

FIVE MINUTE SERMON

BY REV. M. BOSSAERT

SIXTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

THE BEST POSITION

In human life, as at a banquet, there is a great variety of places and positions; one man occupies a seat of honor, another is at the bottom of the table, and between the top and the bottom are all sorts of places, more or less honorable and responsible. Which of them ought we to choose for ourselves? Which will be the best for us?—Let us take this subject today and consider it shortly.

1. When we come into contact with people, we often perceive that very many of them are discontented with their position in life. A man living in the country envies the inhabitants of towns; a laborer wishes that he were a manufacturer; a servant would like to be a master, a poor man would fain be rich, a bachelor would prefer to be married, and many people living in the world wish that they were in a convent. Innumerable desires of every imaginable sort are constantly expressed, and people seem to fancy that they would be perfectly happy if only they could change places with others.

It does not, however, follow that the position which we should choose for ourselves is really the best for us; we are too short-sighted and too easily deceived to be capable of forming a correct opinion. We are apt to judge by the outside of things, whereas the truth is usually concealed inside them.

It is often a great mistake to suppose that this or that position make us happy for time and for eternity. Many have learned this lesson by sad experience; they give themselves no rest until by dint of hard work and violent efforts they have attained what they believe to be a very desirable position, and as soon as they reach their goal, the veil falls from their eyes, and they realize that they have made a bad choice. Consequently they become more discontented than they were before, and learn at last that the position in which God placed them was after all the best for them, and not that which they desired to occupy.

2. We believe in Divine Providence, which arranges and directs everything, and Holy Scripture teaches us that nothing happens without God's command, and that all a man's steps are guided by the Lord. Our Divine Saviour told us that the hairs of our head are all numbered, and that not a sparrow falls to the ground unless it is God's will. Since, therefore, His providence orders and directs everything, both great and small, since it even guides our steps and numbers the hairs on your heads, and since nothing happens without sanction from above, we may be perfectly sure that, in determining our position in life, God exercises His fatherly care and places each one where He would have him be. For this reason He gives a man particular talents and capabilities for some definite calling, and also an inclination to and pleasure in its pursuit. In His goodness and wisdom He directs the course of each one's life, so as to bring him to the position destined for him. Of course it is possible to resist God's will and thwart His designs; a man may even thrust himself into some position for which he was never intended, but as a general rule we must admit that by His wonderful guidance of men's destiny, God brings each to the precise place where He wishes him to be. He places one on a throne, another in a workshop; one has to use a pen and another a plough; one is master, another is servant, etc., just as it pleases Him in His unfathomable wisdom, and just as most conducive to the salvation of each individual.

It follows clearly from these considerations that the position which each of us occupies is the best for that person, because it is the position assigned him by God: What God ordains must certainly be the best, since He, being all goodness and love, desires nothing but what is good for us. Hence the place where we are is undoubtedly the best place, and we should fail to discover a better, though we might seek the whole world over. Yet this does not by any means imply that we must always remain in our present position, for God may have other views with regard to us, and if so, He will reveal them in some way or other; He has power so to order events that we shall sooner or later be in another position, which will then be the best place for us.

You see now which is the best place for you; therefore do not grumble at your position and calling, and do not envy others whose position in human society appears to you higher and more desirable than your own. Be contented with your lot, for it has been assigned to you by God, your loving Father. In His boundless wisdom, with the intention of thus leading you on to eternal salvation. Only be careful to discharge faithfully and conscientiously the duties of your position, doing all for love of God, and then when the times comes for our Lord to requite each according to his works, you, too, will receive your reward in everlasting glory. Amen.

IRISH PARLIAMENT OF 17TH CENTURY

An interesting account of the Irish Parliament of 1689 is given in the current Dublin Review by Michael MacDonagh. The article shows that only for about two months in the 17th century did Ireland have a free and native Parliament, a Catholic Parliament in a Catholic country, a Parliament as freely chosen and representative of the nation as it could be under the restrictive laws of election then in vogue, and a Parliament independent of any outside control.

Dublin held high festival during that brief period in the Spring of 1689. On Palm Sunday, March 24, it was particularly gay. For a great personage was coming. James II., the last Catholic King of England, as he was to be, having fled to France from his rebellious Protestant subjects, had come to Ireland to try to recover his crown with the aid of the Catholic Irish. He landed at Kinsale in Cork, March 12, about a month after the election by the English Convention Parliament at Westminster of his son-in-law and daughter, William and Mary to the throne of the kingdom.

Ireland was fated to be the battleground of the Jacobites against the Williamites. The country was already in a state of civil war. The English and Scottish settlers and most of the Irish Protestants had declared for the Prince of Orange. The dispossessed Catholic Irish and Anglo-Irish rallied to the standard of James, not because they loved James, but because his cause was Ireland's cause.

SUMMONS PARLIAMENT. In the Catholic Parliament summoned by James II. in 1689 the House of Commons was composed of 224 members, all Catholics except six. In the House of Lords were 54 peers, among them four or five temporal peers who were Protestants, and four prelate peers of the Established Church—the Bishops of Meath, Ossory, Cork and Limerick. None of the Catholic Bishops were called to the House of Lords.

Macaulay, with amusing scorn, points out that the names of the Commons sufficiently indicated the religious and political temper of the Assembly. "Among the Irish Parliaments of that age," the writer quotes him as saying: "this Parliament was filled with Dermots and Geobegans, O'Neills and O'Donovans, MacMahons, Macnamaras, Magillincudies."

"More than all that," says the writer, "I notice that one of the knights of the shire for the county of Dublin was Patrick Sarsfield, a name which, for the gallant memories it recalls from the Jacobite war, shines on the page with golden radiance. Therefore, though many of the members of the Catholic Parliament of 1689 were, in a sense, nominated rather than elected—the case was not only in every Irish Parliament but in every English Parliament of this epoch—they were representative of the religious faith and political aspirations of the vast mass of the people in that momentous hour of exalted national consciousness.

FAMILIES AND TITLES. "If Macaulay had examined the roll of the House of Lords he would have had equal cause for indignation at the absence of English surnames, such surnames, for instance, as Heapy, Ebenezer, Goffy and Brag hill, which I find in records of the period. Instead of these, there were historic and representative Irish and Norman families and titles such as Donagh MacCarthy, Earl of Clan-carry; Richard Nugent, Earl of Westmeath; Richard Butler, Viscount Mountgarret; Arthur Macgonnell, Viscount Fingh; Daniel O'Brien, Viscount Clare; Justin McCarthy, Viscount Mount Cashel; Edward Birmingham, Baron of Athlery; Robert Barnswell, Baron of Trimleston; Connor Maguire, Baron of Inniskillin; Christopher Plunket, Baron of Dunsany and Brian Fitzpatrick, Baron of Upper Ossory. Macaulay is also vexed because the highest offices in the State, in the Army and in the Courts of Justice were, with scarcely an exception, filled by "Papists." The Lord Lieutenant, and the head of the Army, was Richard Talbot, Earl of Tyrconnel, a cadet of that Catholic family, the Talbots of Malahide. Thomas Nugent—a Roman Catholic, says Macaulay—was Chief Justice of the King's Bench. Keating, a highly respectable Protestant, was still Chief Justice of the Common Pleas, but—a very big 'but' in the opinion of the historian—two Roman Catholic Judges sat with him. Richard Nagle, 'editorial' to a Jesuit College, was Attorney General. And appropriately completing the band of law makers and law administrators who had the effrontery to be Catholics in a Catholic land, and their final condemnation, the Lord Chancellor was one 'who had apostatized from the Protestant religion,' Alexander Fi ton, Baron Gosworth in the county of Limerick.

VERY REPRESENTATIVE. "In truth, the Parliament was very representative and possessed real national authority. Its objects were to make the government of Ireland Irish; to re-establish the supremacy of the ancient religion of the country and to restore to the Catholics the lands of which their fathers or grand fathers had been despoiled because of their faith by the Cromwellian confiscation which followed the suppression of the Catholic Rebellion of 1641. The Bills for which the Parliament has been chiefly condemned by Macaulay were one for the repeal of the Acts of Settlement upon which the title of the Protestants to the confiscated lands rested, and another known as the Bill of Attainder, containing the names of 8,000 Protestants in rebellion against King James.

These measures, however, came to naught. The cause of James went down at the Battle of the Boyne, twelve months after the Parliament had ceased legislating. Five years later, in 1695, the succeeding Irish Parliament of the Protestant and British colony, passed an Act—(7 William III. c. 1)—annulling all the statutes of 1689. It was also ordered that the rolls wherein the said Acts or pretended Acts, and every one of them are recorded or engrossed, and all the Journals of the said pretended Parliament, and other books or writings in any wise relating thereto, were to be brought to the Council Chamber in Dublin Castle, and there publicly and openly cancelled and utterly destroyed. But happily there has survived some contemporary pamphlets dealing with the proceedings of the Parliament of 1689, which are preserved in the Library of the British Museum, and it is with the aid mainly of these publications that I hope to be able to present a picture of the two Houses at work.

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PARLIAMENT'S ASSEMBLY

"The Parliament assembled on May 7th, and was opened by King James. It met in a suppressed Friary of Dominicans, which stood by the Liffey, on the site now occupied by the Four Courts, and was then used as the King's Inn. James, wearing purple robes and a crown, both of which were made for him in Dublin, took his seat on a throne in the House of Lords. The Commons were sent for, and as they had yet no Speaker, they came in headed by their Clerk, John Kerney. The King made a speech to both Houses. In passages of lofty seriousness and purpose, he said: "I have always been for liberty of conscience and against invading any man's property, having still in my mind that saying in Holy Writ: 'Do as you would be done to, for that is the Law and the Prophets.' It was this liberty of conscience I gave which my enemies, both abroad and at home, dreaded, especially when they saw that I was resolved to have it established by law in all my Dominions, and made them set themselves up against me, though for different reasons, seeing that if I had once settled it, my people (in the opinion of the one) would have been too happy; and I (in the opinion of the other) too great.

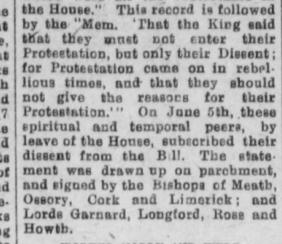
He added: "And whosoever I am master I design (God willing) to establish it by law, and have no other test or distinction but that of loyalty." He also said: "I shall most readily consent to the making of such good and wholesome laws as may be for the general good of the nation, the improvement of trade, and the relieving of such as have been injured by the late Acts of Settlement, as far far as may be consistent with Reason, Justice and the Public Good of my people." The Commons were then bidden by the Lord Chancellor to go to their House, and choose a Speaker. Within half an hour they returned, and presented Sir Richard Nagle, the Attorney-General, as Speaker, and their choice was approved by the King. The Houses afterward adjourned until 10 o'clock the next morning.

James had been accustomed to attend debates in the House at Westminster, the writer points out. He appears to have done this regularly in Dublin. Under date of May 14 it is recorded that one of the Bills brought up from the Commons provided that an Act of Parliament in England shall not bind Ireland. This bill was one of the most important measures of the Parliament. It repealed Poyning's Law, which bound the Irish Parliament in subordination to that of England. It laid down the principle of Ireland's separate nationality, for which William Molynets and Dean Swift contended at the opening of the 18th century, and which Henry Grattan was successful in establishing when he carried legislative independence in 1872, the principle that the King, Lords and Commons of Ireland were alone competent to make laws binding on the Irish nation.

"WERE NOT SLAVES" "Though Catholics," they were not slaves said Grattan, referring to the Parliament of 1689. "They wrung from James a constitution before they accompanied him to the field." "In saying that," the writer states, "Grattan was unfair to James. There is no evidence that the King was opposed to the Bill." "The Lords also spent several days on the Bill for repealing the Acts of Settlement," the writer points out. "It was uncompromisingly opposed by the Bishop of Meath, Dr. Anthony Dopping, a very able and fearless supporter of the Protestant interests in the Parliament. On May 23 h. the House of Lords resolved itself into Grand Committee on the Bill. The Journal says: 'The Bill of Repeal read by paragraphs; some objections made which occasioned some altercation. Motion made for adjourning till Thursday because Wednesday was a holiday. The King asked, what holiday? Answered, the Restoration of his brother and House, etc.' He replied, the latter to restore those loyal Catholic gentlemen that had suffered

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about riches and his frequent admonitions for us to lay up treasures in Heaven rather than on earth, have placed in the hearts of all true Christians the ideal of happiness. "The world will ever be divided into two classes, the rich and the poor. Dives and Lazarus will one day exchange places, however. In this world the one is dressed in fine lincens and feasts sumptuously, the other seeks for the crumbs that fall from the master's table; but in the next world Lazarus from Abraham's bosom will look down upon Dives pleading piteously for the drop of water. The secret of happiness depends upon our ideals. The truly wise man has learned it. It was told of Our Lord to a certain rich young man in the Gospel who inquired the road to perfect happiness, 'Go, sell all thou hast and give it to the poor. Then come and Follow Me.'—The Pilot.

THE TRUE IDEAL

Many today are obsessed with the false notion that wealth is happiness. They toil and moil, day by day, to accumulate riches that they can hand down to their posterity. Yet only too often they are depriving themselves of the finer things of life and placing upon their children a handicap to happiness in this life and in the life to come. Contentment and happiness cannot be purchased by dollars. The words of the Founder of Christianity

THE BOOK OF KELLS

In the year 1539 the Irish Monastery of Kells became the property of the Crown and its great literary treasures were scattered to the four winds. Among them was the wonderful volume known as the Book of Kells, which, as a specimen of illumination and writing, has no superior in all Europe. It is a copy of the Gospels, and dates from the end of the seventh or the beginning of the eighth century. In the year 1606 it was stolen from the church at Kells, and was found after a long search covered with earth and despoiled of its cover. At present the book finds a home in the library of Trinity College, Dublin, where it is safe, however uncongenial its surroundings may be. It has been injured by binders and the ravages of time, but the wondrous beauty of form and color remains.

It is said that the Book of Kells is written with such precision that one may examine it for hours with the strongest magnifying glass without finding a faulty line or an irregular interlineation. In a space scarcely three-quarters of an inch long and less than half an inch wide there have been counted one hundred and fifty-eight distinct designs. Especially beautiful are the illuminated initials, which include representations of the Blessed Virgin and the Evangelists, together with miniature scenes of Our Lord in various scenes of His life. Each one is a marvel of art. Indeed, so wondrous is the workmanship, that for a long time it was believed that the Book of Kells could have been written only by angels.

There is another illuminated MS. at Trinity College, the work upon which is supposed to have been done by St. Columba himself. This is the Book of Durrow, and in it there is this entry in Latin: "I pray thy blessedness, O holy presbyter, Patrick, that whosoever shall take this book into his hands may remember the writer, Columba, who has himself written this Gospel in the space of twelve days by the grace of Our Lord."

St. Columba is said to have transcribed with his own hand no fewer than three hundred manuscripts of the Gospels and Psalms. The transcription of the Holy Scriptures indeed was his chief occupation. His life was written by St. Adamnan, who is also the author of a treatise on the Holy Land, valuable as being one of the earliest produced in Europe.

These books were enclosed in metal covers, or shrines, which were bedecked with jewels and elaborate carving. On one silver shrine may still be read the inscription: "The prayer and blessing of St. Columba be upon Flaun, son of Malachi, King of Ireland, who caused this cover to be made!"

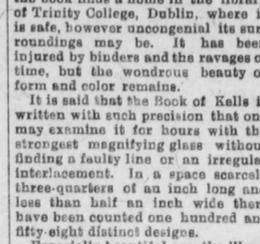
BOOK SHRINES

The cumbrets, or book shrines, hold, perhaps, the chief place in col-

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The Grey Nuns in the Far North

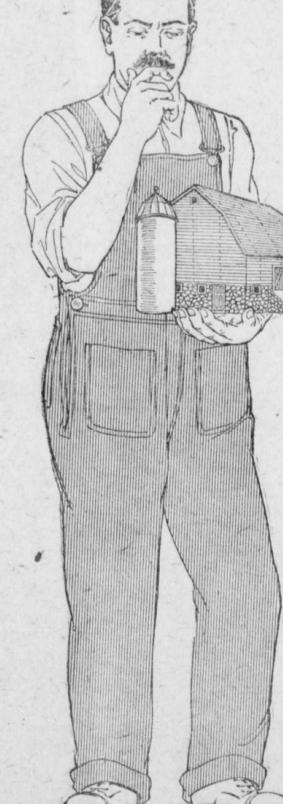
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