

FIVE-MINUTE SERMON

TRINITY SUNDAY
THE DIVINE MAJESTY

"For of Him, and by Him, and in Him are all things: to Him be glory for ever and ever. Amen.
To-day, my dear brethren, the Church, having completed the round of feasts and fasts which she began on Christmas, having brought to our remembrance our Lord's birth, His holy childhood, His ministry on earth, His Passion and death, His glorious resurrection and ascension, and the coming of the Holy Ghost as He had promised, finally brings us into the presence of the Being by Whom all these wonderful works have been accomplished, and Who is the sole object of our adoration, the ever Blessed Trinity, the three Divine Persons, the one God. She bids us contemplate, so far as it is possible for us, the great and ineffable mystery into the faith of which we have been baptized, and to join with the angels and saints in the canticles of heaven. "Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty, Who was, and Who is, and Who is to come."

"Of Him, and by Him, and in Him are all things," says the apostle, reminding us of this highest of all the teachings of the Christian faith. Of the Father is the Son, and in the Son is the Holy Ghost, Who proceeds from the Father and the Son, and in Whom is His life and mutual love. The distinction of the Divine Persons is thus intimated to us; but the divine nature is only One; of, by, and in that One are and all things created.
We and all the world around us are of God: not part of Him, nor born of Him according to nature, nor proceeding from His substance, but still of Him in that we owe our being entirely to Him, Who drew us from nothing by His Almighty power. Nothing to us has ever existed outside of God. Himself except through the wonderful, incomprehensible act of creation. From nothing, nothing of itself could come; all things are from and of God, Who created them from nothing.

By His Almighty power, then, we have been created, and by it now we are sustained. We could not live for a moment except by His continual support. It is only by His aid that we can draw a single breath, walk a single step, or perform the simplest act. The winds and the waters, and all the powers of nature, as we call them, and His powers, too, which He lends to us, and makes subservient to our use.

And in Him we live and move and are. He is nearer to us than we are to ourselves. It is not only that He makes us live; it is His life by which we live; our life comes from and belongs to His eternal life. The Son of God, the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost is in Himself; ours is in Him.

To Him, then, the one and only true God, "be glory," as the apostle says, "for ever and ever." How often we say these words, "Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost," and how little do we think of what they mean! If all that we are and have is from God, by Him and in Him, how can we set ourselves apart from Him, or claim anything for ourselves against Him? How can we glory in ourselves, or desire glory from others, when all glory, praise, and honor belong of necessity to Him from Whom, by Whom, and in Whom all things are?

For this is what it means when we say, "Glory be to God." Not some glory or praise or recognition of His greatness from us, as a sort of tax or tribute which we must pay to keep the rest for ourselves. No, when we have given glory to God as we should, there will be nothing left for us to keep. This is the perfection of the creature, to prostrate itself at the foot of its Creator's throne, and to cast all the crowns it has received before Him that almighty throne, and to say with the angels and saints in heaven, "Thou art worthy, O Lord our God, to receive glory and honor and power, because Thou hast created all things, and for Thy will they were and have been created."

CORPUS CHRISTI IN A PARIS CONVENT

The June Sunday upon which the Fete Dieu, the Feast of Corpus Christi, is held dawned fair and cloudless. The Convent as usual wakes with the birds. Everything is of a cheerful countenance. The sisters are all in new habits. Mère Placide is positively bashful in her fresh black and clean starched cowl. The *seours* converse go about with shining faces. No work of a mental character is ever done on a Sunday, though to the lay mind the distinctions are sometimes difficult of comprehension. On this Sunday of Sundays the whole community must be happy. M. Combes may well look the other way whilst the sun shines so brilliantly on this little band of the faithful. That the dread spectre ever present in any French convent of to-day is not wholly banished from their midst, however, is made manifest by Mère Placide's unwonted gravity when she lingers a moment in the garden with her guests at Midday. In the morning there has been a rumour that a procession for the Fete Dieu is to be held in one of the suburbs in deliberate defiance of law and order. The sisters are pale and anxious. The good cause cannot be furthered by unseemly rioting. Even Mère Placide, the most militant among them, in spite of a certain curiosity to learn the issue, maintains an air of grave disapproval. She discusses the matter in all its bearings with her usual astonishing shrewdness and good sense, but with an underlying strain of sadness. When she turns to go there is a touch of tragic dignity in her attitude. "We will ask you to pray for us this afternoon, mesdames," she says, "that our buildings are not taken from us, that we are not the homeless like so many others." Notre Dame de Bon Secours is a missionary order, and it is probable that the very active work done by the large community in many parts of the world may be its safeguard from the ever-increasing demands of the State. But the Government, since changes so often, and in France there can at present be little security in the Church, and especially in those religious

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orders associated by the closest ties with Rome. In any case it is no hard matter for the most Protestant mind to pray for the peace and continuance of a home outside the moral shelter of which these good women would find it difficult indeed to place themselves, and the promise is gladly given.

The procession of the Saint Sacrament is to take place before the service of the *Fete Dieu* which is to be held in the garden and after Vespers have been sung in the chapel.

During the long bright morning which would be so hot in the streets of Paris, but here it is so infinitely cool and shady—the least touches are being put to the improvised altar before the statue of the Virgin at the end of the principal aisle. The fine linen cloth with which it is covered is edged with priceless lace, one of the treasures of the convent. It must be owned that there is a touching simplicity in some of the adornments employed by the novices, notable among these being a variety of paper frills, obviously offered by the kitchen. But the whole effect is sweet and reverent. In these are flowers everywhere. This time, for the glory of God, Joseph is allowed to work his will on the rose bushes, and in the altar vases are tall white lilies with which the air is fragrant. The very garden seems to have put forth its best strength for the *Fete Dieu*. Sweet peas, stocks, lupins, make a brave show; all the old-fashioned country flowers flourish happily under Joseph's ministrations here in the heart of Paris.

At four o'clock all the doors and windows and shutters of *La Solitude* are carefully closed. It is difficult, in face of the great wall behind the elm trees, to imagine the possibility of marauders other than cats; but caution is one of the rules of life in a convent, and for the next hour or so this little corner will be entirely unprotected even by the faithful Joseph.

The chapel looks larger and lighter in the June sunshine than it did on those chilly March days when the philanthropic ladies met there. The light streams through the clear glass windows on either side of the nave. Here also the air is heavy with the scent of lilies. Every available seat not occupied by the community is thronged with former pupils and their parents, for this is a great day in the neighborhood, and the sisters as well as the children love an opportunity of coming again to the convent. An old *Monsieur* deeply venerated by the sisters, has come to conduct the service, and the red of his vestments adds a touch of color to the sombre mass of black habits in the building. Mère Placide, the prioress, is collecting the banners and the pretty little girls in their white frocks and veils whom she has chosen to carry them.

The chapel of Notre Dame de Bon Secours has always been noted for its music. Here Gounod used to come Sunday after Sunday to worship with the sisters, and often to listen to his own compositions sung by the black-robed choir. Now the voices rise and fall in the unison commanded by Pius X., which the sisters themselves, with all respectful submission to the Holy Father, are inclined to think has a little interfered with the beauty of their music. But to some hearing it brings an admir-

able effect of simple devotion, swept and garnished of any suggestion of the opera house or the concert room. There are some fine voices in the choir, and the sister presiding at the organ is a true musician. The Latin words of Bach's beautiful hymn "Oh Heart ever joyful" seem to rise in waves of true faith and joyousness from the very hearts of the singers, solemnly accentuated by intervals of silent prayer between the verses. The office closes with that petition to the Virgin to help those who are in trouble, and to intercede *pro devoto femine sexu*, which must have a peculiar significance in a French convent at the present day.

Slowly the Host, borne aloft under the gold and white canopy, passes through the kneeling congregation, the Virgin to help those who are in trouble, and to intercede *pro devoto femine sexu*, which must have a peculiar significance in a French convent at the present day. The office closes with that petition to the Virgin to help those who are in trouble, and to intercede *pro devoto femine sexu*, which must have a peculiar significance in a French convent at the present day. The office closes with that petition to the Virgin to help those who are in trouble, and to intercede *pro devoto femine sexu*, which must have a peculiar significance in a French convent at the present day.

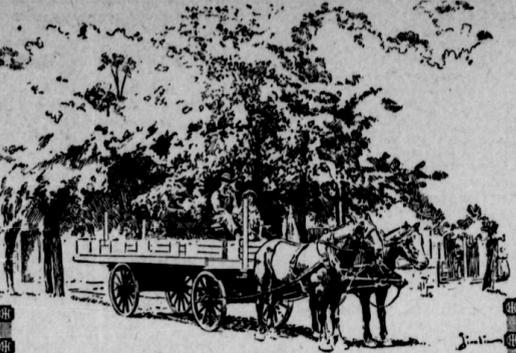
Tantum ergo Sacramentum
Veneremur cernui.
The light falls softly on the black habits of the nuns or the bent heads of the people. The mere simplicity of the scene is impressive. Surely the expression of the Catholic faith is heard here in all its primitive sincerity.

Laudate Dominum, omnes gentes: laudate eum, omnes populi.
The congregation rises to its feet with the triumphant burst of Gounod's music. A blackbird in the chestnut tree above the altar sings with all his might determined to make himself heard in this hymn of praise to the Creator of all. And why should he not? Certainly the good sisters would not wish to exclude him from their song of thanksgiving.

Slowly the procession forms again, and the people fall once more on their knees as the Host is borne past them beneath the rich canopy. Joseph's little children, mites in clean pinafores, stand up from amongst the sisters in the rear and gaze wide-eyed at the acolytes and their swinging censers, until the parental hand forces them gently into a seemly attitude of devotion. One old grandfather, too old to kneel, leans heavily on his stick, the sun shining on his balding head, and crosses himself devoutly with a shaking hand as the Saint Sacrament passes. To the on-lookers there is something of a beautiful anachronism in this medieval scene in the heart of twentieth-century Paris.

The little white-robed children, scattering their rose leaves, emblems of the Passion, in the path of the *Bon Dieu*, instinctively recall the angels of Bonagill on the walls of the Perugia gallery, with their sweet tear-laden eyes, their wreathed heads, and their baskets of roses. But the eyes of these small Parisian maidens, solemn though they are for the moment, are fixed from tears on those of some of their elders. As the procession of the Saint Sacrament winds slowly away under the trees, the choir singing the Ave Maria, the bright path of color made by the priestly vestments thrown up in strong relief against the mass of black habits in the rear of the nuns, more than one who follows it has *le cœur gros*. The pathos of the scene cannot fail to touch the least thoughtful of those present, and it has needed no promise to Mère Placide to inspire a prayer for the future safety and well being of the convent.

It is impossible not to wonder whether the June sun will shine upon such another procession within these walls again. In any case, for those who have



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been privileged to join in it, this afternoon's ceremony will be stored amongst life's most fragrant memories; and there are many who will never smell the scent of crushed rose-leaves, or see the golden light falling across a bed of tall white lilies, without thinking of the *Fete Dieu* in the Paris garden.

Mère Placide, coming into the dining-room of *La Solitude* an hour later, has little to say. Her heart is probably full of love and regret for her children, but, if her air of repose is to be trusted, of confidence, rather than of fear, in the future. Everybody is a little touched and subdued. Even the birds have ceased to sing, and a calm which is full of sweetness broods over the convent.

Presently, however, when the *dames pensionnaires* are sitting under the trees outside the little house, the tension is very sensibly relieved by the sounds of genuine play and merriment coming from the larger garden. "It is the novices," says one of the ladies, who knows the convent well: "they are still keeping their feet." It is not good manners to invade the gardens at this hour, but by peeping through the privet hedge it is impossible to see that it is indeed the novices, and they are playing a modified form of the *jeu de paume*. The novices are so neat as they manage to remain, the exercise has brought a flush to their cheeks and a brightness to their eyes. Shouts of

laughter and cherry expostulations rouse the echoes of the darkening dices. Here there is no lack of healthy animal spirits, a little bewildering perhaps to the minds of those to whom the convent walls suggest mere suppression. Certainly they are old, these novices, to be playing ball like young schoolgirls. But what would you? as the *Mère Economie* would say. Nature will out, and the good sisters like to see them happy. The game does not last long, however. The great clock strikes nine; Mère Placide comes slowly across the garden in the gathering dusk. Complete silence has already fallen upon the girls, who have grouped themselves with unconscious effect; a study in black and white against the great statue of the Virgin whose the altar stood a few short hours before. The evening hymn rises softly in the pure girlish voices. The watcher behind the privet hedge tries to catch the words, but little more than the refrain of each verse is audible:

Je vous remercie, Seigneur:
Merci, merci, mon Dieu.

Surely the good God still walks in His garden in the cool of the evening, and may accept this simple hymn of thanksgiving for a happy holiday and for the gift of His sunshine on the blessed *fete* of the Saint Sacrament.—Rose M. Bradley in Nineteen Century and After.

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