

FIVE MINUTE SERMON

BY REV. M. DOSSAERT
FIFTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER
PENTECOST

WE KNOW NOT WHEN, HOW AND
WHERE DEATH WILL
OVERTAKE US

The thought of the young man on his bier, of whom we read in today's Gospel, arouses very serious and profitable considerations in our minds. We are reminded of the solemn truth that each of us, sooner or later, will die, as he did, on a bier ready for burial. Yes, the hour will come, when the Angel of Death will lay his hand upon us, when our hearts will cease to beat, and our limbs will stiffen; the hour will come for the bell to toll, and for our bodies to be carried to the grave. We know not when this hour will be; our own experience and Holy Scripture both teach us that it is hidden from us, but no reasonable person can possibly doubt that one day he will have to die.

1. We know not when he shall die. "No man knoweth when his end shall be," he is aware that he will die, and that every step brings him nearer to the grave, but he cannot tell when death will overtake him, whether by day or by night, whether soon or at some distant date. Our Divine Saviour often told His disciples that they would not know at what hour the Lord would come, and bade them be vigilant. No position and no age affords security against death. You will be convinced of this truth if you go into the churchyard and read the inscriptions over the graves; every age is liable to death.

2. We know not how we shall die.—what will be the manner of our death. Death presents itself in many different forms; some die after a long illness, others suddenly; some receive the Sacraments of the Church, others are deprived of all spiritual assistance; some linger on for years, in constant expectation of death, others pass away without a moment's warning; some die in an easy death, others suffer a terrible agony. Yes; death comes in many different forms, and we know not how it will come to us.

Where we shall die is equally uncertain; but there is no place in the world where death cannot find us out. "If I take my wings early in the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea," even there he will discover me; nowhere can I be safe from him, neither in town nor country, neither on mountain nor in valley; neither in a palace nor in a cottage; everywhere I am within reach of His powerful hand and of His shaft. One man dies at home, another abroad; one in his bed, another amidst the waves of the sea; one in church, another at some place of amusement; nowhere is safety to be found; death may meet you as you play, as you eat, or as you are about to commit some sin; you know not where you will die.

3. We shall all die. Almighty God Himself said: "Thou shalt return to the earth out of which thou wast taken, for dust thou art, and unto dust thou shalt return." This is undoubtedly true; we shall all die, although we know not when, how or where. Is it not, therefore, how foolish for any man to live as if he were never likely to die? or let his heart cling to this wretched world, when that poor heart of his will perhaps soon cease to beat? Is it not the height of folly to be anxious about ensuring one's happiness in this life, and to forget eternity? What shall we say of a man who devotes all his energy towards emulating his hour of death and making his life after death unspokeably miserable? Or of one who spends his short span of life here in shameful sins and lust? How terrible will be the remorse and despair of such men, when they realize too late that death has them in his grip! Let us never act thus foolishly, but often think of death. This thought will stimulate us to sow as we hope to reap in eternity, and to lay up treasures "where neither rust nor moth doth consume, and where thieves do not break through and steal." Because we do not know when, where and how we shall die, let us no longer delay, but break at once with the world and sin, so that henceforth we may seriously prepare for a happy death. Amen.

PROPAGATION AND DEFENSE OF CHRISTIAN PRINCIPLES

Read the following and ponder the matter deeply. Cardinal O'Connell says:

"A Catholic paper is as much a necessity as a church. It is as much the duty of every priest in the diocese to stand for it, aid it, and work for its widest diffusion among the people as it is to build and support a school. It is all for the same purpose, object and aim—the propagation and defense of Christian Catholic principles. Our Holy Father, acknowledged as a pontiff of superior human wisdom and practical good sense, has voiced all this in words which leave no doubt in the mind of the true priest. 'In vain will you build and teach and preach until you support and diffuse a Catholic paper.' These, in brief are his very words. The priest who, after hearing this, still remains inactive, ready only to offer criticism, is unworthy of his office. It is as if the soldier in the face of attack

stopped to quarrel over the varnish on his rifle."

FRANCE AND THE VATICAN

The Christian Science Monitor seldom overlooks an opportunity to vent its venom against the Catholic Church. Its prejudice is so great that its reason and judgment are biased to an extent which must be apparent even to the less astute. For instance, in a recent issue the Monitor has a lengthy article from Paris on the French policy in regard to the Vatican, in which it seeks to use the canonization in Rome of Joan of Arc to make capital against Catholicism.

The canonization of the Maid of Domremy, it is asserted, was decreed as a means to "recover ancient papal prestige in the politics of Europe." The fact that the first steps towards the canonization of Joan were taken many, many years ago—long before the French Government adopted its hostile policy towards Catholicism and exiled Catholic religious orders from France—is completely ignored by the Monitor. Undoubtedly it was ignored in the expectation that the public's ignorance of the fact could be relied upon. The Monitor said:

"A big bid for political power is being made and it is by means of the Joan of Arc canonization and celebration that this case is to be furthered. Naturally, in France, the ceremony is taken as a compliment to the country of which Joan will be the patron saint. The people are impressed and even the most anti-Roman Catholic Republicans find themselves tongue-tied in view of this appeal to national sentiment."

The impression sought to be conveyed is that the canonization was undertaken to influence political sentiment. How ridiculous is this supposition when it is known that the first steps for Joan's canonization were taken as far back as 1869? The Monitor would scoff at Papal infallibility, but seemingly would accept the idea of the Vatican's omniscience. Unless he were able to see the future, how could the reigning Pontiff in the late sixties divine the political questions the Church would have to confront in France fifty years later and take action which would enable Pope Benedict, in the Year of Our Lord, 1920, to meet these difficulties with a canonization which would "be a big bid for political power."

When Combes & Co. were in control of the French Government and made war on the Church and the religious orders they sought to justify their course by allegations that the Church was seeking to undermine the Government. The War and the conditions which have followed the War have proven how preposterous the charges made by Combes & Co. were. During the War the French army was commanded by Marshal Foch and Marshal Petain, both Catholics, and among the greatest division commanders were Generals Gouraud, Castelnau, and Mangin, also Catholics. France's chief dependence in her darkest hours was on her Catholic captains. Moreover, when the War was ended and the anarchists and syndicalists threatened the stability of the French Government, the support which the Government strongly needed to sustain it was obtained from the Roman Catholic labor element, which refused to be a party to the destructive policy of the atheistic extreme Socialists.

The Christian Science Monitor in its article admits the aid given by the Catholic workmen to the Government in the time of industrial stress, although it attempts to distort the motive which prompted it. It says: "The issue of the election was Bolshevism for which the Socialists were said to stand, and conservatism (conservatism of a rather extreme kind) for which the Bloc National stood. In their fear of Bolshevism, even the old Republicans and some of the Radicals accepted the co-operation of the Roman Catholic parties (such as that which calls itself Action Libérale) and are to a certain extent committed to the Roman Catholic programme."

The fact is, as is well known to all who have followed the news of the labor troubles in France, that while the Catholic organization stood firm for all of the professional demands of their class they refused to become parties to violence against the Government. For this patriotic stand they were highly commended by the French Premier.

A noteworthy illustration of the stupid unfairness of the Monitor towards Catholicism is found in a contrast of statements which are taken from consecutive paragraphs in the Joan canonization article. In one paragraph this statement is made: "In other words, it was recognized that the Vatican is going to exercise considerable political influence in Europe and that the influence may be directed against France if France is not on the spot to negotiate, to intrigue, and to defend her own policy with regard to those regions. Without representation she would be at a disadvantage and the Pope would have an advantage."

The very next paragraph of the article begins with this statement: "The Vatican has lost much influence during the War because it attempted to hold the balance too carefully between the belligerents."

Of course, if the Vatican lost power during the War it would not be in a position now "to exercise considerable political influence in many parts of Europe." It is impossible to lose power and to increase influence at

the same time except in a Christian Science Monitor article designed to bring discredit on the Catholic Church.

The whole purpose of the Monitor's prejudiced article in the Joan canonization is to spread the idea that the Vatican canonized Joan of Arc as a sop to French sentiment in the hope of improving the relations between the Vatican and the Government of France. If the Monitor had any disposition to be fair it might have seen in the gratitude of the French people for the spirit of the Catholic soldiers, many of them priests formerly exiles; in the inspired service of Catholic generals, and in the spirit of the Catholic workmen during the industrial stress following the War, the real reason why the French Government, of its own initiative, sought to atone to the Church by honorable amends for past unjust persecution.—Catholic Standard and Times.

DIVORCE-MADE-EASY

NEW MEASURE THAT DEFIES DIVINE LAW

(By "M. C. L." in Catholic Herald)

At the third reading of the Divorce-made-easy Bill the Archbishop of Canterbury was asked whether he believed that if the innocent party in a divorce for adultery re-married, he or she would commit adultery, and his Grace answered "No." Thus the Privy Council of the Established Church of England accepted divorce in the case of adultery, and would allow the innocent party to marry again, though such a union is distinctly forbidden by Our Divine Lord. "Whosoever shall put away his wife, except for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery, and he that shall marry her that is put away committeth adultery." (St. Matthew xix. 9.)

Whosoever shall put away his wife and marry another, committeth adultery against me; and if the wife shall put away her husband, and marry another, she committeth adultery." (St. Mark x. 11-12.)

"Every one that putteth away his wife and marrieth another, committeth adultery; and he that marrieth her that is put away from her husband committeth adultery." (St. Luke xvi. 18.) It is perfectly clear from those words that the husband cannot marry another as long as the wife whom he has put away is living, and the same applies to the wife. No state, no head of any sect, no civil court or judge, can utter a decree that can override a positive prohibition of God.

There is a divorce allowed by the Catholic Church, but it does not touch the essence of the marriage tie, which is indissoluble, lasting until the death of one or the other. For grave reason the Church permits the married couple to live apart, but maintains that they are still married, that they are united by a bond which only death can sever, and consequently may not enter into any further matrimonial alliance. The law of the land may decree that the innocent party is free to marry again, but the Church, the guardian of the Sacraments, the witness and interpreter of the Scriptures, says that he or she is not free, that such freedom is forbidden by Christ in the New Law; and her teaching is the truth, it is what her Founder taught, and what was taught in the Apostolic age. One of her great theologians has written that the sacramental bond remains, though husband and wife have separated and joined themselves to others; "as long as they live the bond of marriage lasts, which neither separation nor union with another can undo." And St. Thomas Aquinas: "Nothing supervening on matrimony can dissolve it. As long as both parties are alive, neither may seek fresh matrimony." The Church cannot admit any claims of the secular power to interfere in a matter which affects the souls of her children, the sanctity of the Christian home, and the well-being of society. She has always opposed the marrying again of divorced persons.

In these days, it would seem that when a husband is tired of his wife, or she of him, they have simply to supply a certain account of evidence—a stay at a hotel with another person, for instance—to be able to withdraw from the existing alliance, and take up another that is, for the time at least, more congenial. Whilst they lay the just and reasonable to free the innocent party from a union which has been violated and dishonored by the other contracting party, it is outrageous to make of a sin the way of freeing a person from the matrimonial bond, to form a new alliance, that also may be set aside sooner or later. Our Divine Lord raised marriage to the dignity of a Sacrament, and for the honor and sanctification of Christian marriage He was pleased to honor the marriage-feast at Cana with His presence, and there to work His first miracle. The Sacrament of Matrimony is an antitype of His union with His Church. "He has but one Church as His Holy Bride, which He has loved, for which He has died, for whose sake He spent Himself to the end. Even so, a man can have but one wife, whom he too should cherish, on whose behalf he too should sacrifice himself. The Church loves and serves and is true to Jesus Christ her Lord. There we have a perfect model for the Christian wife." "That which God hath joined together let no man put asunder." Those are the words of Christ. His Church repeats them through the ages. "In every truly Christian home the Sacrament of Matrimony, with the stability which

is due to the bond that death alone can sever, remains another of the works of Christ, yet another proof of His Divine power." In "the present distress," and in view of the famine's attitude, it is comforting to find in a popular novel a more exalted estimate of marriage obligations than prevails amongst too many. The heroine in a fury of jealousy leaves her husband, and denounces him to a friend; who reminds her that she also took the vows of matrimony, and if her husband has not kept his, neither has she. "If he had a bodily ailment, you would nurse him with patience and care and devotion, and pray for his recovery. But you have no desire to heal an ailment of his soul! You took him 'for better or worse,' you said, but you really meant only 'for better.' You won't bear any of the 'worse.' Does the prayer which Christians should say daily ever cross your lips, and if so, do you really want to be forgiven as you forgive others, which seems to be not at all?" There is matter for meditation in those few sentences.

A WARNING TO PARENTS

LAX PARENTAL TRAINING IS RESPONSIBLE FOR LOWERING OF MORALS

The President of Yale University at the recent commencement exercises said:

"It is astonishing how much faith many parents have that Divine Providence will bring up their children. They are becoming more and more indulgent. There is no longer insistence on the sacredness of the moral code. When something is twisted in a boy's life, if he gives you his full confidence, you may be practically sure that his trouble can be traced to some peculiarity, neglect, or blindness in his home training. Unfortunately, the training of parents is not always negative; the blind indulgence of worldly ambitions is too characteristic of the American family."

"As I sit in this office I suppose that I see fathers and mothers at their best. Anxious, loving, interested in the welfare of their boys; even the most worldly of them are at the moment real parents, willing to undergo any hardships for the future of their children. Far too often, however, their blind ambitions show. They want their boy to enjoy the social position of his father, to accept moral delinquencies with little more than a formal protest. When a boy is called to this office for reprimand I do not infrequently get the reply, 'But, sir, they don't say anything to me when I do that at home.'"

"It is a more subtle influence, I believe, that is bringing about the decay of the national conscience. It is the acquiescence of parents to the lowering standards of morality. In fact we face a dangerous and terrifying prospect. The children of today are the parents of tomorrow. Will they in turn acquiesce to continually lowering standards? What will then be the result? So-called modern 'liberty' is fast approaching license. It seems to me at times that the very core of our civilization is at stake."

"The crazy seeking after gaiety, the rush of social activity, the liberty between man and woman, increase in dishonesty and in all forms of social and personal delinquency—these are not confined to our youth or our college towns, to our cities or to any one class of society. They are nation-wide and world-wide."

"Such tendencies are perhaps more easily observed in the young, and the change was at first more noticeable in young girls than in men, and I am convinced that it has come about gradually during the last few years, and largely because of the influence of the dancing craze, the automobile, and the moving picture. The parents of the country were not courageous enough to take a definite stand against the increasing gaiety, and hence the result."

"About eight or nine years ago the popular vogue of the 'new dances' commenced. Right then was the beginning of the lowering standards. At first the more conservative parents were obtuse but gradually they acquiesced until not only do we have the dance craze developed to its full extent, but we have various other evils in its train. Chief among these are the appearance and activities of the modern girl and the growing popularity of the 'public dance hall.'"

"The morals of the college man have, I think, been in the past well above the average. I believe this still to be true. That does not argue well for the morals of the rest of the country. We are approaching a moral crisis, nor do I think we can avoid it by educating."

There was a time when I thought that we must teach in college first and foremost the learning of books. In these days I would bend every effort to the making of good citizens, and by a good citizen, I think I mean a man who is master of himself, earns his own living and as far as possible in doing it is of benefit to his fellow men."

Catholic educators have pointed out time and again that education without moral training will lead to anarchy in morals. Characters and responsible minds are to a great extent the result of a religious training. The neglect of that side of education has given us a generation of moral anarchy, men and women who are law unto themselves. Therefore the present decline in morals

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and ideals. Catholic parents have it in their own hands to give their children a complete education, a real education, by sending them to a Catholic institution of learning.

DECAY OF ANGLICANISM

That the decay of faith in the Anglican Establishment has, during recent years, been fully as rapid as the decline of the Protestant churches in this country is evident from the fact that many of the Anglican churches, even in London itself, are now empty of worshippers. The Liverpool Catholic Times comments on this condition and incidentally gives the reason for it. It says:

"The paucity of worshippers at the Anglican churches of the city of London has for years been the subject of occasional comments in the press. What has been taking place throughout the country has also happened in London city. Protestants having rejected fundamental truths of Christianity and quarrelled continually on questions of doctrine, the people have fallen from doubt into indifference and the churches have been emptied. Appointed by the Anglican Bishop of London to consider the question of the utility of the city churches from the ecclesiastical point of view, commissioners recently decided that no less than nineteen of the forty-seven churches were useless, that they should be demolished and the sites sold and that the money expended in their maintenance and derived from the sale of the sites should be paid over to the Central Board of Finance of the Church of England as ecclesiastical trustees. The recommendations of the commissioners have met with a good deal of opposition and a resolution of protest has been passed by the court of common council. The objections have been raised chiefly because of the high value of the buildings architecturally, but as the Times says, the question is not one of architecture, but of ecclesiastical reorganization, and the churches are superfluous, many of the parishes being dead or in a dying state. It is natural that as the Anglicans need funds they should desire to dispose of empty churches which are useless to them."

This moribund condition of the church that was brought into being by the test of Henry VIII. is the inevitable destiny of all religious error. Truth alone can endure and maintain its way over the hearts of men. Though heresy may be bolstered up by all the powers of a tyrannical and persecuting government, though it may be decked out in all the splendor and pageantry of royalty, though it may arrogate to itself all the divine prerogatives which belong to the true Church alone, it must sooner or later perish from the earth like those who impiously gave it being.

The Anglican church, since it was established by an Act of Parliament in 1534, has passed through many doctrinal vicissitudes. In 1558 another Act of Parliament made Queen Elizabeth the Pope of the institution. In 1559 another Act compelled all Englishmen, in spite of the protest of the whole Anglican Hierarchy, to believe in an Elizabethan Christianity. In 1571 the Thirty-nine Articles were prescribed, just as "Common Prayer" was prescribed a little later. In the course of time the Establishment thus founded began to disintegrate and to create dissent all over the world. By persecution alone did it maintain, during the first years of its existence, its control over the English people. But rebellion against its usurped authority soon grew strong enough to raise its head. The Puritans, after a struggle, came to the

United States, to found "churches" the Nonconformists inaugurated Congregationalism; the Oxford Methodists covered the land with their conventicles; Whitfield and Wesley turned Dissenters; and during more recent years we have the interesting spectacle of High Churchmen and Low Churchmen, Broad Churchmen and No Churchmen, Extreme Ritualists and Rationalists, contending against the bishops and the law courts. The Establishment which must, as time goes on, become worse confounded. The Church of England must die; she is now showing the first signs of the approaching dissolution.—Catholic Union and Times.

BADLY IN NEED OF RELIGION

Evidence is rapidly accumulating to prove that our national morality is badly in need of the stimulus of religion. A cursory glance at the daily papers must suggest the reflection that since the War there has been a startling increase in delinquency. This is especially true in regard to delinquencies on the part of right-mindedness on the part of the youth of the country. The increasing number of wayward boys and girls is a striking illustration of insufficient moral education. As long as the nation is content with forming the intellect without training the will, and without developing the moral sense by the aid of religious principles, we may expect to find a continuance of juvenile delinquency.

Catholic parents have been taught to consider their children as a sacred trust committed to them by Almighty God for the purpose of training them not only to be good citizens of the State, but especially to be Christians, children of God, and heirs of Heaven. For twenty centuries the Church has hedged her children around with principles of religion and morality which she has received from her Divine Founder. For that very reason the Church has stood as the perennial guardian of morality in every nation of the world, and the impregnable barrier against the inroad of irreligious principles.

Where these principles have been inculcated by Catholic parents into the hearts of their children, and where the children have correspondingly adhered to the training that they have received, there have been few evidences of juvenile depravity. But on the other hand where this training has been neglected or denied, as it has been in the materialistic philosophy of life current outside the Catholic Church, the harvest of immorality and crime has been appalling.

It is gruesome to read the sordid details of this or that horrible crime. But after all these are but symptoms of the disease that is deep-seated in our national life. Morality and religion go hand in hand. You cannot expect to have a moral nation without first having a religious nation. And the first requisite for developing religion in a nation is to place religion in the hearts of the children.

The Church is the only agency today that recognizes this fundamental truth. Theorists, alarmed at the symptoms of immorality, and vainly striving to stem the flood by ethical culture, marquerading under the name of religion, should study the methods of the one agency that through ages has kept morality in men and nations. Such a study will furnish them with the ingredients necessary to rebuild our tottering civilization on the firm foundation of religion and morality.—The Pilot.

One has many little trials to bear from others, and also from one's own natural character and disposition. It is sometimes our own thoughtfulness of mind, etc., that makes us feel low spirited and weary. We must fight against that as long as we live, and never give way to discouragement in anything.

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