

FIVE-MINUTE SERMON

QUINQUAGESIMA SUNDAY

CHRISTIAN SELF-LOVE

"I speak with the tongue of men and of angels, and have not charity, I have become as a sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal..."

We see from these texts that charity is indispensable. We must have it in order to be united to God in Heaven. Nothing whatever can take the place of it.

But what does this love of God consist in? It consists chiefly in keeping faithfully God's commandments. When the young man asked our Lord, "What shall I do to enter into life?" the answer was, "Keep the commandments; and St. John, inspired by the Holy Ghost, says: 'This is the charity for love of God, that we keep the commandments.'"

This being so, I can express the meaning of my text by saying: "If I speak with the tongue of men and of angels, and do not keep the commandments of God, I am become as a sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal."

And we may talk as eloquently as possible about the faith and our holy religion, and profess to love it, but if we at the same time violate the commandments, or any one of them wilfully, then we are hypocrites, the true love of God is not in us; it is all empty noise.

The love of God is not in high-sounding phrases, but in the true disposition of obedience. When we begin to understand in the least what God is, then we should desire and possess Him which is the same as possessing the Infinite good, and to obey Him in all things, that is, keep His commandments as well as we can. This is the true love of God, although it may be defective, and the feeling of love which we have naturally to our fellow-men whom we like.

If we faithfully keep God's commandments we pay Him true homage and worship—such as is acceptable to Him and worthy of Him. It is not the one who says, "Lord, Lord, that shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of My Father Who is in heaven." Brothers, let us not deceive ourselves. "Do not deceive, for God is not mocked." Many seem to deceive themselves, thinking they can put some thing else in the place of keeping God's commandments. One says to himself: I will go to Mass. I will repeat prayers while I am there. I will feel devout, but I will continue to drink. I will get intoxicated from time to time without doubt, but God, seeing my devotion, will not be so hard on me. He will forgive me this failing. Another says: I am tempted to impurity and to indulge in lust. I cannot give this up. It is too much to ask of me. I will sin from time to time, but I will pray. I will go to confession and Communion occasionally. God will overlook it. You deceive yourself. You have not charity, and without charity all the prayers, all the Masses, all the confessions, and all the Communions in the world will profit you nothing.

NAPOLEON'S DIVORCE

Such questions will arise to the end of time, and it so happens that Wednesday, December 15, was the hundredth anniversary of the opening of one of the most interesting and complicated marriage questions recorded in history, and one which would have exercised all the learning and legal acumen of Pius X's Auditors of the Rota. On December 15, 1809, after his triumphant return from the Austrian campaign, Napoleon proclaimed to his ministers of the imperial family and the chief dignitaries of the State that he had come to the decision to sever the ties that had united him for thirteen years with Josephine Bouchart de la Fayette, and that he did so "in accord with the Empress his most beloved spouse" in view of the certainty that she could never give an heir to the imperial throne. The following day an imperial decree announced that the civil marriage which had taken place between the Emperor and Empress had been dissolved, and on January 17, 1810, the Moniteur announced that a definitive sentence had been issued by the ecclesiastical court of Paris pronouncing the non-existence of the spiritual bond. Less than two months later, March 11, the Emperor married by proxy the Archduchess Marie Louise. Was this second marriage a valid one. The question has been discussed at great length by a host of historians and jurists, and latterly and most competently all by Father L. Rini in his history of Pius VII, but the authorities seem to be fairly divided into diametrically opposite opinions. On March 9, 1870, General Bonaparte and Josephine presented themselves before the registrar of the second district of Paris to declare their union and have it registered according to law. Had they wished to contract marriage in the eyes of the Church they might easily have done so, but the General purposely avoided this, and the civil contract was undoubtedly null and void as a marriage in a country where the Tamesti of the

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Council of Trent rendered all clandestine marriages invalid. But complications were destined to arise. On the very evening before the coronation Josephine succeeded in having a private conversation with Pius VII. in which she informed him that she had never been really married, except so far as a purely civil contract could marry her to Napoleon. Thereupon the Pontiff at once sent word to the Emperor that unless he regularized his marriage he would refuse to consecrate and crown him. The news provoked the fury of Napoleon against Josephine, but he realized that the Pontiff was immovable, and that a delay in the ceremony might be attended by very serious consequences. So he sent his uncle Cardinal Fesch to ask Pius VII. to grant all the necessary dispensations that the religious marriage might be performed by the Cardinal himself, without any witnesses. The Pope consented, and two hours later the Cardinal married the imperial pair in his private chapel, and at the request of Josephine consigned to her a certificate—which, however, the Emperor destroyed a few days afterwards.

The question of divorce did not arise until five years later. There was little trouble over the dissolution of the civil contract of March 9, 1796—in fact all Napoleon had to do to effect this was to sign a decree. But the dissolution of the religious marriage presented difficulties which were apparently insurmountable. First of all the marriage cases of sovereigns were reserved to the exclusive and immediate jurisdiction of the Roman Pontiff—the very Roman Pontiff whom Napoleon by a famous decree of a few months before had robbed of his states, (proclaiming at the same time Rome to be the second city of the French Empire) the Pontiff who had formally excommunicated him, and who in revenge had been subjected to all kind of outrage by him. The Emperor determined to reach his object in another way. He got the Arch-Chancellor Cambaceres to bring the case before the Metropolitan Curia. The latter protested that it was incompetent, and asked for authorization from the Ecclesiastical Committee appointed by the Emperor on November 25, 1809, to regulate ecclesiastical affairs. This committee which was manned by creatures of the Emperor and immediate jurisdiction of the Roman Pontiff was competent, and the case went on. A number of witnesses including Talleyrand, Berthier, Duroc and Fesch united in declaring that the Emperor had never consented to the religious marriage with Josephine—he had merely gone through the ceremony to quiet Josephine and to avoid the dangerous scandal that would have followed had the Pope refused to crown him—with the result that the Court pronounced the marriage null through defect of consent. As a matter of fact this sentence was of no juridical value, because the Court was incompetent. But it was enough for its purpose. The Emperor of Austria and the Archbishop of Vienna, before allowing the marriage by proxy of the Emperor with the Archduchess, asked for explanations concerning the validity of the first marriage, and the Calvinist Count Otto was able to make a sworn statement that he had seen and read the original of the sentence of dissolution pronounced by the Metropolitan Court of Paris, and as neither the Austrian Emperor nor the Archbishop were apparently aware of the full powers granted by Pius VII. to Cardinal Fesch to perform the first religious marriage of Napoleon without witnesses they might easily have come to the conclusion that this ceremony was invalid on account of clandestinity. In an case the Archbishop consented to celebrate the second marriage with great pomp on March 11, in the church of the Augustinians in Vienna. Such are the salient facts of this most complicated marriage case.—Rome.

THE SALVATION ARMY

1. What is the creed of the Salvation Army? 2. Are Catholics allowed to join the Salvation Army? Give some theological reasons. In order to meet this question inquiries were made at the Salvation Army Hall, the superintendent of which produced a small book for inspection. Its title was "The Metropolitan Court of Paris, and as neither the Austrian Emperor nor the Archbishop were apparently aware of the full powers granted by Pius VII. to Cardinal Fesch to perform the first religious marriage of Napoleon without witnesses they might easily have come to the conclusion that this ceremony was invalid on account of clandestinity. In an case the Archbishop consented to celebrate the second marriage with great pomp on March 11, in the church of the Augustinians in Vienna. Such are the salient facts of this most complicated marriage case.—Rome.

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one in radical. For instance, although the book aforesaid lays down a considerable number of sound doctrines, it also lays down others (especially regarding conversion and forgiveness) which no Catholic could accept. Secondly, the Salvation Army ignores the sacraments which no Catholic can tolerate. Thirdly, the Salvation Army offers to men a religion and religious membership other than that of the Catholic Church, as sufficient and efficacious to salvation—thus tacitly declaring that Catholic membership is unnecessary. The last consideration brings us to our point. The reason why a Catholic cannot join the Salvation Army is the same as that which prevents him from joining any religious sect or creed other than Catholicism. We believe that Catholicism is the only divinely instituted religion, which is intended in the divine scheme for all mankind, and that all other forms of religion outside the Church as human inventions without divine sanction. We fully admit that there is good in the Salvation Army, because of the degrees of religious truth and religious endeavor which exist in it. Hence it is better that man be a Salvationist than that he should be an unbeliever destitute of all religion. But seeing that a Catholic, as such, is in possession of the only genuine article, it would be against the Divine Will and irrational in itself, to adopt a substitute.

THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION

Few Protestants know what the dogma of the Immaculate Conception means, and we fear that a good many Catholics would be unable to give a correct definition of it. The idea that it refers to the conception of our Blessed Lord in the womb of His mother is very prevalent, so much so that in a Catholic exchange we find a quatrain called "The Immaculate Conception" which reads: As one by one to-day the rose-leaves fell, Responsive to a wind that hardly stirred; So Mary's pure words answered Gabriel, "According to thy word." Now this has nothing whatever to do with the Immaculate Conception. It refers to the Annunciation—the message of the Angel Gabriel to the Blessed Virgin that she was to be the Mother of the Messiah. The Immaculate Conception means that the soul of Mary herself from the moment God first breathed that soul into her body in the womb of her mother, was preserved free from the stain of that sin—original sin—with which we are all born.

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