

## FIVE MINUTE SERMON

BY REV. WILLIAM DEMOUY, D. D.

## SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

THE SANCTITY OF MARRIAGE

"At this time there is a wedding in Cana of Galilee; and the Mother of Jesus was there. (John II, 1.)

The very presence of Jesus was sanctifying; no one in any sense disposed toward grace could be near Him and not come under His influence. The attractiveness of Jesus brought souls to Him in all their purity; in fact, it was only the pure, and those who, though once stained, were repentant, that were attracted by Him. The wicked, at the time He walked the earth, as today, scoffed at Him and approached Him only from wicked motives. For this reason, they neither gained His favor nor received His sanctifying grace. No one can be an enemy of God and receive His divine grace while continuing in sin. There must be a complete change before grace can abide with the sinner; for it expels sin as the sun does darkness.

But Christ by His presence did not sanctify people only; for places and things were sanctified by Him as well. What places are more hallowed today than the scenes of Christ's life and passion? What earthly object is more sanctified than the cross upon which He died? We see the effect of the power He instilled in things, especially in the sacraments. In all of them there is something material, some visible sign which, when placed as ordered by Him, is the means of life-giving grace flowing into our souls. In the Gospel of this Sunday, the Fathers are wont to see an instance of the sanctifying presence of Jesus at a wedding-feast. By His presence at this marriage, the contract received a sacredness which He had pronounced belongs to it. And it was not this marriage alone that He sanctified, but all Christian marriages.

Marriage was not a sacrament in the Old Law. Nay, it even had lost its primal sanctity. God permitting exceptions to the rule He established regarding it, because of the wickedness and hardness of heart of so many of the people. But this lenient permission of God in the case of marriage, as in many other customs and ceremonies of the Old Law, was not to last. When the fulness of time would have come, marriage would not only be made as it was in the beginning, but it would receive an additional dignity—it would become a sacrament. This work Christ was to perform, and He clearly made it known that He did so, and indicated evidently, that it must be monogamic. The husband and wife, united in lawful marriage were to be husband and wife as long as they both lived. It was only the death of one that could permit another marriage of the other. There would be times perhaps when they would separate—specifically if one of the parties were guilty of adultery—but neither of the parties could enter into a new marriage as long as both were alive. Nothing but death severs the ties of matrimony—a union that God has made and sanctified—"what God has joined together let no man put asunder."

Alas, how much the world has separated from this law of God, and set up one of its own! What city is without its divorce courts, where men and women daily attempt to sever the links that God has eternally welded? We cannot exactly blame these courts for their existence; but we must blame the people who have brought it about that their presence is required. Upon what slight complaints and petty grievances of the one and the other these sacred ties are pronounced broken! What a mockery to have said to take each other for better or for worse! Above all—and this is the greatest of all divorce evils—what a defiance of God's law, that law that is wise, that is eternal! What a disobedience to His commands!

The principal ends in matrimony are mutual help and the procreation of children. The possibilities of a divorce proceeding destroys them. Rather than mutual help, we see disgusting egotism; rather than the procreation and education of children, we see marriage used for the lowest end man and woman can propose to themselves, and children roaming the world parentless and homeless. It has gone to such extremes in many cases that not even the existence of angelic little ones—the rich fruit of a union—will hold man and wife together. The home is being replaced by a room in a hotel or a little quarter in an apartment house. And, unfortunately, the lesser the homes, the greater the crimes! Would that the family hotel were a true word. We must not be skeptical of all bearing this name, but there is poison in the combination. Divorce has brought all this about and it bids fair to play yet greater havoc among people.

Certainly, humanly speaking, incompatibility sometimes exists, but it is not an instantaneous production. In almost all cases it existed when the marriage vows were pronounced; that it comes about afterward is nothing more than a manifestation of its presence. Mutual help is the parasite to its very existence. Where there is egotism, there is marriage stripped of all its qualities. Marriage

should be of compatibilities and not of foolish future expectations. They who marry their kind, for the real ends of marriage, will never know there is such a word as compatibility in the language, at least, from experience.

But how is one to know his or her kind? It is to be learned from the laws of the Church. Every Catholic is acquainted, or should be, with the chapter in the Baltimore Catechism on matrimony. There the wisdom of the Church—greater than which no other exists—is set before those considering marriage. The Church, too, is speaking with the experience of almost two thousand years to her credit. The Church predicted the only preservation of the home, and the Church today is the only preserver of the home. She has seen all the incompatibilities of today, the compatibilities of yesterday, and she is seeing them yet where God's grace is present. The Church alone puts before people the ends for which they marry. Will you doubt that, if people married from the proper motives and with the right ends in view, there would be no divorces? Must you not admit that day after day, by the hundreds, couples are marrying at an age when a bud that would otherwise some day blossom is spoiled forever? You need not call it crime. Call it imprudence if you will. But we may ask, who is to blame? Alas, in most cases it is the parents! Many of them did likewise. What is to be done? What can be done with a perverse society? Nothing, unless God and His Church be obeyed.

Catholics, fortunately, as a whole, are faithful to the Catholic law. But there are many cases where even they have followed the path of divorce. Of course, where they have done so, they have abandoned the work of their salvation, and defied their mother, the Church. Say what they will, their excuses are vain. Christ, who made the laws of marriage severe and stringent, has given to all who come under them grace sufficient to enable them to obey. In the Old Law, was different. Marriage, not being a sacrament, and not the grace attached to it that is united to it in the New Law.

Customs of countries and of peoples can never justify Catholics in any divorce proceedings. Such customs, since they are contrary to God's eternal law, cannot lawfully exist. They are a continual defiance of God's wise, eternal legislation and unless abolished in time will bring a disaster that may call what will remain of man to a realization of his folly. What God has established, man must obey. He is not bound to do so physically, but his moral obligations are eternal. Divorce, if you will; physically speaking you can do so, but God, who united you, holds you yet bound together, and worst of all, will make you render an account for your sin, which is one of the gravest of the grave. But rather than fear have for a motive love of God's law and obedience thereto. Then you will obtain the grace to overcome difficulties even of a married life that is not the most fortunate.

## MY RETURN TO THE TRUE FOLD

A TRUE STORY OF CONVERSION BY MONICA

Being orphaned early in life, I was reared by an old fashioned grandmother. A strict Methodist. At the age of nineteen, I married a Catholic. There was some opposition on the part of my people, as we were married by the priest. When my baby came a year later, the question of baptism had been settled by my marriage agreement. My husband was an indifferent Catholic, never attended Mass, and never gave any encouragement in the matter of religion. The first practical Catholic with whom I came in contact was an old lady, my nearest neighbor. If I happened in, while she was saying her Rosary, she paid no attention to me, but finished her devotions without either excuse or embarrassment. Naturally this interested me, particularly as her life measured up to her profession, and this led me to investigate what I had been taught to believe was "a priest-ridden system of ceremony and superstition." Without telling anyone where I was going, I called upon the priest who had married us, and stated my case; several months later I was baptized. It is not my intention to go into detail of my life, but for a period of twenty years I lived a practical Catholic loving my religion, and practicing its precepts under most discouraging conditions. Conditions which should have drawn me close to the Sacred Heart, but which, unfortunately, I allowed to deprive me of my Faith, and all else that I held dear. I do not wish to excuse what follows, by attaching blame to another, but eventually, after a series of misunderstandings and mistakes I allowed myself to question God's dealing with me; and after the death of my youngest son, and the seeming harshness of those to whom I looked for consolation and sympathy, I, too, became hardened and indifferent and finally left the Church.

My children married out of the Church, and have substituted the Lodge for religion. While not identified with the Church they call themselves Protestants. My son is Master Mason of his Lodge. In

February, 1922, my husband, from whom I had long been separated, sickened and died, suddenly. That he should have been given the Sacraments, he had so long ignored, and died with thoughts of God, and repentance in his heart, duly impressed me, although I would not admit it, I realized that no other Church would have been such a tender mother to a wayward child.

In my Church relationship, I was respected and looked up to, taking part in its various activities, but never quite content, always seeking something satisfying and permanent. I studied my Bible, but could not agree with what others found in it. That the Virgin Mother became a natural mother, always called forth a deep protest in my heart. That divorce and remarriage were compatible with Bible teaching, or Christian living, was absolutely impossible of belief to me. As house superintendent of a hospital, I came in close personal contact with followers of many creeds—Christian Science, Theosophy, Russellism, Mennonites, Adventists, as well as the evangelistic churches, the Episcopal Church which, with a divided Ritual, calls itself Catholic—all claiming to be right and quoting one common authority—the Bible. These facts set me thinking, and I withdrew from church membership in that City of Confusion, Protestantism.

The only people who died well were Catholic. The most patient and resigned were Catholic, and all of this made its impression upon me. Also the manner in which the priests ministered to those pitiful cancer cases, which are so offensive and hard to care for, which the Christian workers from the Protestant churches rarely visit.

With others I planned, about the first of last December, to attend the Midnight Mass at Christmas. About a week or ten days before Christmas I met a priest in a railroad station, whom I had known years ago. After the greetings were over I said, "You know, Father, that I am no longer a Catholic." He replied, "No, I do not know that; I have heard it, but I do not believe it." He asked me if I ever said my Rosary and I told him that "Presbyterians did not use a Rosary, but a Bible." In an instant came the question, "Where did you get it?" I never have had anything strike me so forcibly. After I reached my room I sat down and made a thorough examination of my life. The result was a letter to the Reverend Father telling him all about the events and conditions that had hardened my heart. How I had often wished for the consolation of the Confessional, but had lost all belief in the Real Presence in the Sacrament of the Altar. I admitted that I was unhappy and dissatisfied. The answer to that letter was a call from Father, coming some distance, from another town. He talked it all over with me. Told me just where I had failed and why. Before leaving he said he would send me a Rosary. I told him I would promise to keep it but I would not promise to say it. I also told him that if I could again believe in the Real Presence I would return to the Church, regardless of what it might cost me. He promised to remember me in his prayers and told me to say from my heart, "Lord, open my eyes," which I did frequently.

A few days before Christmas the mail brought my Rosary. I immediately became possessed with a desire to use it. Before night I had said the fifteen mysteries and have never missed a day since. At Midnight Mass on Christmas Eve I said my Rosary on my knees, asking for the gift of Faith and before Mass was over I knew the truth. I wrote the good news to Father and under his direction, by prayer and visits to the Blessed Sacrament, made preparation to return to my Father's House—I faced loss of children, position, friends, and that side of it looked dark. On the other side was the consciousness of duty, of God's ever jeering power, with the words of Jesus continually in my ears. "He that loveth father or mother more than me, is not worthy of me; and he that loveth son or daughter more than me, is not worthy of me," and also "What doth it profit a man if he gain the whole world and suffer the loss of his own soul?" Oh what exchange shall a man give for his soul? Four of my very intimate friends renounced with me in no uncertain terms, when they learned of the anticipated step, but to each I made the same reply: "When you know what you are talking about, I will gladly discuss the matter with you, but I absolutely refuse to talk with people who are not only bigoted, but ignorant. If I wish to know the character of a person I interview his friends, not his enemies. When you investigate the teachings of the Church from a Catholic source, you will understand what now seems inexplicable. I will gladly buy help from the seeker of the truth, but I will not be insulted nor allow the Church to be maligned, not even from those I love."

My children protested, my daughter less emphatically than my son, who wrote me a heart-rending letter, in which he said, "I should prefer my infant daughter to remember her grandmother as a member of the Salvation Army rather than a Catholic," and also, "I would rather see you laid away than to return to the Catholic Church." My reply was that dearly as I loved him and his family, I loved God

more, and must do what I knew to be right, and that I would never again visit his home unless by his request. In reply to what his "brother Masons would think of their Master Mason with a Catholic mother," I assured him that one thing they would never think or say was that his mother was either a hypocrite or a coward. My letter has never been answered. Being human, all of these things hurt, but the compensation has exceeded all seeming loss.

On the first anniversary of my husband's burial I was received into the Catholic Church, and a heart at peace is a priceless possession. Of my friends, one has remained loyal. When I have time off duty I visit Our Lord in the Tabernacle. On several occasions when she has wished me to spend my afternoon with her, I have explained that after my visit I would meet her. She asked me if she could go with me, and, of course, I gladly consented. I have never asked her to go with me, never mentioned the subject of religion to her, but I stormed Heaven with prayers for her conversion. A few weeks ago she came to me asking what I meant by the "Real Presence," which I most gladly explained; she admitted that from the first she had been conscious of an atmosphere in the Catholic Church never met with elsewhere; she also said she was very much upset, and attributed her unrest to my prayers. At her request I gave her Father Scott's book, "God and Myself," and the "Question Box," following them up with "Rebuilding a Lost Faith." She then decided she would like to be instructed for baptism. I gladly introduced her to one of God's priests, a saintly man who I knew would be able to help her, and when this is before your eyes on the printed page she will have had the great joy of being her sponsor. She insists that my attitude and example have been the cause of her conversion. It seems very wonderful that God should have chosen one so unworthy and proves what He can do with old rusty instruments once they are yielded to His Will. I have written this in obedience to the request of the Vicar-General of the Diocese where I belong. His tender sympathy and understanding as well as his priestly ministry made my home coming easier. If God uses it to help another discouraged one—to lead a prodigal home, or to warn the careless Catholic, and bring to him renewed faith and devotion, I shall feel well repaid for the effort it has cost me. May the dear Sacred Heart use it for His glory and for the glory of the Holy and Apostolic Church.

## WORTH REPEATING

Nearly a century ago when Archbishop John Hughes of New York lost his fight at Albany for State help for parochial schools, he returned to his people and told them to build a school to save it. And now the new Archbishop of Baltimore reiterates the words of advice; he even goes further in his insistence on the necessity of schools.

"Where there is a doubt," said the new Archbishop, directly addressing his priests, "as to which we will erect a stately church or a capacious school—let us have no hesitation in making our choice; the school."

"The battles of the past were fought on the fields of dogma. Out of the fray came the Church with the teaching of Jesus Christ, pure as it was in the catacomb days. The field has been left to her. The battles of the future will be fought on the fields of education."

"I need not tell you that if we of the Faith are to save our children to their religion, if we are to instill into their young lives moral principles that will stand them in good stead in life's fight, if we are to make them worthy of their citizenship in the Church of Christ and in this republic, then we must see to it that close to the church stands a Catholic school."—The Monitor.

## IN THE COMING YEAR

SUPPOSE WE TRY TO BE MORE CONSIDERATE TOWARD OTHERS

Standing in the doorway of the New Year we wonder, as we look into the future, what it has in store for us. Perhaps it is well that we can only wonder. It is in kindness to us that Providence hides what the future holds. Yet we are after all not entirely in the dark. We know that 1924 will be very much what we make it. If we firmly resolve in our own hearts and purpose in our minds that we will do our best to make the year happy for ourselves and for others, we can go far. If our lives are in accord with God's law we will harm none, deal honestly with all, be kind and considerate of others, lighten their burdens, cheer and encourage them in trials—then, the New Year will be filled with blessings for us that come as virtue's own reward.

It is not impossible for most of us to advance in virtue during the coming year. We can overcome many faults of character that are a source of much unhappiness. We can, for instance, cultivate a cheerful disposition, and strive always to avoid a frown. We can be more considerate of our neighbors, more

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willing to do others a good turn, less prone to transgress the laws of God. It is not necessary to make many resolutions. To attempt quietly to correct the little mistakes will count as well. It will be a real charity so to consider them.

It will be a charity, too, that begins at home. Suppose we try treating others there with more consideration. Suppose children try to show themselves worthy of all the care and cost that their parents have lavished on them. Suppose those who are "united in matrimony" try to bear one another's shortcomings more pa-

tiently. Suppose the husband try to show a little more consideration for his helpmate in life. Suppose the wife try to be somewhat more affectionate toward her husband. Couldn't we be a trifle less selfish or impatient in our dealings with others in the family circle? Couldn't we make life less burdensome and more joyous for others. It seems that we could. Suppose we try it, but try earnestly.

Here is the secret of the season: in seeking the happiness of others we will find happiness ourselves, and surely then it will be for us a happy New Year.—The Echo.

## As an aid to Cooking



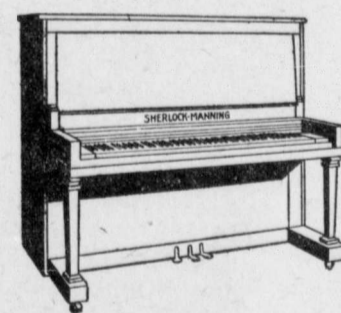
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