

PASTORAL LETTER AND MANDEMENT OF MGR. PAUL BRUCHESI, ARCHBISHOP OF MONTREAL,

Inaugurating a Crusade Against Intemperance

PAUL BRUCHESI, by the Grace of God, and of the Apostolic See, Archbishop of Montreal.

To the secular and regular clergy, to the religious communities and to all the faithful of our Diocese, greeting, peace and blessing in Our Lord Jesus Christ.

Dear Beloved Brethren, For a long time the problem of alcoholism has been deservedly preoccupying the minds of moralists, economists and legislators.

Nevertheless, every year, in the different countries of the world, appalling statistics show the progress of that terrible plague, and the necessity of more and more energetic resistance against its invasion.

As we have already often stated in our pastoral visits, it is time theoretical statements and unfruitful lamentations should be left aside.

The moment has come for all to enter the path of practical realization.

All initiatives must group together and form a holy league: private initiatives and public initiatives, civil, political and religious initiatives for, without any intention to establish a comparison between the Province of Quebec and the other provinces of Canada, between the Canadian Confederation and the other States of America or of Europe, it is an undeniable fact that we are suffering from the evil of alcoholism. That malady has already attacked our vital sources, and it threatens to deeply vitiate them. The ravages which it makes among our people are more harmful and greater than the so dreaded ravages of phthisis, of which it is, anyhow, the sinister purveyor.

And we beg you to remark, dear beloved brethren, that we do not solely refer to the vice of drunkenness carried to its extreme excesses, but to that drunkenness which deprives man of the use of his reason and sometimes throws him on the pavement like a brute. Oh! that kind of intemperance has a special ugliness of its own, it is so vulgar of its nature that the great majority keep away from it with disgust. It carries in its proximate and immediate consequences such shameful blamish, that it is held in abhorrence. It may be said that it constitutes, even here below and without delay, its own punishment, and its own check, especially among the higher classes of society.

In a general manner, the evil to which we refer has not that hideous and brutal aspect. Its form is rather latent, its effects are generally slow to appear. But it is none the less pernicious, and no social sphere is closed against it.

Properly speaking, alcoholism does not consist in an act of intemperance nor even in several acts of intemperance separated one from the other by pretty long intervals. There is evidently in this a more or less serious disorder, a more or less criminal fault, a disorder and a fault, that may lead to formal alcoholism, but which do not yet constitute it. Alcoholism is a condition, a morbid condition, which is acquired either by often repeated sobriety, or by the habitual use of strong liquors, even if taken in small quantity each time.

It is a gradual poisoning. In a word, it is chronic intemperance, with or without sobriety.

According to the data of medical science, no poisoning is more disastrous. It attacks the whole organs of the human body, especially the brain, the kidneys, and lungs, the heart, the liver and the stomach. It lessens the strength; it troubles, revolutionizes and paralyzes all the faculties. It calls forth any number of diseases, and complicates them all in a singular manner. When it does not render them incurable, it often leads to insanity, or to suicide, and always leads more rapidly to decrepitude and to death.

You consider no doubt in your minds, beloved brethren, that the picture of the physical ravages of

intemperance is very sombre. So it is. But do not conclude that it is overdrawn or exaggerated. All those facts could be signed by some famous medical authority. They have been borrowed with the most scrupulous honesty from the best writings of which the medical profession, now so methodical in its investigations and so conscientious in its statements, can boast.

Besides, nothing is easier than to verify its correctness. It matters little whether your personal experience be long or short, or whether your field of observation be large or small. Do not your recollections unfortunately bring to your mind too many instances of ruin caused by alcohol? Have you not seen powerfully built bodies waste away, the choicest intellects get out of balance, strong wills collapse, hearts naturally tender and kind get so perverted and hardened as to become cruel? In most cases, were not those catastrophes a manifestation of the work of the alcoholic poison?

Still, if the sad effects of intemperance reached only the individual who renders himself guilty thereof, the habitual drinker? But such is not the case. Alcoholism has terrible repercussions. Here one is unwillingly brought to think of the unavoidable and so painful consequences of the sin of our first parents on the whole of human nature. Oh! how often have you not wept over that initial vice, over that corruption and those disordinate concupiscences deposited within us by the sin of Adam and Eve?

The person addicted to alcohol does not act otherwise. Christian parents and young men addicted to drink, you poison the children to be born from you. You will answer before God for all the evil which you cause them. Does not your crime, in certain respects, resemble the fault committed in the garden of Eden? Your sons and your daughters were redeemed in the blood of Christ. Is it not, in some way, that blood which you profane? It is the price thereof, anyhow, which you disregard and contemn.

Can any one conceive more complete aberration? Thus to compromise the future of one's own children, their health, their honor and even their eternal salvation, rather than give up a miserable habit, rather than deprive one's self of a passing satisfaction? Prefer to drink drop by drop one's own ruin and that of one's family, rather than practise the rules of Christian sobriety, rather than slightly mortify one's self every day?

If, at least, one could deny the laws of inheritance, if one could fail to see and understand the lessons of experience. Vain efforts! Atavism exists, experiments are no longer needed. Nobody now contests the ravages of alcoholism in the family, and as a rigorous consequence its deleterious effects on society and on the race.

The children of drinkers are down-fallen beings. With life they receive in their organs the germs of disease and of death. A terrible thing to say, before being born they have been poisoned by their father. Of course, the agent of degeneracy and of destruction which circulates in the veins of those poor children, is more or less active according to the degree of intemperance of the parents; but it is there, it does its murderous work. What a subject for reflection, dear beloved brethren, what a subject for meditation! With what gloomy remorse such a thought must torture the conscience of a man addicted to alcohol? Is there a more odious crime and one more against nature?

What generations will those sickly, infirm, anomalous, physically and mentally diseased beings produce in their turn, unless an exceptional grace gives them the courage to reach?

For the honor of our race and of our country, we must, dear brethren, be vigilant in the teaching of Our

er exhaust within ourselves the sources of life, let us no longer contaminate them with the habit of alcohol. Let us avoid all excesses in the use of liquors. The sacrifice, if sacrifice there be, is worth while a thousand times.

Yet, as terrible as they are, the physical ravages are the least among those produced by alcoholism. Its consequences appear much more disastrous when considered in a moral sense.

All vices lower and degrade man, they soil and disgrace his existence: often they blench his honor and the name of his family, they always debase his dignity. None of them, it strikes us, is viler than intemperance. That vice carries with it such humiliating ugliness that it sometimes renders its victims insufferable to themselves, and contemptible in the eyes of their fellow-beings.

We will not go any further with that picture. You are familiar with it. Preachers have more than once placed it before your eyes in retreats and missions.

Let us simply recall to your mind that alcoholism, as well as obesity and drunkenness in the ordinary sense of the word, is by its nature a very active ferment of bad instincts, of vile passions, of impure lust, of criminal suggestions. Well! what is there to wonder at that a drinker, even if he never got intoxicated, should fall an easy prey to so many plagues? Is it not well known that the habitual use of alcohol disturbs the normal working of our organs, dims the intellect, weakens the will and deadens the moral sense. The union between soul and body is too close, too intimate to prevent those two portions of our being from having reciprocal influence one upon the other, and that is one of the main reasons of Christian mortification.

When not properly regulated and when satiated, the lusts of the flesh rebel against the soul and reduce it to slavery. The saints were well aware of this phenomenon, and that is the reason why they subdued their body and unceasingly preached penance, self-denial, sobriety in all things.

There would be no end to it, dear beloved brethren, if we undertook to describe all the evils produced by alcoholism. Jointly with the documents furnished by medical men and moralists, we would bring up the statistics prepared by economists and magistrates.

Those figures would be sinisterly eloquent. The registers of insane asylums, of prisons and of penitentiaries have been patiently gone over, the records of civil and criminal courts have been honestly studied. Well! the mind is literally stupefied when examining the results of such investigations. The proportion of judicial sentences and sequestrations brought on by the abuse of liquor is such that, a disappearance of said abuse occurring, two thirds of the courts would no longer work, for want of clients, and most of the prisons and asylums would be completely deprived of their inmates, as shown by most correct calculations.

Everywhere in our dear country, as in other lands, would come a holy regeneration, a recrudescence of physical health and of intellectual and moral vigor, the almost uninterrupted reign of peace, of concord, of honesty and of charity.

Political economists have asserted that, with temperance, we would also see great public and private prosperity flourish on the whole surface of the globe. Pauperism would be a thing of the past. To save would become an honor, and old age would be provided with shelter, clothing and food. Stoppage of work would hardly exist. Children would attend school more assiduously, instead of fading away in the atmosphere of factories. Fathers of family and young men being no longer enticed by clubs or saloons, would gladly hasten to reach the home in the evening, and mothers and maidens would greet them with a smile or kind word.

XIII. repeated by Pius X., the great social question would be solved. A lovely picture, pleasant promises, some will say perhaps—but idle fancies of utopists and dreams of theorists.

Not at all. Let the drinking cease, let alcoholism be banished, and these promises will soon become realities.

The economists have not simply made assertions, they have also furnished unquestionable proof of the correctness of such assertions. Intemperance collects from both the wealthy and the poorer classes fantastic amounts. Would one believe it? The alcohol consumed in our cities and country districts costs more than both meat and bread combined. Add now to this foolish squandering of millions, the enormous amount of salaries lost each year by drinkers, the sums of money which alcoholism ingulfs in insane asylums, prisons, hospitals, doctors' offices and drug stores. To this tremendous heap of millions, add again so many other millions shamefully eaten up, by all those vices to which alcoholism fatally leads, and calculate whether it is exaggeration to state, with the statisticians, that three fourths of the poor are or become so through their own intemperance or that of others.

Then go on with another operation. Place all those lost or squandered millions in active service, distribute them in salaries. Is it not evident that you thereby at once restore new and more active life to trade and industry; you introduce comfort and happiness in the homes; you furnish beneficial employment to both mental and manual energy. The health of the body is restored, the health of the soul is restored; and as a blessing for both the holy law of labor which is respected, and for sobriety which is observed, comes forth the prosperity which you had some hesitation to expect.

The word of God does not pass away, dear beloved brethren. Fulfill the maxims of the gospel, be sober, be mortified, do not squander his gifts, never allow the poison of alcohol to destroy or weaken the precious faculties which he has placed within you, do not defile that heavenly image of Himself which beams on your forehead, and you will ever be blessed. You will stand in need of nothing. He has promised it to you: serve him, keep his commandments, all the rest shall be added unto you.

We will not insist on the developments that those truths and those exhortations admit of. Both will be presented to you in your respective parishes by missionaries who will act as our mouth-pieces. Hear their preaching with an attentive mind and a docile heart. They will be for you the envoys of the Lord. It is in the name of your very best interests that they will beseech you to be temperate and even to use your efforts and your influence to stop the surge of alcoholism, which spreads everywhere physical, intellectual and moral ruin. Following the example of our venerable predecessor, Bishop Bourget, our watchword will be to found temperance societies in every locality, without exception. Those local societies will form together a holy league, endowed with precious indulgences. The cross, that black and bare wooden cross, which is still found in the old families, and which, in its truly evangelical poverty and austerity, preaches mortification with such persuasion, that cross where Christ was offered vinegar and gall to drink, for the remission of our sins, such will be the new rallying sign of those Christians who will choose to enlist in the holy league against intemperance.

Please God that this cross may occupy a place of honor in every Catholic home! It is a great battle that we are about to undertake, with one consent, dear beloved brethren, a pitched battle against a terrible enemy supported by the infernal regions; we need the weapons of the cross. But, with it and through it, we shall conquer. In hoc signo vinces. Let every man come and stand close to that divine standard: fathers of families, young men, children, all Christians, irrespective of age, fortune, calling or social position. The great point is to save the souls; but the safety of the family, of society and of the nation is also concerned.

For those reasons we make an appeal to all persons of good will, and more especially to the active and

persevering support of the constituted authorities.

In such a work of moralizing and preserving the masses, those authorities can do much, provided they have a sincere will.

The Church will do her part, the best and most efficient part, by using the supernatural teachings, remedies and assistance which she has received from heaven and which it is her mission to dispense to men.

Private initiative will display its zeal in a number of instances, either by example, apostleship, lectures on the dangers of alcoholism, anti-alcoholic teaching in the schools or elsewhere. In this latter connection, we deem it advisable to recommend the excellent manual of Rev. Canon Sylvain. That small pamphlet deserves the many praises given it, and the lessons contained therein are within the reach of all intellects.

The civil authorities know what measures to adopt in order to fight that plague and avert its terrible results. Their dispositions are known to us, they will not hesitate in the face of duty. Limitations in the number of hotels, restaurants, saloons and all retail liquor shops; sufficiently high taxes on such establishments, license taxes and sale taxes; rules and regulations calculated to maintain therein order and morals; vigilant and active control over the daily observance of such rules; efficient repression of all transgressions, especially the sale of spirituous liquors on Sundays and to minors; and, above all, absolute refusal of a license to persons not having a perfect reputation of respectability and honesty; such are, dear beloved brethren, the principal preventive and repressive measures which it would be desirable to see in force everywhere, in the country municipalities as well as in the cities. They already exist, to a large extent at least, in our laws.

But it strikes us that they are not always observed, that they are not even always applied. That is a great misfortune for society, and we entreat you all to repress those offences every time you can do so. First of all, give charitable warnings, and if need be, complain to the authorities. Your energy and constancy will finally triumph. The public authorities are fully interested to see that they are supported, for, we repeat it, they have at heart that work of purifying. But, dear beloved brethren, a thinker has said with much appropriateness: "Legal as well as tax remedies will remain powerless to stop the evil of intemperance and the plague of alcoholism, if they are not supported by moral and religious remedies. It is not sufficient that the drinker should find it more difficult to satisfy his passion; he will overcome such obstacles, and he will deprive himself of everything rather than give up drinking. He must be brought on to have a desire to amend."

We will close with this and sum up. The will, therefore, is what must be acted upon first of all. How can this be done? By the two first means which we have mentioned: consideration of the disastrous effects of alcoholism in the individual, consideration of its disastrous effects in the family and in society. But we will reach that end much more surely by means of considerations of a religious nature, the teaching of the truths of the gospel, the awakening of Christian feeling, the preaching of penance and mortification, the stimulant of good example, so many things which the temperance missions and the holy league against alcoholism are going to permanently establish in each parish of our diocese.

May the Immaculate Virgin Mary grant her all powerful protection to those missions and to that holy league, which we place under the guardianship of the regenerating cross of her divine Son!

After invoking the holy name of God and consulting with our Venerable Brethren, the canons of our Cathedral, we have decided upon the following regulations:

1. The clergy shall be the first to set an example of the temperance which they must preach. Consequently, in the presbyteries and religious communities, on the occasion of pastoral visits, of gatherings for retreats and missions, of visits from priests or laymen, before or after meals, no alcoholic liquors shall be taken.

2. We request all families to do the same thing; to entirely give up the deplorable habit of offering and of taking spirituous liquors such as brandy, gin, rum, whiskey, etc., on the occasion of gatherings, soirees, dinners, visits, and especially the visits and festivities of New Year's Day. Let all kinds of alcohol disappear from our homes; let us use it only in cases of necessity and upon the doctor's order. The pastors will not fail to refer to that subject when giving advice to their parishioners.

3. We implore young men and fathers of family not to enter saloons and bar rooms except for serious reasons; not to drink there intoxicating liquors, and especially to give up the, alas! too common practice of "treating." We would feel happy to see all honest men league together against that social disorder which brings so many evils both to the family and to individuals. We particularly entreat the citizens who form the leading classes and the members of the liberal professions to preach by their example in this respect.

4. We request the priests, the principals of colleges and teachers in general to often refer to intemperance, in the classrooms, and to adopt all possible means to inspire the pupils with horror for that vice.

5. We order that in all parishes work be commenced at once to establish temperance leagues or societies: 1, among the children from the year of their first communion up to the age of eighteen years; 2, among young men; 3, among the heads of families. Saint John the Baptist shall be the patron of those leagues, the members of which must pledge themselves not to use spirituous liquors, except in cases of sickness and of real need. Those societies already exist in some parishes and do the greatest amount of good. Their rules and regulations, as well as the spiritual favors secured for them, will be made known in the near future. We simply mention for the present what is most essential and what should call for the efforts and zeal of all, of the people as well as of the clergy.

6. We particularly entrust the preaching of temperance to the Reverend Franciscan Fathers whom we hereby appoint apostles of that great work in our diocese. The pastors will invite them to come and preach to their parishioners at such dates as will seem to them most favorable, but will not wait until they come to establish the societies we have referred to. Each pastor must commence to establish these societies without delay, by making an appeal to the good will of his parishioners. They may for this purpose take advantage of the meetings of the League of the Sacred Heart, and especially of the retreats and missions.

We specially and urgently request the greatest zeal in attending to the children and young men, upon whom we must rely to form the sober generation of the future.

7. It is also our will that those temperance societies be founded in our colleges and our University. The students of those important institutions are, they know it, the subject of our greatest solicitude and our deepest affection. It is our ardent desire that they may become one day men of character and of principles, men of science and of virtue, for the glory of the Church and of their country. They will become all this in as much only as they are really temperate. Let them call to mind the number of fine talents prematurely destroyed by the poison of alcohol. We do not wish them to have such a sad fate, and that is the reason why we are so anxious to see sobriety and temperance honored in our colleges and in our University.

The present pastoral letter and the present mandement shall be read and published from the pulpits in all the churches and chapels where public worship is held, on the first Sunday after they are received.

Given at Montreal, under our hand, seal, and the counter-signature of our Chancellor, the 20th day of December, 1905.

PAUL, Arch. of Montreal.
By order of His Grace,
EMILE CANON ROY,
Chancellor.

P.S.—This pastoral letter can be read in two sections, but the concluding part thereof must be read at all the masses as early as next Sunday.