

FIVE MINUTE SERMON

BY REV. WILLIAM DEMOUY, D. D.

QUINQUAGESIMA SUNDAY

THE PRACTICE OF CHARITY

"Brethren, if I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal." (1 Cor. xiii. 1.)

The opportunities for performing acts of charity today, as in St. Paul's time, are unlimited; and therefore the occasions for practicing the virtue of charity are numberless. This virtue—we take it here in its comprehensive sense—means love, and what follows from true and pure love. It means the giving of help where it is needed for body or soul; it means also abstention from any word or deed injurious to man in his person, right, or character. When we consider the multitude of ways in which the virtue of charity may be practiced, we also should realize from existing conditions, that there are a vast number of opportunities for its practical application. It is lamentable to hear people sometimes protesting that they know not where to direct their charity. Not a day dawns but the crying need of some individual—nay, of hundreds—is ringing in our ears. Few of us need go in search of the needy. They are at our doors; they are filling our ears with their supplications; they should be touching our hearts also by the occasion they give us, to say no more, of exercising the great virtue of charity, under the head of help to the needy.

Nor is it only by supplying real and personal needs that our charity can be daily practiced. There are special opportunities of bringing it into action, to protect and defend the character of our neighbors. The human tongue wields a great influence in this world. It will be doubted whether the written word, so extensively spread in modern times, surpasses it in molding the opinions of people. What comes from the lips so often seems to produce impressions that are unceasingly reproduced. The natural results of this is that, if a favorable report is spread about a certain person, his reputation is certain to be enhanced; while on the other hand, if the report is to his disfavor, he is likely to be ruined. When our character is attacked, the number of our defenders is small indeed, whereas our enemies seem to be indefinitely multiplied. Men are more ready to help with their physical strength than with the power of their tongue. As a rule, man is more willing to risk his life to save a fellow being from some physical danger than he is to use a few kind words to protect his character. He will in a flash recognize danger to the body and almost instinctively will exert his utmost strength to rescue the exposed one, while he will remain unconcerned, to say the least, when a person's good name is being destroyed before him.

That more misery and suffering is primarily caused by words than by deeds seems to be a truth that cannot be denied. It would be difficult to conceive anything that could ultimately produce more energy than that which words have been the means of putting into action. Of course, we can not and do not deny that words have done a vast amount of good and will continue to do so; but we are now speaking of their exaggeration and abuse. The one real antidote to the evil they produce is charity. In the case of many, the practice of this virtue has been the dawn of a new day, when it seemed that light would never return. It has been the means of many a beautiful flower, heavy and drooping from the atmosphere of calumny and gossip, brightening up and resuming its primal beauty. The sting of the serpent is soothed by its balm and the ghastly ghost of ruin expelled. Charity can work wonders even where all else fails. Upon it is built the beauty of the heavens and whatever good is found upon earth. Upon its wings alone can man fly to God and rest in the peace of heaven.

No day should be allowed to pass on which charity is not practiced in some way and in some degree. It is the principal stepping-stone before us to perfection. In fact, it is the foundation for all else that helps us to arrive at the end for which we were created. Since it is so frequently disregarded, we are doing a twofold work in practicing it—a work of duty and a work of reparation. By it we build, and by it we rebuild what others have torn down. It alone bridges the gulf separating God in all His infinite perfection, from us in our lamentable lowliness. But once it has spanned this abyss, we stand united to God by the closest of ties. We are His friend, His children, the heirs to a share in His eternal kingdom. The path which ordinarily is difficult to follow is, by charity, made a straight road from which we never can deviate so long as we hold it as our guide. The beauty of the lives of the saints, on which we love to think and to admire, was begun and consummated in charity. Nay, the glory that has come to any soul both in life and after death, is but the crown of charity. It reaches from earth to heaven, and returns laden with the sweetness of God's love to pour it upon those whom it adorns.

It is to be regretted that our young people are not more fervent

in the practice of this virtue. It is left, to a great extent, to the elders. The young are selfish today because the world is selfish. Whatever the spirit of the times demands, these worshippers of the material gladly grant. For the sake of appearance, to bewitch, to charm, to impress, the youth of the present are spending their all, saving nothing for charity. Their parents no doubt are doing their share, but why should not the young be taught that charity is also required of them? Parents should remember that a child growing up with no inclination to the practice of this virtue is preparing himself for a future where selfishness is the reigning god. The beauty of charity should be seen emanating from every Christian, young and old, for each is the temple of the Holy Ghost and the tabernacle of the Lord, He who is Charity itself.

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THE VISION OF THE CROSS

Among all the meditations with which the Church strives to awake sorrow for sin during the Holy Season of Lent, doubtless the thoughts suggested by the Agony in the Garden are the most eloquently pathetic and pathetically eloquent. The meaning of Lenten mortification, fast and self-denial by which we seek to gain mastery over our souls and ensure victory over temptation takes on a personal aspect when we behold the God-Man, prostrate in Gethsemane's grotto, shivering and shrinking before the parade of the world's sin, for which he would hang on Calvary's cross, ere another sun had sunk to rest.

That prostrate Figure in the garden cried to His Heavenly Father for relief, pleaded that this chalice of agony be allowed to pass not merely because He saw the betrayal of Judas in that panorama of evil, with the beckoning cross in the background, but because He saw all the betrayals in the world's sad history—even ours; not only because He saw Peter deny him at the accusation of a maid servant, because he saw all the denials of the ages, all the shamefaced Catholics who would blush at being called His disciples, all the cringing, slinking victims of human respect who, down all the centuries were to answer cravenly: "I know not the Man;" not merely because He saw the lash and thorn-crown and the howling Jewish mob of the morrow advancing upon Him, but because He beheld the pride, the impurities, the debaucheries of all time adding their hatred to the stinging lash and their mocking sneer to the weight of the crown and the piercing sharpness of the thorns.

The vision before which He fell, a quivering mass of blood, was a marching army of all the world's sin advancing menacingly to crush the Sinless One; the serried ranks of the vices of men, hurrying toward Him to drive the Virtuous One forever from their path; the black-hearted forces of mortal sin, rallying all the reserves of their venomous hatred, to crush the Sacred Heart that was bleeding and breaking for them. At this onslaught of the world and the ages upon the prostrate God-Man, the Man pleaded: "Let this chalice pass from Me; but the Son of God tried, in sacred tones that will echo through eternity: "Not My will, but Thine, be done," and arose to lead that apparently most forlorn of all forlorn hopes: the advance to Pilate's courtyard, Herod's court and Calvary's Cross.

Reflect for a brief moment on how we shrink from any coming trial; add to that our indignation at suffering for another's fault; add to that again our horror at being obliged to agonize for a deadly enemy; multiply that suffering by all the sins and vices of all men, from Abel's murderous blow to the last victory of sin over man's soul before the final call to judgment, and we have, dimly, the arithmetic of Calvary; we have, dimly, in the cold language of mathematics, the heroism of the Divine Figure that overcame the fears of Gethsemane, marched fearlessly before the tribunal of the

craven Pilate and the lawless jury of the blinded mob, and laden with the Cross, climbed the stormy heights of Calvary to aerial death.

Our sins added to the blackness of this picture. Our sins were part of that raging sea of iniquity which engulfed Him in the garden. Our sins exeged on the murderers who shouted: "Crucify Him!" and added venom to the blows that nailed His Sacred Hands and Feet to the Cross. Alas! Jerusalem of two thousand years ago had no monopoly of Pilate's and Herod's and even Judas's. Their lusts and weaknesses and betrayals have disfigured every page in the world story of man, and more's the pity, men are more eager to read and, at times, to emulate their doings than they are to hear of the Redeemer and to seek the Kingdom of God. The current story of our race, told in the dailies and the weeklies that everyone reads, is predominantly a story of error and sin. It is typical of our age to send flowers to criminals.

However, the contemplations suggested by Lent are not a chronicle of despair. Jerusalem of two thousand years ago had no monopoly of Johns and Magdalene. We have infinitely more of these faithful souls and repentant hearts than did the Jewish capital of our Saviour's day. Every Lent adds to their number, and if the Redeemer's horrified eyes beheld us in the ranks of sinners, Lent is the golden opportunity given to us to show Him our repentant hearts seeking admission to the ranks where Johns and Magdalene march. If this vision of the Cross does not reveal us there now, with His help, and His Mother's intercession, it will reveal us there before the present Lent shudders again on Calvary and smiles again in triumph on Easter's dawn.—Catholic Mirror.

OSSERVATORE ROMANO UNDER NEW CONTROL

It has been officially announced that the Osservatore Romano, the leading Catholic daily of Rome, is to be published hereafter by the Community of Saint Paul. This community, which has been in charge of the famous Opera del Cardinal Ferrari in Milan, has been called to Rome by His Holiness for this purpose.

Many improvements are promised, including better printing, an expansion of the various services, and a regular schedule of publication and mailing. The number of pages will be increased from four to six and at times, even eight, and will include a section published in several languages for the benefit of foreign Catholics.

This improvement, no doubt, will be greatly appreciated by the countless numbers of pilgrims visiting Rome during the Holy Year, who will naturally be anxious to obtain news not only of Catholic activities in Rome proper but news from other countries, including their own. The Osservatore Romano subscribes to the N. C. W. C. News Service in order that Americans in Rome may be kept informed of important Catholic activities in America.

The Osservatore has been moved to new quarters. A large, magnificent palace has been acquired by the community in the via Germanico. It contains 175 rooms, in which the latest equipment and most up-to-date printing presses will be installed. In addition to the editorial and administrative offices, the building will house other activities of a social, educational and cultural nature. In fact the new establishment will be a real welfare center, and will be known as the "Opera Pio XI." or Pius XI. Work.

The Community of Saint Paul is an association of priests and laymen who, while following the exterior life of their state, are pledged to the work of social apostolate.

THE ZEAL OF THE K. K. K.

Athens, Ga.—Four local officials of the Ku Klux Klan, including two Protestant ministers, have been suspended by the imperial headquarters of the night-gowned organization as an outcome of a Klan "clean-up" designed to wipe out gambling and liquor law violations here. Action by the imperial headquarters is said to be based on objections to the methods used by the local Klansmen in carrying out their campaign. The principal objectionable method was the alleged establishment of a gambling resort here by a Klan investigator who lured patrons to his place of business for the purpose of obtaining evidence on which to base indictments.

Local Klan officials assert they were acting under instructions from the national officers but the latter—following the exposure of the unsavory methods used—disclaim responsibility. There is also a story in circulation here to the effect that Governor Clifford Walker attended a conference at which plans were mapped out for the purification of Athens through the agency of the Klan. The Governor denies this story. Whatever the origin of the clean-up plans, nearly a dozen citizens of Athens including the City Recorder, a member of the City Council, and a woman, have been indicted so far. T. C. Husted, Klan investigator who operated the

alleged gambling house as a trap for the unwary, has also been indicted.

Husted is said to have admitted that the only gambling in Athens of which he has knowledge was conducted in two private homes and in

the establishment he conducted. The Rev. Dr. B. M. Miller, pastor of the First Christian Church and Cyclops of the Klan, is being severely criticized here for having planned with Husted for the opening of the latter's gambling house and having

thereby given implied sanction to such an establishment. Local opinion is inclined to the belief that the whole performance was staged in the hope of compromising a prominent young citizen of Athens who has been active against the Klan.



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