

FIVE MINUTE SERMON

BY REV. WILLIAM DEMOY, D. D.

SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

THE VALUE OF SUFFERING

"Dearly beloved: Christ also suffered for us, leaving you an example that you should follow His steps, who did no sin, nor was guile found in His mouth." (I Peter 2, 21-22)

St. Peter, in these few words taken from his first Epistle, reminds us of one of the greatest truths among men. It is the fact that we must suffer. Never yet was there, nor will there be in the future, any one to escape suffering completely. It is true that it is repugnant to human nature, but this does not destroy the fact that it is, to some extent, at least, the lot of all who are born into this world. Yet suffering has its reward—it is bound to have it—if borne cheerfully, as it is difficult, since it inflicts wounds on our nature.

St. Peter gives us another reason for our suffering: namely, because Christ suffered, we are to follow His example. He does not mean that we are to go in search of suffering; but that when it comes, we are to bear it as did the Son of God. But, as we say more, Christ suffered not because He committed sin or was guilty of any misdemeanor, but because of the sins of man. His very creatures, who had life from Him. So much more should we suffer, who have been guilty of sin and who, as a consequence, deserve suffering. Christ died for all, but we can say that had He not died for us, it would be necessary for Him yet to undergo suffering after death!

Most people complain at the least approach of suffering, and do everything in their power to avoid it. This may be right from the natural standpoint, but it is wrong from the point of view of the supernatural. When sufferings come, whether through our own fault or not, we should bear them with as much patience as possible, after willingly accepting them from God, or generously submitting to them as a punishment for our disregard of the laws of God and of nature.

Sufferings are to our spirit what wholesome exercise is to our body. By regular and moderate exercise we strengthen our body, and become more nimble and hardened in muscle. Suffering exercises our spirit in virtue, patience, and constancy. It strengthens our will to resist sin and temptation, and makes of us worthy soldiers of the Lord. The spirit that knows no adversity and experiences no pain will grow as soft and weak as the body that lives in luxury. As a person, by brave attempts and continual exertion, may accomplish many remarkable feats with his body; so, by the pangs of suffering and revealing in many of them. We are wont to tell others of our sorrows in order to loose ourselves from them; yet do we not realize that we need them, that they are due to us? Time has often blurred the vivid conception of the sins we have committed, and we frequently do not recall them in their real enormity. We almost forget them, though they have been catalogued against us perhaps day after day. It should not be so; they ever should be before us, ringing in our minds against us, so that penance be done for them. Why do we not recall the history of our entire lives, when suffering is facing us, and see how much we deserve it, and how voluntarily we should accept it? No greater blessing than suffering could come to most of us sustained as we are with the scars of Satan's attacks. The death of Christ will not be in vain, if such be our attitude. We thus shall have little Calvary of our own, where we can cleanse our souls of the filth sin spreads over them.

But suffering does more for us. It wins for us a right to heaven. We must not think, as some are inclined to do, that God has deserted us, or does not care for us, when He does not free us of our sufferings. His eyes are open to every pain we undergo, to every disappointment we encounter, to every contradiction we bear. Do we ever think that He allows us to suffer, because in no other way would many of us have even a chance of salvation? How many we know today, who have been prosperous in the world's eyes and have escaped a great amount of the physical ills that come to most of us, but who have forgotten God! Unless He sends suffering upon them, they no doubt will continue till death in such enjoyment as their Maker separates from them. We poorer worldly richness and nothing in feeling, if we have done our best in the midst of our want, that we are

on the roll of honor in the school of the Lord.

Though the road of suffering be bitter to the body, let us make it sweet to the soul. Thorny though the path of this life may be, still we can make it studded with spiritual roses for the world above. Our journey lies through a land of want, but the land of plenty is at its end, and if we are patiently enduring it. Let us never forget Him who died amidst suffering that we might reign, so that we in suffering may rise to where in truth we will reign.

CATHOLIC MINUS THE POPE

Floyd Keefer, in America

Not long after my submission to the authority of the Catholic Church, I had fairly adjusted myself to the very much changed circumstances in which I found myself, a priest said to me that Anglicans were the most Protestant of Protestants, and that High Church Anglicans were the most Protestant of all. I rather resented this statement and laid it to the fact that he, a "born" Catholic of Irish extraction, could not appreciate the position which one like myself had occupied. For a while the remark stuck in my memory and after the lapse of years and with the study of Anglicanism from the outside and of the Catholic Church from within, I have been able to see wherein it was not only justified, but that it actually describes their condition more accurately and epigrammatically than any other form of expression could do.

I know that if these words are read by any Catholic who has come into casual and superficial contact with Anglicans or Anglicanism of the "Catholic" type, they will likely produce the reaction they did in me when I first heard them. How can a set of men who hold practically every Catholic doctrine in its entirety, who frequently lead lives of heroic Catholic practice, whose whole soul is fired with love of the things which distinguish the Catholic, be called Protestant? Do they not hate and despise modern Protestantism and its perversion of the Faith? Do they not consider the Reformation as the great crime of Christian history and utterly repudiate it and all its works? Are they not striving in their own communion to expunge, as a foreign substance, every trace of Calvinism which fastened itself upon their own fair Ecclesia Anglicana in that transitory period when Henry's last and Elizabeth's pride had given room to continental "Reformers" to usurp the places of their own leaders in parish and university? Protestantism! Go into the churches today and see the altar complete with tabernacle and sanctuary lamp, as the center of all their worship. People are reverently doing obeisance before the "reserved Sacrament" and the "Mass" is carried on with a dignity and reverence too often, alas, lacking in our own churches. Vestments and accessories of every sort are there in the very best of taste and in the most correct shapes and shades. Stations of the Cross adorn the walls, confessionals invite the penitent to enter, and holy water fonts stand at the doors. Question one of these "priests" walking about in cassock and biretta, maybe saying his Office, or even telling his beads. Ask him what he believes and teaches. Is it Protestant doctrine? Transubstantiation, the Sacrifice of the Mass, the seven Sacraments, an absolutely correct Christology, a firm profession of belief in the authority of the Catholic Church, all these one hears from his lips. How dare we say that he is a Protestant? And if we say it to him he will resent it with indignation. I know, dear reader, for I was one of those who held to just such a position. I was a "Catholic priest" if anyone wanted to know, and was very particular to have it known too. But what differentiated me and those who held to similar tenets, from those in the Protestant Episcopal Church who frankly avowed themselves Protestants, and who more consistently with our published formularies believed that "Transubstantiation . . . is repugnant to the plain words of Scripture, overthroweth the nature of a Sacrament, and hath given rise to many superstitious, and who did not find it necessary to teach the existence of more than two Sacraments? I know the "Catholic" will deny that these things are so, but prayer in the hands of one not prejudiced in favor of one or the other view and see what his verdict is as to the teaching of extracts such as the one I have quoted above. We had Catholic authority for our beliefs and practices, but we did not realize how inconsistent we were in accepting and teaching on the Church's authority, fasting communion for example, and yet denying that authority when the Church spoke on the subject of lawful jurisdiction. We stood firmly for the Catholic discipline on matrimony so far as its indisolubility was concerned, and regarded it as a Sacrament, though the Thirty-nine Articles were very shaky on the subject, but when it came to the Catholic discipline on the subject so far as the clergy are concerned, we exercised our own individual judgment backed up by no better authority than those same Thirty-nine Articles. And what is this but Protestantism? This picking and choosing of doctrines and practices is not Catholic, no matter how Catholic may be the doctrines and practices which are chosen for

one's use. It is quite true that when one's mind prefers those things which the Catholic Church holds, when it is attracted to its tenets, feels that they represent the truth, and the interior witness of his conscience corroborates the exterior witness of the Church's pronouncement, he is on the road to becoming a real Catholic. But he is not a Catholic until he has made an unconditional submission to what the Church says. "I believe because Thy Church hath spoken in Thy name," must be the convert's act of faith, and until he is ready to make that he is not and cannot be a Catholic. This helps to account for the position of many Anglicans who, holding everything that the Catholic Church teaches, even to the doctrine of Papal infallibility in some instances, still remain outside the fold. And it is this eclecticism in doctrine that keeps them where they are, and that makes them essentially Protestant.

One who has not been in the Protestant Episcopal Church can hardly realize how insidiously this is taught in the midst of the "Catholic" teachings of advanced Anglicanism. The following extract, written by one of their number, serves to show what we mean:

"As Catholics we belonged to a club called The Church. The club is some 2,000 years old. In this club alone we can meet our friends; in this club alone we can sleep or argue or organize or pray. This club holds endless debates about everything—seas, stars, boats, biology, sacraments, suffrage, self-determination, alps, and bishops. Among other things, our club has always discussed the question of authority. The question is all the more interesting because in different ages different answers have been given. But these discussions are meant to amuse the club. No one ever dreams of their being allowed to destroy it. Yet they certainly would destroy the Catholic Club if once they meant that we were rude to the members or stingy to the waiters.

"This is a strong instance of the big thing against the small: that the Catholic Church, in Heaven and earth, east and west, is the huge house in which we live, while modern Roman Catholicism is a comparatively small but interesting member of the club, which has quite recently asked to be domesticated in it and now claims to be the whole club."

This is flirting with heresy. Such writing has for its object to blind the devotees of this school to the fact that diversity of opinion has been permitted in the Church on the matter of authority. Whenever that authority has been questioned, those who did so were menaced with the anathema of the Church. If they persisted they were expelled from the Church and adjudged heretics or schismatics.

It is true that Anglicanism is a sort of debating society, but that merely goes to show that it possesses no authority to settle its members which may come before it. Some of its members are adepts in debate, they could vanquish in argument some of our simple-minded people who believe in the Church's infallible teachings, but that proves nothing so far as facts are concerned. An individual fact cannot be changed, but a series of facts can be put into juxtaposition so as to prove anything one pleases, and the inferences which are drawn from the juggling of facts may be thoroughly unsound.

Being a Catholic does not consist in the use of Catholic practices or in holding Catholic doctrines, else that curious body of Congregationalists and other Non-Conformists in England who call themselves "The Society of Free Catholics" would be Catholics indeed. They have a "Mass" which is very satisfactory from the viewpoint of Catholic liturgy, more so than the present Anglican service in many respects. They teach many things quite at variance with ordinary Protestant doctrine, and their aim is to "Catholicize the free Churches." This they may do to some extent, for the absorption of Catholic doctrine leads to the Church as I have pointed out above, but until one is inside he is outside, and no amount of camouflage or throwing of dust into the eyes of the crowd can disguise or blind one to that fact. Just so long as the position taken in the extract we have quoted is the position taken by anyone, just so long is that man a complete Protestant and communicatio in sacris with him is just as much a sin for a Catholic as it would be with the most bigoted of ultra-Protestants.

A chief reason for seeking the Catholic Church is to obtain the sanction of an unchanging authority, and thousands have done it for just that reason. Some of us had more or less authority when we were, but the question as to how much this authority was brought to the fore when one who had occupied the high office of bishop felt it necessary to lay aside that office and begin all over again, simply because he felt he did not possess real authority for his acts. Such a change wrought havoc in the High-Church camp, hence these frivolous attempts to belittle the whole matter. Being "Catholic minus the Pope" means leaving out and rejecting the one thing which makes the authority of the Catholic Church articulate, and which alone gives that authority a basis on which to stand. Hence "Catholic minus the Pope" is just as much Protestant as though it were minus every tenet of Catholic belief.

I do not like to accuse any of my former co-religionists of bad faith or insincerity, for I know how com-

pletely deceived one can be and how sincerely one may occupy the false position in which they are, but it does seem as though this were done deliberately, and for the purpose of keeping souls from finding out the truth. But "Woe to them that scandalize one of these little ones that trust in Me," said the Lord. May that "woe" not be their portion.

THE OLD IRISH MOTHER

I wonder if she is still in the old land, the blessed Irish mother, who put a cap around her comely face between the twenties and thirties, and covered her brown waves from sight.

To her simple soul marriage meant consecration; the man who chose her need not concern himself about the little tendernesses; her affection was as fixed as the stars. He might be unreasonable, exacting, but her faith in the divine right of husbands was unshaken. She would have the children reverential to their father, even if she should have to romance a little to effect it, and with what loving sophistry she explained away his weaknesses.

She never understood constitutions, political or physical; but when sickness was in the family the pathetic care made the poor broth strengthening and the bitter medicine sweet. No sleep, no rest, no peace for her, while the shadow of death lay across the threshold; and how hard it was to die under her searching eyes!

But if a summons had really come, she would hold a crucifix to the dying lips, and the beloved son or daughter would carry the sound of her voice with them to heaven, for what Irish mother but could say prayers for the departing soul.

Not even the story of her country's wrong could embitter her guileless nature. The mantle of her charity covered even the bloody "Sassenach" and sometimes secretly, not daring to let it be known, she recommended them to the Virgin Mary.

If her belief in Her husband was strong who could measure the confidence she reposed in the brave boys who overtop her at sixteen; anything evil in them, her glory and delight? Impossible. They are always white boys in their mother's eyes, however dark and desperate in the sight of those who dwell in palaces.

Her unquestioning trust and earnest teaching kept them pure and honest in their early days and later when they discovered that their mother was only a simple, illogical, unlettered woman, their loyalty and devotion deepened, to find what wonders she had worked with her few talents.

What a tragedy Shakespeare could have woven around her, haunted all her life by a phantom ship at anchor in some harbor waiting till the children of her love were old enough to take passage and leave her forever.

How sorrowful must have been her joy on seeing them rise to the stature of men and women.

I wonder if she is still in the old land, stealing out of her lonely home at twilight, and looking with her tender eyes always westward, and when no one is by, falling on her knees and lifting up her hands in such intensity of supplication that they touch the hem of His garment, and His blessing falls on her flesh and blood in the far off land.

If flowers emblematic of their lives could spring from the earth beneath, it would be easy to find the grave of the Irish mother.

Roses would be clustered on the emerald moss about her head, violets at the feet and among the sweetest of the clover blossoms there would be lilies—lilies—Truth.

CONTINUING LENTEN PRACTICES

Easter joy very often spells the end of Lenten effort. As far as this concerns the mortification of the penitential season, it is quite within the intention of the Church that so it should be.

Many persons, however, begin during the Lenten time loving the salutary practices of religion which might easily now become a permanent feature of their daily life and rebound to their encouragement and perseverance. Those who have faithfully during Lent made the Stations of the Cross in a few moments happily snatched from time more nobly spent, would find their Lord most gracious should they maintain their practice. The numbers who have heard daily Mass all through the holy season will find the reward in hope and love and bravery far greater than any inconvenience these beautiful spring mornings if they continue their meeting time with God.

To hold something steadfastly when Lent has passed away is to have garnered choicest fruits in the holy time of penance that will make more glad the Easter time and help to sanctify the summer days before us.—Catholic Standard and Times.

THE VERDICT

"Behold the Man!"—the cringing Roman tries To shift upon the rabble's hands the blame; The center of the world's appraising eyes, He stands the King!—On Pilate falls the shame!

—MABEL J. BOURQUIN

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