kept them awake by my loud praying. I was in an upper berth and a non-Catholic pal of mine lay in the berth below mine. After I had gone over those beads several times and felt drowsy I hung the beads on a nail at the side of my berth so that the chain was suspended below, opposite the berth of my army chum.

"Seventeen years passed and I became again a confirmed land-lubber. One day I accidentally met my berth mate of years ago, and he at once gave me an agreeable surprise by saying that he, too, was a member of the Catholic Church. I was curious to know how he came into the Church.

"'I will tell you,' he said. 'Don't you remember how you kept up your praying right over my head? Why partner, after awhile from listening to you I could repeat every word of it. So when I thought you asleep, for you kept me awake by your terrible snoring (I forgive you now), I reached out and took your beads off the nail and went over them many a time. And I have done the same many a time since. Yes, I am a Catholic now like you, thank God, and His Blessed Mother, and I am happy.'"

THREE HEROIC MOTHERS

Now that so many mothers in the land have nobly sent their sons off to the War, perhaps the example left us by historic mothers who have made like sacrifices will help to hearten and comfort in their loneliness these generous mothers of America. What an admirable portrait, for example, Shakespeare draws of the Roman mother in "Coriolanus" when Volumnia says:

"When yet he [Coriolanus] was but tender bodied, and the only son of my womb, when youth with comeliness plucked all gaze his way, when for a day of kings' entreaties a mother should not sell him an hour from her beholding, I considering how honor would become such a person, that it was no better than picture like to hang by the wall, if renown made it not stir, was pleased to let him seek danger where he was like to find fame. To a cruel war I sent him; from whence he returned, his brows bound with oak. I tell thee, daughter, I sprang not more in joy at first hearing he was a man-child, than now in first seeing he had proved himself a man. . . . Hear me profess sincerely: Had I a dozen sons, each in my love alike, and none less dear than thine and my good Marcius, I had rather had eleven die nobly for their country than one voluptuously surfeit out of action."

Nobler still was the conduct of the Machabees' mother who, when her seven sons were being tortured and murdered before her very eyes because they would not violate God's law, kept entreating them so heroically to be steadfast and faithful that she deserved to receive in the inspired pages of Holy Writ such high praises as these:

"Now the mother was to be admired above measure, and worthy to be remembered by good men, who beheld her seven sons slain in the space of one day, and bore it with a good courage for the hope that she had in God: and she bravely exhorted every one of them in her own language, being filled with wisdom and joining a man's heart to a woman's thought."

But noblest of all, and richest, too, in comfort for sorrowing mothers, is Our Blessed Lady, who stood unflinchingly at the foot of the Cross and freely offered up for the ransom of the world her incomparable Son. She made that sacrifice to free from the servitude of sin not only her own nation, but the entire world, and she made it whole heartedly and without reserve. There never lived a mother and son who were dearer to each other than Mary and Jesus, no son ever died a more cruel death or for a holier cause than He, and no mother ever suffered more from the sword of grief than she. Almighty God graciously permitted this in order that Our Lady might be able to sympathize and that sorrowing mothers in ages to come might always find in her heroic example and strong intercession a stay and comfort.

In Volumnia, that high-hearted Roman matron, in the mother of the Machabees, that intrepid defender of her nation's honor, and in Mary, that unselfish lover of human liberty, all the mothers of the land who with tear dimmed eyes have watched their sons march away to the war have patterns of patriotism that are no less inimitable than admirable.—America.

CLEANING UP CORNER NEWS-STANDS

Joyce Kilmer, in the current issue of the Columbiad, writes an article under the above caption. Speaking of magazine criticism he says:

"But there is a danger less obvious but perhaps greater than that of the regular gutter magazines, than the magazines that announce on their covers the disgusting nature of the wares to be found within. And that danger is the occasional presence of immortal fiction and verse, and articles attacking morality and religion, in the so-called 'high-class' magazine. When you pick up a magazine with an honored name and a noble tradition, and find in it a story by a famous writer in praise of marital infidelity, or an article in which the Church or the home is held up to scorn as a decadent institution—then you are in the presence of an evil force more pernicious than the magazine which has a suggestive name and the picture of a half nude woman on its cover.

"To deal with such matters should be the function of the Catholic critic of the magazines. When a magazine that has a good reputation prints an article in which some accomplished writer advocates free love or turns his scorn on law and religion, or a story in which Christianity and morality are attacked, then trained critics writing for our Catholic press should warn their readers that this particular issue of the magazine is one to avoid. This sort of criticism would eventually have a beneficial effect on the magazines criticized, and it would at once prevent Catholic readers from innocently spending their money for attacks on the things most dear to them.

"But until this department of magazine criticism is organized there remain weapons available to every one—a stamp, paper and envelope, pen and ink. When one of the high-class' magazines (of course it would do no good to write to the gutter magazine) prints a story or an article or a poem that should never have been printed, write to the editor and tell him so! He will pay attention to you, for it is on you that he depends for his bread and butter. When Mr. W. L. George repeated in The Atlantic Monthly an old lie against the Church, Dr. Conde B. Pallen wrote to the editor, and retraction and apology were forthcoming. But the editor would remember the lesson longer if a hundred readers had written to him. If you want the magazines to keep their pages free of articles on anarchism, feminism, birth control and the other immoral fads of the day, and from fiction that is an insult to your sense of decency, complain to the editor whenever you have just cause for complaint. There are many cases in which good results would be obtained by spontaneous individual action."

SEVEN YEARS TORTURE

Nothing Helped Him Until He Took "FRUIT-A-TIVES"

ALBERT VARNER

Buckingham, Que., May 3rd, 1915.

For seven years, I suffered terribly from Severe *Headaches and Indigestion*. I had belching gas from the stomach, bitter stuff would come up into my mouth after eating, while at times I had nausea and vomiting, and had chronic Constipation. I went to several doctors and wrote to a specialist in Boston but without benefit. I tried many remedies but nothing did me good. *Finally, a friend advised* "Fruit-a-tives". I took this grand fruit medicine and it made me well. I am grateful to "Fruit-a-tives", and to everyone who has miserable health with Constipation and Indigestion and Bad Stomach, I say take "Fruit-a-tives", and you will get well".

ALBERT VARNER.

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A PRACTICE TO BE ENCOURAGED

Why not carry the beautiful devotion of the family Rosary throughout the winter for the benefit of the Poor Souls in Purgatory or for the Holy Father's Intention, the restoration of peace among nations? The practice will surely bring a blessing on the home and on those who join in the prayers.

"It is not affirming too much," said Pope Leo XIII. "to hold that ignorance and error will not banish faith from the place or home or nation where the practice of the Rosary is maintained."

A concrete example of the truth of this statement is afforded by a writer in the current American Ecclesiastical Review, who says of Ireland's devotion to the Rosary:

"There is no history that can adequately recount or describe the devotion of the Irish people to the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. In the days of the worst persecution of Ireland, when Mass was infrequent or impossible, the Rosary became a substitute in the Irish home for the August Sacrifice.

"How much the prayer of the Rosary contributed to preserve Ireland's faith only eternity will reveal. Meditation on the glories of the Risen Master and on the life of His Blessed Mother gave the Irish courage to suffer persecution and inspired in them the hope of receiving an eternal reward for all the sufferings endured for Christ and His Faith."

Extraordinary blessings have been bestowed by Almighty God on the Church in the United States, but, says this writer, the enemies of religion are by no means inactive. There are lurking dangers, to which the Holy See recently called attention—the attack on the home by divorce, lack of respect for authority, and the refusal to acknowledge that all true authority is from God.

The revival of the family recitation of the beads will go far towards increasing respect for the authority of home and union among the members. What benefits the home, benefits the nation. Thus the prayers of the people are powerful with God for the preservation of the country.

This advocate of the Rosary urges priests to preach upon the beautiful practise, and he exhorts the religious teachers in the parish schools to enlist the children under their care in spreading the devotion. Make them "little apostles of the Rosary," bringing about the introduction and faithful recitation of the Rosary in homes where it may not have been said before. Other fruitful means of inculcating devotion to the Rosary are the cooperation of pious parents and of prefects of sodalities.

"All these are forces which, cooperating for the same end, can make the family recitation world-wide, thereby calling down many blessings from od on the homes of our country. Their work will surely do much to reestablish the idea that the home is not merely a place for sleeping and eating and drinking, but a sacred institution established by God."—Sacred Heart Review.

In the secular affairs in our lives few of us lack determination and perseverance. Opposition difficulties serve only to spur us on to greater effort. Mistakes and disappointments we look upon as mere incidents met with on the way to find success. Once we set out to obtain an object we labor untiringly to achieve it. This same diligence and perseverance in cultivating virtue is all that is required to make our lives noble and pleasing to Almighty God. ught we not willingly make this effort to win the crown of eternal glory?

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