

FIVE MINUTE SERMON

By Rev. N. M. REDMOND
TWENTY-FOURTH SUNDAY
AFTER PENTECOST

THE TERRORS OF THE LAST JUDGMENT

"But pray that your flight may not be in winter, nor on the Sabbath Day." (Matt. xxiv. 20.)

Striking in the extreme is the contrast between the Scriptural description of the first and of the second coming of our Blessed Lord. Infinite mercy is foreshadowed in the one, and infinite justice in the other. We now enjoy the blessed effects of His mercy: we have yet to experience the awful rigors of His justice. Oh, how terrible will be the latter for all those who will not have made a Christian use of the former! To abuse God's mercy in life, is, we are told, to hoard up wrath which will be vented in the awful day of wrath. On that terrible day "we shall reap what we will have sown in life." Oh, with what intolerable anguish and confusion those will be seized who will not have availed themselves of the blessed fruit of God's mercy, who will have made their flight in the cruel winter of sin, when they find themselves in the awful presence of the Judge of the living and the dead! All hope that the indictment will lack in proof, that the witnesses can be bought, that compassion will prevent the Judge from proceeding against them according to the full tenor of the law, will be most absolutely debarred. The Judge Himself will be the Person against whom they will have acted the part of criminals. His infinite knowledge will leave no room for hope that ought of their lives will be hidden, and His infinite justice will forbid that the slightest tittle shall go unpunished.

Oh, crushing thought! Not only the Judge will know all their sins and condemn them, but the angels of heaven, the spirits of hell, and the whole human family will know their sins and condemn them. "There is nothing covered that shall not be revealed; nor hid, that shall not be known," says the Judge. As St. Benedict saw in a single ray of the sun the whole world, so shall each sinner on that last dread day behold all the sins of his life in one infernal group, and hear them exposed as his to the whole universe. O man, man, what then will be your confusion and shame, when the secrets of the most hidden recesses of your heart shall be exposed? You now prefer to spend the best part of your life groaning under the weight of your iniquity, rather than communicate the secrets of your heart to God's priest under the most inviolable secrecy of the confessional. What, then, will be your shame and confusion, when all these will be exposed to angels and men? O, sinners, who refuse to avail yourselves of God's mercy in the sacred tribunal of penance, behold what shall befall you on the awful day of His justice. Then you will cry out "to the mountains to cover you, and the hills to fall upon you," to hide you from the face of your Judge, to hide you from the terrible aspect of your sins, and to hide you from the whole universe. Your cry will be in vain.

On that awful day of retribution, the sinner will be without a friend. All will be his enemies. The angels and saints will be his enemies, because he is the enemy of God; the reprobate will be his enemies because they cannot be. On that day the mother will cry out against her child, the wife against her husband, and the dearest friend shall be as the bitterest enemy. Yea, even all nature will manifest its enmity for the sinner. The heavens will team with the most awful signs to terrify the enemy of their Creator; the earth will show itself in the throes of the utmost regret that it was ever cursed by his presence; the sun, the moon, and the stars will all contribute to his terror. But though last not the least condemner of the sinner on the judgment day will be his own conscience. Oh, so terrible will be all his surroundings that he will even sigh to have the dreadful sentence of his condemnation pronounced, that he may hide himself in the fiery caverns of hell forever.

What a sentence it will be! Oh, behold the Judge with fire in His eyes, and terror in His countenance! Listen to the thunder of His almighty voice, as He pronounces the dreadful sentence of the sinner's irrevocable doom: "Depart from Me, you cursed, into everlasting fire, which was prepared for the devil and his angels." Go forever from Me, from My kingdom, from My angels and saints. In life you chose My enemies for your associates, you took sides with the devil, go now with your wretched companions into the abode, into the fire of devils, and take My curse with you. My curse you have chosen, and My curse shall be your everlasting lot. Forever it shall be to the sinner a source of the most dreadful complications of irremediable evils.

Should not this cursory glance at the terrors of God's justice be sufficient to make the most hardened take advantage of God's mercy in this our day? Should we not now sow the seed we wish to reap hereafter? No one has more consolation than he who shares the Saviour's Cross. Divine sweetness flows in abundant streams for the soul that drains the chalice of bitterness. — B. Henry Suso.

TEMPERANCE

WHEN IS IT A SIN?

Bishop O'Reilly, late Bishop of Liverpool, clearly defined the teaching of the Catholic Church with regard to the moral aspect of drink.

And we suggest a careful reading of these decisions, especially to those who are inclined to look with most kindly eye upon their own failings and excuses for indulging in drink.

He says: 1. Whosoever drinks deliberately to such an extent as to lose his reason commits a mortal sin.

2. Whosoever knows by past experience that when drunk he is accustomed to blaspheme or utter other improper language, or injure others about him, besides the sin of drunkenness, is guilty of those other crimes committed during the state of intoxication.

3. Whosoever does not adopt the proper means for the correction of this vicious habit of drunkenness remains in a continued state of sin.

4. Whosoever entices or urges others to excess in drinking, who he foresees will become intoxicated, commits a mortal sin.

5. Any seller of liquor who continues to supply to any individual that he knows will become intoxicated therewith, commits a mortal sin, because he deliberately co-operates with the grievous sin of another.

6. Whosoever is guilty of excess in drinking, though not to intoxication, in such a way as to cause distress in his family by squandering that which is needed for their support, commits a mortal sin against charity and justice. In like manner whosoever thus renders himself unable to pay his lawful debts, though he may not drink to intoxication, commits a mortal sin. — New World.

THE CONQUEST OF ALCOHOL IN RUSSIA

Temperance in Russia is an ideal; the Czar's edict indicates an ideal rather than a measure. That is an important differentiation. A measure is something which is introduced to meet a more or less temporary situation, but an ideal has upon it the imprint of immortality. So that when war is over in Russia there is not likely to be any relaxation in the matter of temperance.

When the war is over the Russian soldiers will come back to a new Russia. The Russian soldier is coming back to a village which has known the advantages of being without vodka. He is coming back to a home where harmony has been restored. The Russian soldier is coming back to a new prospect. A great amount of time has been liberated for him. Our life is made up of a certain amount of interests. Life is almost like a bag into which we put various interests, and when the bag is full, no matter what with there is no room for anything else. And out of the bag of the Russian peasant's interests has been taken this enormous volume of vodka. He will now have time to give to thinking out the future of the Russian peasant, and when we say this we mean the future of the Russian nation. He has to define his new course.

Temperance is one of the most lasting fruits of the war. But Russians, whether they gain new territory and a life without fear from their neighbors, or whether they do not, certainly will gain the lasting fruit of temperance. — Christian Advocate.

CONFESSION

CATHOLICS WOULD NOT GO TO CONFESSION IF CHRIST DID NOT COMMAND IT

(By Rev. Thomas F. Conley, D. D., in Our Sunday Visitor)

Catholics are reasonable people; they have common sense; they have education; and as there are about 300,000,000 Catholics in the world there must be some very valid reasons for their faith in confession, otherwise they would not practice it. It is absurd to suppose that so many hundreds of millions of sane and sensible and educated people can be deceived on so important a point.

What then are the reasons? There are many of them, and space permits the discussion of only one.

Christ, speaking to His Apostles, (and through them to their successors to the very end of time) said "Whoso sins you shall forgive them, they are forgiven; whoso sins you shall retain, they are retained" (John 20: 23.)

Christ did not limit this wondrous power to His twelve Apostles. He knew they were to die within a few years, whereas sin was to be forgiven until the end of time. From the above plain, obvious and explicit passage, it is clear that our Lord conferred upon the Apostles, the power to forgive or remit sins. But there was also another power bestowed upon the Apostles, but our Lord expressly pledged Himself that the exercise of these powers should be ratified by Him, in the same way that He pledged Himself to ratify in heaven what they should do, under the power to bind and loose. (Matt. 18: 18.)

In conferring these important powers, our Lord did not intend to do an idle and useless thing. He wished these powers to be put into practical operation. The very act of conferring these powers was in itself a command to use them for the purposes intended. When the Constitu-

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tion of the United States confers certain powers upon the different departments of government, it intends that they should be put into practical operation, and the officer who fails to do so is guilty of a dereliction of duty.

These powers having been given for practical application, the Apostles had the right to use all the means necessary to carry them into full and complete operation. To give them the power, and to withhold from them the means to exercise the power would have been foolish. Confession is the only means whereby they can exercise those powers.

Hence sins committed after baptism could be forgiven only through the exercise of this power held by the Apostles. For let it be observed, the powers given by Christ were not merely to forgive but also to retain sins.

If the transgressor could obtain remission without recourse to the Apostles or their successors, then the power of forgiving and retaining sins would have been utterly idle and futile. Christ would not give the power to the Apostles, require them to exercise it, and promise to ratify their acts in heaven, if at the same time, He could have allowed the offending party to escape the exercise of this function. Christ said explicitly: "whoso sins you shall retain, they are retained." Therefore, He could not violate this promise. Hence without recourse to the Apostolic power there can be no forgiveness.

Consequently, the Apostles and their successors have the exclusive power to forgive sins. What is sin? It is a violation of the law of God. Each transgression constitutes a separate and distinct offense. Thus the Apostles have the power to remit or retain each particular transgression of the law. How could the Apostles remit or retain sins unless they knew what they were? Christ did not intend that the power of forgiving and retaining sins should be exercised blindly. He did not intend that the Apostles should have the power to remit and to retain sin in one undistinguished mass.

Remember, the authority of the Apostles was to remit sins, not sin. If they could remit and retain sin, without distinguishing between different violations of the law, then the whole end and purpose of these powers would have been substantially defeated, and the exercise of their power would have been utterly useless. Christ told His Apostles to forgive and retain sins, not sin. How could the Apostles and their successors tell what sins to remit or retain unless they first knew what they were?

Could you, dear reader, if you were a criminal, go into court, into the presence of the Judge, and say, "Judge, I am guilty?" Would not the Judge immediately say, "Guilty of what; what crime have you committed?"

Hence the Apostles and their successors do not know whether to forgive or retain a sin until the sin is told in confession. Hence the very nature of the judicial power given by Christ to His Apostles demands a confession of sins. The power given to the Apostles of either forgiving or retaining sins demands for its intelligent exercise the statement of the sins to those whom Christ clothed with the tremendous power of absolving or retaining them. The power given by Christ has two opposite effects: It is either for forgiveness, or non forgiveness, and no judge can decide a case until he knows what it is the evidence must be presented to him, and this requires confession.

LEGEND OF LONGINUS

WHAT BECAME OF HIM AFTER THE CRUCIFIXION

Strange, indeed, marvelous, are some of the stories and legends told by the "Schennachies," and bards of ancient Erin, concerning the Crucifixion. One of the most striking of these is told concerning a Roman soldier who took part in the Crucifixion, and who is said to have been the one who pierced our Saviour's side with a spear.

This soldier, according to one of the legends which traveled westward and found lodgment among the warm-hearted and poetic sons of Milesius, was that this same Longinus was struck with pity at the terrible sufferings of the Crucified One, and that it was through this same pity and in order to end His sufferings that the soldier plunged his spear into the heart of Christ.

It is here that the strange story links itself with the traditional lore of the ancient Irish. The story runs somewhat in this wise:

When the blood issued from Our Lord's side it ran down the shaft of the spear and covered the day forth that hand remained blood red. Longinus feared that was a token of God's wrath, for he had been convinced by what he saw on that awful day that Christ, indeed, was God.

So the Roman soldier alternately marveled at, and bewailed his fate. He dare not return to kith and kin on the banks of the Tiber, and to leave the martial service of Imperial Rome was a sore reflection. Yet it was the only alternative of being a prodigy, a something set apart, a thing marked for curiosity and avoidance among his people, if he returned home. He chose the life of a wanderer, and his long pilgrimage in the wake of the setting sun began. He won his way by valor and by suffering through the territory of the Goth and Vandal, crossed beneath the shadow of the Alps, won his way as a soldier of fortune through the warlike regions on both sides of the silvery Rhine, on through the land of the Angles (Britain), where he saw all about him the signs of the conquering power of the legions of his own masterful nation. At last he crossed the seas and reached an island of wondrous beauty, an emerald set on the brow of the sea, and here he saw no sign of the Roman conqueror, but only the remains of his native land. So here at last Longinus rested from the dreary journey, and here among the kindly Gael he made his home and found happiness. Here, too, the story runs he became the founder of the royal house of Hy-Nial, later, O'Neil, of which the kindly Neal of the Nine Hostages, killed by lightning while leading his armies at the foot of the Alps, was a scion, and whose crest combined the Red Hand of Ulster. Tradition also has it that St. Longinus preached the Gospel in several places in Europe, thus disproving the Irish legend.

Another, though in detail widely differing, touches on the same subject, and this is embodied in A. M. Sullivan's story of Ireland. It tells of one of Ireland's ancient kings, Connal Mac Nessa, who in battle had been struck in the head by a missile known as the death ball. It remained embedded in his head, but did not produce death. A Druid, however, told him that wine or anger would cause instant death. One day, one of Patrick's missionaries told him the story of Christ, and the fine old pagan king's ire broke forth like a torrent. Springing to his feet, he drew his skien (short sword) and waving it aloft cried aloud, "Had I been there I would have struck thus for that kindly God." And with a blow he smote a limb from a tree close by. At the same moment the death bell sprang from his forehead and kind Connal Mac Nessa was dead. — St. Paul Bulletin.

SICK SENTIMENTALITY

Lately the Catholic King of Bavaria gave some leading dames of his monarchy an advice that should make them more human and less beastly. Like some of their ilk, on this side of life's waves, they were breaking their little hearts over the suffering of beasts, and so went to His Majesty to implore his regal influence on behalf of asylums for sick animals. "My dear ladies," said the monarch, "sick beasts we kill, but sick men we help. Use your money for the sick, the needy, and the helpless."

With these sensible words that ignored their senseless appeal, the dead ladies went back to their homes, wiser if not prouder.

There is so much maudlin sentimentality about brutes. Often some fuzzy pig usurps the knee throne where baby should sit and coo. A parrot is preferred to the little autocrat of the breakfast table, and even monkeys, dressed in their swallow-tails, are not only set on the same plane with madam and monsieur but are actually feted as the guests of honour. If the monkey could, he would, doubtless, pick his company. Then a pet cat or dog receives great consideration when dead, and, although human beings are houseless under cold skies, a silk-lined coffin receives the dear remains of pussy or puppy.

For shame that such should be, when God's children are in need! For shame that men should prefer beasts to human beings, and deny the one that they lavish on the other!

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As men cease to anchor interest in humanity, because they ignore divinity, so in the same degree, since they must love something, they turn their hearts to quadrupeds. It is a form of modern paganism that indicates souls callous and abandoned by common sense as well as grace.

Lately we knew of a gentleman, whose heart was closed against every charity, ordering his horses to be killed when he would die, lest they might be misused by strangers. Oh, if the horses could find a tongue, what advice they would have given their solicitous (?) master! So, these pagans lose their good judgment as well as the correct estimate of the purposes of all things. First, they miss the conception of the end of their own creation, and then it comes easy to be mixed in regard to the purposes of other animals. The man who knows not his God cannot clearly understand the reasons of creation or its any part—is not only in the way of his own high interests, but is, in general, a nuisance. The Socialist finds in his reason for their vicious schemes, which would be eschewed as simple madness, only the supposed sympathy for the poor which is embodied therein. This sympathy for humanity receives color from the solicitude of some infidel rich for their brutes. Tennyson hails such as these with: "If time be heavy on your hands, Are there no beggars at your gate, Nor any poor about your lands? Oh, teach the orphan boy to read, Or teach the orphan girl to sew, Pray heaven for a human heart And let the wretched canine go."

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For the addition of the last line, the poet would call us to account for the age we live in is far more foolish than that which drew censure on the brute-lover, Lady Clara Vere de Vere, and Tennyson, even as philosopher and poet, could not prophesy its shams and sins.—Catholic Columbian.

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