

FIVE MINUTE SERMON

BY THE REV. F. P. HICKEY, O.S.B.

THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT

THE CHARACTER OF THE MESSIAS
 "There hath stood One in the midst of you,
 whom you know not." (John 1:23.)

The prophets had foretold and partially described the Messiah that was to come. But was it not most appropriate that the most explicit testimony of Him and revelation of His character should be given us by and through means of the Baptist? Therefore we find in Advent that St. John is brought before us in the gospels. His preaching, his works had led men to think that he himself was perhaps the Messiah. But "he confessed I am not the Christ," to the priests and levites, who had been sent to question him. And the next day," says the gospel, "John saw Jesus coming to him and He said: 'Behold the Lamb of God, behold Him who taketh away the sins of the world.'" And John gave testimony, saying: "I saw the Spirit coming down as a dove from heaven, and He remained upon Him. . . . And I saw and gave testimony that this is the Son of God." (John 1:33.)

Moreover, the Baptist, later on, when cast into prison by Herod, sent two of his disciples to our Lord, and by his questions causes our Blessed Lord to reveal Himself openly to us—the character and description of our divine Lord given us by Himself! What excuse can man have not to know Him; and knowing Him, not to love Him and follow Him? John's disciples gave his message, "Art Thou He that art to come, or look we for another?" And Jesus making answer, said to them: Go and relate to John what you have heard and seen. The blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead rise again, the poor have the gospel preached to them. And blessed is he that shall not be scandalized in Me." (Matt. xi. 3.)

Thus the Baptist drew from Christ the description of the character by which He would be known by man. The God of Truth made Man gave testimony of Himself.

How blessed are we, preparing to celebrate the anniversary of the coming of that divine Redeemer, to look upon Him portrayed so clearly by His own Blessed Self! As in those days, so now, there are countless ones that need Him. And He comes to us with the same benevolence, the same readiness, the same power to do us good. Have we not ourselves been amongst the crowds, and have we not ourselves felt the divine touch of His mercy? Perhaps we were blind, and He opened our eyes to the Faith! We may have been lying helpless on the road to heaven, powerless to proceed, and the lame have been made to walk. Lepers in sin, more than once—yes, many a time—have been cleansed and forgiven. Alas! perhaps for years, our souls, dead to God through sinful habits, have been raised to life again by His grace. And our hard, laborious lives have been sweetened and filled with hope of eternal joy in heaven, because we poor have had the gospel preached to us.

It is well for us to realize this merciful character of the Saviour. It was not always thus. Formerly, under the old Law, the Almighty was the God of justice. His wrath flamed out; His vengeance overtook the wicked. But now with the coming of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, how different! And this is why the Baptist gave testimony of Him and our Lord revealed Himself, so that no one could mistake the object of His coming, and no one feel that he was too utter an outcast not to be forgiven.

Then why did the Redeemer thus come, filled with compassion, ready and longing to befriend and forgive? Becoming Man Himself, He wished to be one with us, to dwell amongst us, to share our sorrows, to take upon Himself our sins and miseries; for He remembered that we were but the dust of the earth—poor, weak, and helpless creatures. He had in His mercy created us for Himself, and He came to restore us, to re-establish us, that we might again might be "the sons of God and heirs with Christ." He is the Saviour, who "loves the souls of men."

And again, He came pitying us, ready to help us, for He knew the enemies that would plot our ruin. He could not leave us helpless amidst such perils. It was through spite and hatred against Himself that the devil would never cease from trying to work our ruin. The envy of the evil one is our constant danger. Envy because the Redeemer came to raise us up and fit us for the thrones left empty by the fallen angels. To know that we are meant through the Redemption of Christ to reign in glory, whilst the fallen spirits pine in the abyss of misery, is the cause of the enmity, which can never cease, between the devils and the souls of men.

The Blessed Redeemer came to do all that even an Almighty and all-loving God could do to save poor mankind from eternal death. He came "to save His people from their sins." Will it not, then, be all our own sad, miserable fault if the evil one prevails against us? Shall we not, then, welcome Him at this holy time, and offer Him loyalty and loving obedience? Trust in His goodness, for He came "to seek and to save that which was lost."

COPTIC MANUSCRIPTS

THE POPE, PIERPONT MORGAN AND PROF. HYVERNAT

By Mgr. Enrico Pucci

At the conclusion of a private audience given by His Holiness to Mr. Pierpont Morgan and Professor Henry Hyvernat of the Catholic University of America, at which the American financier presented to Pope Pius the first volume of the famous Coptic manuscripts, I had a long interview with the Very Rev. Dr. Hyvernat in which he discussed the finding of the manuscripts and the work done by the Morgans, father and son, in publishing them in a photographic edition.

"The discovery of the manuscripts was made some twelve years ago," said Dr. Hyvernat. "Some Arabs of Upper Egypt, while sifting the sand in search of lime products which they use as fertilizer, came across a small case. On opening it they found a quantity of objects arranged in rows which they took for bricks. On examination these turned out to be old parchment volumes. So ignorant were the Arabs of the value of these volumes that they were on the point of throwing them away when on second thought, they decided to try to sell them to some of the many foreigners who scour Egypt in search of objects of antiquity. And in fact the manuscripts were bought by a merchant and taken by him to Paris. He had no idea of the value of his purchase."

"At that time I was passing through the French capital on my way from Rome to London, and the owners of the manuscripts desired to have my opinion as to their worth. It was only after much urging that I consented to examine them, for I did not imagine that they were of any great scientific value. But when at last I went to inspect them, I had scarcely looked at them, when I understood their unusual worth."

"I gave the owners a brief statement as to the origin, the contents and the value of the magnificent collection, and the volumes were offered for sale to J. Pierpont Morgan for his library. The generous American relying on my opinion bought them, becoming thus a true patron of science, because had he not made the purchase, the volumes would have been put up to auction and dispersed through the world."

HELP GIVEN BY VATICAN LIBRARY

Mr. Morgan, having bought the manuscripts, consulted Prof. Hyvernat as to the best use he could make of them. The Professor again examined the collection and saw that the volumes were in need of repair. It was not easy to find the proper person to undertake a work requiring skillful and accurate handling. Prof. Hyvernat thought of the Vatican Library which possesses a famous department devoted to the restoration of manuscripts and equally famous for the perfection of its methods and their results. He did not communicate his plans to Mr. Morgan but merely asked for time to reflect on what was to be done. Then he came to Rome to see Father Ehrle, at that time Prefect of the Vatican Library to whom he spoke about the manuscripts, inquiring if Father Ehrle would undertake their restoration. Father Ehrle answered that he could do nothing without asking the Librarian, Cardinal Rampolla, and the Secretary of State, Cardinal Merry del Val. He added, however, that, should the manuscripts prove to be of great scientific importance, not only would no objection be raised, but that the merit of contributing to an undertaking of such extreme historical and scientific interest would be considered a great satisfaction and honor.

Permission having been given, Dr. Hyvernat returned to America and without mentioning the Vatican Library, told Mr. Morgan that if he would entrust him with the manuscripts he would find in Europe the best method of restoring them. On arriving in Rome with his precious possession he hastened to show it to Father Ehrle who immediately perceived the value of the manuscripts, stating that it would be a great pity if the Vatican Library did not take part in so important a work. All moreover were full of enthusiasm, Cardinal Rampolla, Cardinal Merry del Val, and the most enthusiastic was Monsignor Achille Ratti, (now Pius XI.) who was not yet Prefect of the Vatican Library, but came, now and then, from Milan, to help Father Ehrle.

PIUS X. GAVE HIS FULL CONSENT AND APPROVAL

Mr. Morgan's satisfaction increased and he said that he was very grateful to know that the Holy See felt the same spirit of love for science and antiquity which had prompted him to buy the manuscripts. So the work began.

COPIES FOR WORLD SCHOLARS

Mr. Pierpont Morgan was not satisfied with having acquired the manuscripts for the sake of science, he also wished to defray the necessary expense of restoring them and of a photographic edition of a limited number of copies to be placed at the disposal of the foremost educational institutions of the world. The Vatican Library offered for this work and for the preparation of the edition, all its technical and scientific advantages with no

compensation beyond what was strictly necessary to cover actual cost. Dr. Hyvernat undertook the direction of restoring and editing the manuscripts, also without compensation, except reimbursement for outlay for materials. Mr. Morgan had to ask the Catholic University of Washington to grant the necessary leave to Dr. Hyvernat and this was accorded willingly and with enthusiasm, the University being flattered by the opportunity to associate its name with such an admirable undertaking.

THE WORK OF RESTORATION

In July, 1912, on the day when the manuscripts were handed in at the Vatican, the Prefect of the Library, Father Ehrle and his collaborator, Monsignor Achille Ratti received them. The latter who in his scientific work has always given particular care to the repairing of ancient manuscripts, had for this purpose, at Milan, his own laboratory. He followed, therefore, with close attention, every step taken in the delicate restoration of the precious Coptic volumes entrusted by Dr. Hyvernat to the Vatican Institute. Although Mons. Ratti was unacquainted with the Coptic language, he desired to have minute information from Dr. Hyvernat concerning the period and historical reconstruction of the manuscripts. His interest grew, when, soon after, he succeeded Father Ehrle as Director of the Library and came to stay at the Vatican.

War interrupted the work, and in July, 1914, on the eve of the declaration of the War, Dr. Hyvernat returned to the United States, nor could he come to Europe until November, 1919. During his absence of five years, the work was suspended. It was resumed toward the end of 1919 but proved more difficult on account of post-war conditions of industry and labor. The enormous rise in prices added to the difficulties, for while payments in American money gave the advantage of exchange, the cost of material is seven times more than it was during the pre-war period.

Nevertheless, with God's help and the patient work of Prof. Hyvernat, the undertaking has been completed with the most exquisitely perfect results.

WHERE MANUSCRIPTS CAME FROM

The manuscripts, of which there are 56, were parts of the Library of the Monastery of St. Michael Archangel. The locality where they were found is near the small hamlet Hamali, in the Fayoum province. In all probability the monks, fearing an Arab incursion, abandoned the Monastery with the intention of returning to it later. They collected and placed their more valuable manuscripts in a case and buried it in the sands, carrying away only the more ordinary books, such as Breviaries and Missals, of which none were found in the case which contained inkstands and pens, an evident proof that the monks wanted to return to their monastery. Their intention was thwarted as the monastery was completely destroyed so that no trace of it remains. All this happened in the tenth century because the dated manuscripts of the Morgan collection bear the date of the ninth century, while those not dated appear more ancient.

Ten manuscripts contain portions of the Sacred Scriptures, others, lives of Saints, homilies, etc. They are all written upon parchment and their bindings are valuable, both as regards art and rarity. The parchment sheets have been repaired one by one, then bound in volumes as corresponding to the original ones, but minus the ancient covers which have been set apart as objects of artistic and historical importance.

The edition is in 5 volumes, the first 56 corresponding to the 56 manuscripts and the last containing the general index. Each volume has of course its own index.

Each page is photographed exactly the size of the original, therefore the manuscripts are not of the same dimension, but are like the original. These photographed pages number altogether 7,421. There are only twelve copies which are not the photographic reproduction of the photographs, as usually happens, but are all and singly original manuscripts, so that for reading and consulting purposes, they show no difference from the originals.

Each volume bears as frontispiece the following inscription: "Bibliotheca Pierpont Morgan—Codices Coptici—photographice expressi."

"Membranarum reficiendis curaverunt Praesides Bibliothecae Vaticanae ademptibus Summis Pontificibus Pius X., Benedicto XV., Pio XI. Codices ordinavit, tabulas omnes photographicas membranarum contulit, titulos adposuit, indices digessit Henricus Hyvernat, S. Theologiae doctor, in Universitate Catholica Americae litterarum orientalium antecessor."

This is the translation of the above:

"Coptic manuscripts of the Library of Pierpont Morgan photographically reproduced."

"The Prefects of the Vatican Library directed the restoring of the pages, with the consent of the Supreme Pontiffs, Pius X., Benedict XV., Pius XI."

"Henry Hyvernat, D. D., Professor of Oriental Letters in the Catholic University of America, arranged the manuscripts, compared all the photographic plates with the parchments, wrote the titles and compiled the indexes."

The first copy of this magnificent edition which marks an epoch in the history of Oriental literature, rearranged by express desire of Pierpont Morgan senior and faithfully executed by his son, has been offered as a gift to the Holy Father. The second will be given to the Library of the Catholic University of America. The other copies will be offered as a gift to the principal libraries of the world.

THE PAPAL AUDIENCE

John Pierpont Morgan and Henry Hyvernat were received by His Holiness on Thursday morning, October 26, at 11 o'clock.

Upon the big table in the private Library of His Holiness was placed the first volume of the copy of the manuscripts presented to the Pope, the first volume only, because the others were yet to be bound. The binding is in tan leather and linen of the same color with simple decorations and gift inscription on the back of the volumes. The Papal Coat of Arms, also in gold, is printed on the outside front cover and there is another white silk cover better to protect the volume.

Pius XI greeted his two visitors with extreme cordiality—Prof. Hyvernat told me: "We found him as kind, as simple, as if he were merely the Vatican Librarian, with his usual perfect calmness of manner, as I had known him, and as when I conversed so often with him during his daily work."

The audience lasted half an hour and was as interesting as could be one in which a generous donor and an illustrious scientist were face to face with a Pope who was also a scientist universally known, who had spent all his life in literary and historical pursuits, to honor which the two callers offered the first fruit of a great undertaking.

After Pius XI. had thanked Mr. Morgan for the gift of the unique edition, with which the names of the Vatican Library and of the Pope would always be linked, His Holiness examined the volume in detail, recalling circumstances of the restoration which he had witnessed while attached to the Vatican Library and discussing technicalities of the manner of restoring and preserving manuscripts. Thus passed a memorable half hour which the Holy Father would have prolonged had not the anterooms and halls been full of people waiting for audiences. Pius XI. parted with the welcome callers with great cordiality, giving to Pierpont Morgan the gold medal of the first year of his Pontificate and two silver ones to Professor Hyvernat.

POPE APPROVES LATIN IN SCHOOLS

Paris, Nov. 17.—The "Société d'Education, an association composed of prominent Catholics concerned with the development of Christian education, has received from Cardinal Gasparri a letter commending the members for their support of the study of Latin in the French lycées. The Cardinal says: "The Holy Father is pleased to congratulate you upon your work to maintain and to give greater importance to the place of Latin in Secondary Education. Latin is the still living language of the Church and of Catholic tradition and it is likewise the study which contributes especially to give young men a deep and serious general education."

NEW FRENCH REVIEW FOR BOYS

The question of the Catholic press has been one of the chief concerns of French Catholics who, during the past thirty years, have made an effort which, although not always crowned with the success it deserved, has nevertheless been absolutely remarkable. Despite the number of daily and weekly papers, and of popular journals and illustrated reviews, there has been a great gap in the field of the Catholic press.

Up to the present there has been no paper for boys of twelve to sixteen years of age. This need has now been filled by the French Association of Catholic youth which has taken upon itself the publication of a weekly paper, to be known as the Revue de Jeune Français.

Today Eddy's are selling more matches than ever because they are the best in the world!

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with an enthusiasm which promises well for its future success.

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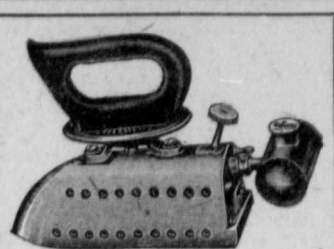


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