

FIVE-MINUTE SERMON.

Fifth Sunday after Easter.

THE THREE STEPS TO HEAVEN.

Blessed is the man whose help is from the Lord; in his heart he hath depended to ascend by steps. (Psalm lxxxviii, 6)

Next Thursday the Church will celebrate the feast of the Ascension of our Lord; the day on which His sojourn in this vale of tears came to an end, when He entered upon the possession of that glory which He had won by His obedience in this world. In the Collect which is said at Mass on this feast we ask "that we who believe that Thy only Son, our Redeemer, ascended this day into heaven, may also have our hearts fixed on heavenly things."

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case the real meaning of the word, it is indispensable to pay attention to the circumstances as well as to the nature of the power, the exercise of which is to be prevented or limited."

Mr. Mallock thus elucidates the freedom of thought enjoyed by Catholics in religious matters: "Infallibility is not a fetter only; it is a support also; and those who cling to it can venture fearlessly, as explorers, into currents of speculation that would sweep away altogether men who did but trust to their own powers of swimming."

Just as the scientist, when he has conquered and made his own the truths of physical knowledge has narrowed the field of his speculation to the extent of the truths ascertained, so does divine authority, acting through its duly commissioned teachers, take possession of the field of divine truth, and thus the dogmas of revealed religion support, strengthen and elevate human reason, place it upon a reliable basis, and by illumination, enable it to pierce more safely into the realms of undefined and speculative truth.

Permit us to quote another passage from the author already mentioned: "The Catholic Church is the only dogmatic religion that has seen what dogmatism really implies, and what will, in the long run, be demanded of it, and she contains in herself all appliances for meeting these demands. She alone has seen that, if there is to be an infallible voice in the world, this voice must be a living one, as capable of speaking now, as it ever was in the past; and that as the world's capability for knowledge grows, the teacher must be always able to unfold to it a fuller teaching. The Catholic Church is the only historical religion that can conceivably adapt itself to the wants of the present day, without virtually ceasing to be itself. It is the only religion that can keep its life without losing its identity; that can enlarge its teachings without changing them; that can be always the same, and yet be always developing."

As this is an important point, we should like to make its explanation very clear, and therefore, may be pardoned for presenting another quotation. The celebrated Dr. Brownson says: "The Protestant is fond of calling us slaves because we recognize the Pope as our head, and forgets that, unless he is fibbing, he is, to say the least, as great a slave as we. He is no more at liberty to believe or to do anything contrary to the teachings and precepts of the Bible than we are to believe or to do anything contrary to the definitions and prescriptions of the Holy Father."

How then are we less free than he? The only difference between us in respect to authority is that he places it in the record of what God said by men in ancient times, and we in what He teaches and commands through the voice of a living Pontiff.

SECRECY OF THE CONFESSIONAL.

INTERESTING DISCUSSION BY THE HON. WILLIAM J. O'BANAN.

A rejoinder to his luminous article on the Secrecy of the Confessional, published in last week's Telegraph from the Chicago Record-Herald, has called forth another interesting communication from the Hon. William J. O'Banan.

There is scarcely occasion or necessity that I should make any rejoinder to the courteous notice by Mr. David of my article on "The Secrecy of the Confessional." Substantially he is in concurrence with it on the essential point—the justice and necessity for exempting priests from disclosing the confession of a penitent.

I need not say that, law or no law, a priest would under no circumstances yield to such a demand. Indeed, it is hardly conceivable that any court or judge in this country, or indeed, any other country would seek to enforce a requirement so repugnant to every consideration of religion, of honor or of common justice.

Mr. David seeks to place the professional privilege of the attorney and the physician—and also the press—on the same plane as that of the priest. The position of the priest in his relation to the penitent is of a different character, involving a solemnly higher responsibility, and far deeper and graver consequences.

The confidence entrusted to the attorney and the physician presupposes the obligation of professional and personal honor, which should be respected, but is far, very far, from carrying with it, or imposing the degree and conditions of sanctity and solemnity which attaches to a sacramental confession made to the priest, with all the restrictions and obligations—and I may add penalties—joined to the sacrament.

The force of this point needs no further demonstration. The Catholic Church guards by the most solemn junctions and by the most rigorous and severe ecclesiastical penalties the

secrecy and individuality of the confessional.

In the decree of the Council of Trent on the subject of the sacrament of penance it is declared:

"As all are anxious that their sins should be buried in eternal secrecy, the faithful are to be admonished that there is no reason whatever to apprehend that what is made known in confession will ever be revealed by any priest, or that, by the penitent can at any time be brought into danger or difficulty of any sort."

All laws, human and divine, guard the inviolability of the seal of confession, and against its sacrilegious infraction the Church denounces the heaviest chastisements."

The great Council of Lateran admonished priests in the most solemn manner to "take especial care, neither by a word nor sign nor by any other means whatever, to betray in the least degree the secret trust confided to him by the sinner."

It is a striking and significant testimony to the inviolability of confession—the sanctity attaching to the sacrament of penance—that scarcely an instance has ever been known of the violation by a priest of the obligation of secrecy.

In the period of the atrocious penal laws, when Catholics had, I may say, no rights and their religion and their priests were under ban, attempts were sometimes made to enforce the priests to disclose the confidences given to them in confession. The prison, the most barbarous torture, every diabolical device to inflict pain that inhuman ingenuity could devise, were employed without avail. The scaffold did not daunt, and death, with its attendant horrors peculiar to that evil period, never once found a priest weak enough to betray his sacerdotal obligations.

More remarkable still, in the case of priests who have abandoned the faith and who, in instances have fallen into evil ways otherwise, no example is known, as far as I am aware, that any of the class proved unfaithful in this regard.

My purpose in taking up this subject was suggested by the publicity given to the case lately before a local court, in which it was sought to obtain from the priest information which appeared to have been acquired in confession. The New York case, which I cited, similar in character, appeared to be little known—even to the profession—hence I thought it would serve a useful purpose to present a summary of it, which I accordingly did. The authority of a name as well known in American history as that of Governor De Witt Clinton, who presided over the court, seemed to me to give special weight to the decision, which was unanimous, there being four sitting magistrates.

Still more I was impressed by the lucid and luminous reasons given by the court in the judgment exonerating Father Kahlman, and upholding the sacredness and inviolability of confession to a priest.

The court found justification for this action in the principles of the common law, and even higher and more binding force in the constitution of the State, which assured religious freedom to all, and guarded the rights of conscience with scrupulous jealousy.

To maintain the contrary, as that court declared, would be "to render the liberty of conscience a mere illusion, to subvert all the principles of sound reasoning and overthrow all the convictions of common sense."

MASONRY LEAVES CHRIST OUTSIDE HIS WORSHIP.

WHY THE CHURCH'S CONDEMNATION OF THE CRAFT IS WORLD-WIDE.

"Freemasonry" was the subject of a lecture delivered by Rev. Joseph M. Woods, S. J., of Woodstock College, in Gonzaga Hall last Sunday night, says the Washington Catholic.

"The principles of Freemasonry are anti-Catholic and anti-Christian," said Father Woods. "It is not so hard to understand why the Catholic Church should be opposed to Freemasonry in countries like France and Italy, judging from the way in which the lodge have shown by their deeds, by their persecuting treatment and by their open rejection of religion that they are emphatically not only anti Catholic, but also anti Christian."

"But in America and England it is quite different. Here Freemasonry poses as the friend of religion and professes to be a staunch holder of all Christian and human law. In all its proceedings God is recognized with an outward show of honor and respect. The lodges boast of their benevolence and their charity."

"It is not because of these things that the Catholic Church condemns the craft. It has not a word to say against the good it does or may do. But these good things, like the benevolence of the sect, are only the accidental and secondary element of Freemasonry. Men's lives are happily often better than their principles, as happens, indeed, with many Masons."

"What the Catholic Church does condemn in Freemasonry are its principles, and these principles are the same in all Freemasonry. In America, in England, on the continent of Europe, everywhere the principles of Freemasonry are a staunch holder of all Christian and human law, and here the Catholic Church has placed the organization under the ban."

To prove his statement that the principles of Freemasonry of America and England, though not carried to their natural consequences, were anti Catholic and anti-Christian, Dr. Woods argued that the theory of Freemasonry as founded in England, and changed by the Masonic architects and authors, had adopted the universal creed, based on the Fatherhood of God and the Christian creed, and all it implies was replaced by a universal creed that any man of any religion might accept.

not the God of revelation, and, therefore, not the God of the Bible. This certainly is not true Christianity.

"Masonry in America and England leaves Christ outside its worship. In its basic principles it has set aside Christ. This it must do to be true to its fundamental principle."

Admires The Irish.

Father Bernard Vaughan, S. J., the eminent preacher, although a thorough Englishman, is a great admirer of the Irish people.

Speaking in the East End on the Feast of St. Patrick, Father Vaughan enlarded the Irish as a race of brave men and pure women whose faith, to borrow the language of St. Paul, "was spoken of throughout the world." He was glad to read that Mr. Kilduff, the Irish leader had told them how the Irish party were going to fight for the rights of Catholics parents. The Education Bill had overlooked the legitimate claims of Catholics. Instead of being penalized for their religion, Catholics ought to be subsidized for it. In the not distant future, if the birth-rate continued growing horribly less, the country would have to rely on Catholics for school-going children. Father Vaughan exclaimed: No words of mine can express my admiration for that race of men and women who, recognizing God's claims upon them and the sacred trust committed to their care, continue in spite of bad example and of sin in the face of poverty, to uphold the laws of God and to transmit to the children lent them by the Almighty a physique untainted, a nature unsoiled and a faith "unspotted from the world."—True Voice.

The Open Pulpit.

Rev. J. B. Haslam was a member of an order known in the Presbyterian Episcopal Church as the Companions of the Holy Saviour. He was born in England and had been in charge of parishes in St. Paul and Chicago. He was received into the Church in Philadelphia, and has taken up his residence with the Paulist Fathers in New York. In a short time he will enter the Paulist House of Studies at the Catholic University, to prepare for the priesthood.

In an interview he was asked: Did the adoption of Canon No. 19, on the open pulpit, by the last general convention of the Episcopal Church, influence you?

"No, but the adoption of that canon accentuated the dissatisfaction which exists among the High Church party by throwing open the pulpits and handing over the Episcopal Church to Protestant revivalists during Lent. In connection with the open pulpit, too, the increasing domination of the laity is a growing and alarming feature. It was the laymen who so readily compassed the passage of Canon No. 19."

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