

FIVE MINUTE SERMON

FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

PRAYER AS A MEANS OF CHRISTIAN WARFARE

By Rev. N. M. Redmond

"Amen, amen, I say to you, if you ask the Father anything in My name He will give it you." (John xvi. 23.)

Prayer is amongst the God-given arms to be used by the Soldiers of Christ, whilst they remain face to face in the world with the enemies of their salvation. Its importance cannot be doubted, since without it the others cannot be used with efficiency. Hence, as well might the soldier on the world's battlefield, face to face with the enemy, expect without arms to gain a victory, as a Christian without prayer. The victory must be ours, or we will be eternal castaways, and we have God's word for it, that ours it will not be without His aid. God's word we have, assuring us that His aid we will have by the proper use of prayer. The necessity of prayer, then, is as clear as our absolute dependence on God. Of the latter no Christian, at least, can have a doubt; but that we may be the more impressed with our necessity of prayer, it will not be out of place to dwell more at length on this point.

Our blessed Lord illustrates most pointedly and strikingly our absolute dependence on His grace by a simile. He compares Himself to a vine, and us to the branches. No simile could more fully represent our dependence on His grace than this, since, of all branches, the vine branch is the most useless when not supported by the vine. It is fit for nothing save the fire. His words are: "As a branch cannot bear fruit except it abide in the vine, no more can ye, except ye abide in Me." But lest those might not be wanting who would construe His words to mean, that for the most difficult acts of virtue only His grace is necessary. He chooses the parable with the words: "Without Me you can do nothing." So that, dear Christians, we have the word of our blessed Lord assuring us that absolutely nothing can we do conducive to our salvation without His grace. The same, of course, was the doctrine of the apostles, the words of St. Paul, one of whom we have telling us: "That we are not sufficient to think as of ourselves but our sufficiency is of God. The teaching of the Church of Christ and the Apostles could not be different. She addresses herself to the Holy Ghost in the Mass during the octave of Pentecost in the words: "Without Thy grace man has nothing but what is sinful." And, to be candid, must we not, as Christians, admit that this is our own individual dependence? Therefore, without God's grace, we can neither keep from sin nor practice virtue, and yet, as soldiers of Jesus Christ, we must do both to gain the all-important victory over the enemies of our salvation.

That prayer is the ordinary medium for procuring the grace of Jesus Christ is as clear as our total dependence on His grace. Our Lord wished to leave no room for doubt on this point when He said: "Ask and ye shall receive," and again: "Pray that ye enter not into temptation." From these and other references of our Lord regarding the necessity of prayer, St. Thomas, and all the fathers before him, teach that it has been decreed by God from all eternity, that no blessing shall be received save by prayer. St. Cyprian pronounces prayer the great source of all virtues, and the channel through which the grace of Jesus Christ and all the gifts from above, are conveyed to us. He calls it the nourishment of the soul; the light which dissipates the darkness of the mind; an excellent remedy against temptations; a pledge of God's love to a soul, and a mark of her predestination. St. Austin calls prayer the key of heaven which unlocks all its treasures and gives us access to all the blessings there laid up for us. The words of St. Liguori on this subject should never be forgotten. He says: "If you pray, your salvation is secured. If you neglect prayer, your perdition is inevitable." Hence it is clear that to be victorious in the spiritual battle of life, we must have aid from above, and to procure this aid we must pray. Prayer, then, is our sword and buckler, nay, more, prayer precedes, accompanies and follows all our spiritual armor in the day of battle, and the day of battle will be as long as our lives. It is evident, then, that the days of a Christian's life must be marked with the practice of prayer, embracing all the conditions requisite to make it acceptable to God. We can, as many do, deceive ourselves by accounting that prayer, which in reality is not, because, forsooth, it lacks the conditions. It is of this description that the Apostle St. James speaks, when He says: "You ask and receive not, because you ask amiss." We should first be sure that what we ask would be of spiritual benefit, and not injury to us, before we undertake to ask. After we have satisfied ourselves on this point, we should not be without advertence to the infinite dignity of God, whom we ask, and to our own subject spiritual poverty. Beggars asking alms from God, and nothing higher should we deem ourselves. Like the beggars of material alms, we should be oblivious to everything else, and fix our attention on the petitions we make to God. Voluntary distractions will rob us of the merit of our prayer, but we should never lose courage because of any number of distractions which are involun-

tary, since they affect not the efficacy of prayer. Devotion should mark every prayer that we offer. That is, our prayer should not be one of the lips only, it should earnestly proceed from our hearts. Otherwise we would deserve to be placed in the category with those of whom the Scripture says: "These people honor Me with their lips, but their hearts are far from Me." Not only must our prayers proceed from our hearts, but also our hearts must be filled with the most humble sentiments. We have often read and heard of the fate of the prayer of the proud-hearted Pharisee, and of the benedictions that were the result of the prayer of the humble publican. To want confidence in our prayers is to insult God, whilst we pretend to honor Him. Every good man holds his word sacred, and feels the insult keenly when it is doubted. When God gives His word and pledges Himself, must He not be offended by those who show the slightest diffidence? Has He not done so when He said: "Ask and you shall receive," etc.? But of all conditions the crowning one in this, as in everything else, is perseverance. "Seek and ye shall find," says our Blessed Lord, and this seeking must continue, says St. Austin, till we find ourselves on the threshold of eternity.

TEMPERANCE

MEMORIES OF FATHER MATHEW

A writer using the pen-name "Mononia" has contributed to the Freeman's Journal of Sydney, Australia, some very interesting recollections of Father Mathew. Of the personal appearance of the great Irish Apostle of Temperance, "Mononia" tells us:

"It was something singularly arresting in the countenance of Father Mathew. More than one authority whose words carried weight as those of shrewd observers of the human face, recognized in the priest's a certain resemblance to that of the great Napoleon. A glance at any of the portraits of the two men will show that the comparison was not an extravagant one. Father Mathew's face had a decidedly Napoleonic cast, though with a sweet and benignant expression in place of that air of stern command which, even when depicted in his calmest seconds, was and is discernible in the pictures of the modern Caesar. Father Mathew was always a special favorite with children. Wherever he went they flocked round him. He himself was never more delighted than when there was a big muster of children among the audiences which he addressed when advocating that cause with which his name is now so inseparably associated."

Having thus limned for his readers the personal appearance of Father Mathew, the writer naturally goes on to speak of Father Mathew's power as an orator, saying:

"In his noble reformatory mission Father Mathew was aided by priests not less zealous than himself, and many of whom had much more remarkable gifts of eloquence. He had, indeed, no special faculty in that way. His discourses were not set off by any of those rhetorical graces of style which many other public speakers of his day—both lay and clerical—so carefully cultivated. His language was always simple and direct. But it went to the hearts of his hearers in a way that the most studied periods would have fallen short of when coming from other lips. He exercised a sort of personal magnetism which in itself was more potent than words, however burning. He was persuasive from the impression which he conveyed to all who listened to him as to the depth and sincerity of his own convictions."

AN EDIFYING SIGHT

It was edifying to see the number of men, young and old, who at the beginning of Lent gave up the use of drink, tobacco and amusements. It was an evidence of their good-will and love of God, and of their belief in the utility and necessity of penance; and of their Christian self-denial, the control they have over themselves and their readiness to exercise it for Christ's sake. Many of them will keep up the practice for weeks after the close of the holy season. It will be for many a check that will save them from going to excess at other times, and for all it was an occasion of great self-denial as they cut out entirely some of these useless and dangerous luxuries. It will teach not a few of them the money value of things, and start them on the way of economy and thrift. Some of them will make a further good use of Lent in this way—by giving to a good work—missions at home or abroad, to the widow and orphan, the needs of their own parish or the education of worthy boys for the priesthood, a part of what their self-denial enabled them to save. They will all come to see utility, as well as the need of self-denial, as well as the more expensive and dangerous it usually is. Hence the effort of those engaged in Catholic temperance work to have as many as possible give up drink at the beginning of Lent and continue in abstinence after the end of it. It is a spiritual blessing to the Church as well as to themselves and families, and also a temporal blessing.—Very Rev. M. A. Lambing.

Be gentle and kind with every one, and severe with yourself.—St. Teresa.

THE REJECTION OF CHRISTIANITY

The generation of non-Catholics which is growing up to-day is finding it difficult to accept Christianity. Its members are witnesses of appalling injustice, capitalistic greed, dollar standards and smug respectability that might easily be mistaken by Diogenes for disguised criminality. They see self, wealth, and hypocrisy written large in the faces of people who are acclaimed as leaders of men. They see captains of industry, rather than artists or poets, thinkers or preachers, geniuses or heroes, lauded as the great and mighty men of the day. And they ask: "Where is the Christianity in all this? Is this the full bloom of the religion which you ask us to accept, to whose artificial prohibitions you demand that we submit ourselves? If it is, then Christianity is a tremendous delusion. If it is not, then Christianity has failed miserably. And in either case we will have none of it."

In truth, it is small wonder that many sincere seekers after better things think in some such way. They glance at conditions around them, and see might rather than right snugly ensconced in the seat of power; they behold talent or personal aggrandizement rather than productive talent or genius all too high up in the scale of esteem. But it would be well for them to perceive as well as to see. They should make sure that it is Christianity which repels them, ere they have the hardy hood to come out into the courts of cold, hard reason and solemnly reject Christianity as a failure.

Is it Christianity, then, which repels them? What do they know of Christianity as a corporate force in a Christian society, dominating human society as a whole? Have they ever had the good fortune to see it occupying such a position for many generations back? Have they ever read an unbiased account of the society of the Middle Ages, when some approach to such a consummation was reached? Is it not the fruit of Protestantism, especially Puritanism, and of the medley of peculiar private opinions into which the sects have dissolved, that repels them? Do they not see the effects of a movement which left it to each individual to say what Christianity should mean for him and should make of him, and has not each individual who cared to do so interpreted Christianity in the way best calculated to feather his own nest or foster his own aims? Under this system, who can say that "Christianity" does not legitimately nourish the individual greed and pride of a person skilful at rolling up a fortune for himself out of the talent and toil and tears of others? Cannot the rich and avaricious man declare that private interpretation of Christianity makes him certain that he and his kind alone are predestined to know how things should be managed, how money should be used? Is not the "malefactor of great wealth" logically as much of a Protestant saint now as was the pious and lowly-minded parson whose Bible is his central interest in life? Is not the greedy captain of industry, unscrupulous or cruel, an excellent embodiment of the private judgment ideal?

For who shall presume to dispute him if he insists that his own private interpretation of Scripture reveals to him that he is elected to reign over the hearts and souls of his human servants, and the public and his children rebelled. The bonds were too heavy, the stays too tight, Reaction set in. And moderation is none too likely to be the guiding principle of reaction. Hence arose much of the free thought of the day. Is it not so? Of men shoot from one extreme to another, and society must suffer the consequences.

This is a logical development of the early days of Protestantism. As soon as men began to deny the authority of the Church, strong-minded individuals flew to various violent extremes in faith, morals and thought. The mild shackles of the Church had been too much, hence they forged heavier ones for their own children or others' children, the latter especially. It is all very well to protest against corruption in seats of authority, but when protest is turned against authority itself, something entirely new is originated, and loss will follow. Here it was the loss by myriads of souls, of the Divinely guided truth and wisdom and sublime moderation of an authoritative institution, whose thought is not that of one passionate man or body of men, but of God.

And so the fruits of the Puritanic morality ripened. It was not enough to have the Christian precepts and the counsels of perfection. A superstructure had to be built upon them, "respectability" and a "holier-than-thouness." Even if a man were not exactly all that he should be, he must be looked up to by society as being such. Furthermore, there were certain things which, because capable of being turned into sins by being carried to excess, though innocent in moderation, a person

must not be known to do. He must not touch alcoholic liquor. At any rate he must be ashamed to admit it if he does. Certain things must not be mentioned in polite society merely because, though harmless in themselves, they are capable of being turned into occasions of sin. All this generates a repulsiveness which goes to the other extreme and becomes morbid in its desire for complete enjoyment of the forbidden things, irrespective of the effect. Moderation and sanity are not enough. There must be extremes and insanity.

To call certain things immoral or wicked simply and solely because they can be abused is an artificial exaggeration which, when exposed and disproved, may lead not only to a proper use of the condemned things, but to an improper use of them also, to the encouragement of practices immoral and wicked, such as free love, divorce and the like. If you condemn something as immoral, and it is shown not to be such, what is to prevent the unguided person from taking it for granted that real immorality is no longer immoral that all morality, all right and wrong, are mere outworn superstitions?

No, Christianity really pure and undefiled has never built artificial superstructures on top of Revelation. It is not Christianity which is to blame for the things which disgust visionaries to-day, but the abuse of Christianity and its consequent neglect. This abuse and neglect have been due, I take it, partly to the excessive restraints placed upon men by certain schools which claimed to teach the only pure doctrine, partly to the development, the logical development, of the individual private-judgment principle into a principle that can be stretched to almost any length in almost any direction, and thus may be used not only to excuse but to encourage self-aggrandizement at the expense of others or immorality of any kind.

Catholicism was one great, corporate system, uniform, but wisely moderate. Protestantism was not. And it is now individualism run wild to such lengths as to make Christianity ridiculous in the eyes of the unguided thinker of exaggerated and falsely-founded thoughts. Those long subject to the undue restraints and bareness of Puritanism, finding some of its restraints unwarranted and its bareness unintelligent, have been tempted to consider all the restraints and rigors of true Christianity unwarranted. And, sad to say, they are not aware of the value of the Catholic warmth and beauty which are the cure for Puritan bareness, and of the Catholic moderation which is the cure for Puritan excess in restraint.

On witnessing the crimes committed in the name of respectability, those who have long been wont to consider "respectability" the standard of conduct are tempted to hold Christianity responsible for a system of greed and exploitation which is wholly opposed to Christianity.

Forsaking undue restraint, they do not stop at moderation, but "compensate" to luxury and immorality, and call slavery to these things freedom; they even have the audacity to pronounce Catholics ignorant because they will not applaud this judgment. Carrying private judgment to its logical conclusion, they are left with no authority which can vouch for their Christianity at all. Hence away goes Christianity, so far as they are concerned, without even having a fair chance to render a proper account of itself to them. The results to individual and society alike are such as to suggest that the vaunted horrors of the Inquisition were mild in comparison with theirs. What is needed before one condemns Christianity is a calm and intelligent study of Christianity itself, not a hasty and passionate glance at what falsely claims to be Christianity but is in reality a half-baked vision of an earthly Utopia.—Henry A. Doherty, Jr., in America.

BENEDICT XV. AND PEACE

Years ago Cardinal Newman called attention to the practical wisdom of the successors of St. Peter. He pointed out that they always have shown themselves capable of dealing with problems affecting the welfare of mankind as these problems presented themselves in successive ages. The Successor of St. Peter, as the great English Cardinal put it, "has set himself to one thing, now to another, but to all in season, and to nothing in vain." The truth of this assertion has been confirmed by the course Benedict XV. has adopted in regard to the present European War. When he succeeded Pius X. in the Chair of Peter the war that has involved fourteen nations was a month old. He lost no time in applying himself to the work of doing what in him lay to put a stop to the conflagration that was sweeping over Europe.

In doing this the Holy Father was but following in the footsteps of his predecessors in the Chair of Peter, who never failed to exercise in the affairs of the world their powerful influence for good. Cardinal Newman had this in mind when he wrote: "If ever there was a power on earth who had an eye for the times, who has confined himself to the practical, and has been happy in his anticipations, whose words have been facts, and whose commands

prophecies, such is he in the history of ages, who sits from generation to generation in the Chair of the Apostles, as the Vicar of Christ and the Doctor of His Church." Benedict XV., therefore, was but living up to the traditions of the Holy See when he made an appeal to the rulers of the belligerent nations in behalf of peace. That appeal did not have the effect of putting an immediate stop to the murderous work that has converted the fairest portions of Europe into a veritable charnel house. But the fact that the words of the Father of Christendom did not elicit a favorable response from those to whom they were addressed does not imply that they were spoken in vain.

Benedict XV. has sown seed which in time will bring forth a fruitful harvest. The impression he has made upon non-Catholics is reflected in an article in the Review of Reviews, which reads as follows: "Of all the powerful religious bodies in the world there is only one which has dared to try and bring about peace. The head of but one has had the courage to lift up his voice and urge the combatants to settle their differences by conference instead of by sword, to stop killing each other, and endeavor to save hundreds of thousands of lives by bringing the war to speedy close."

The writer of the Review of Reviews article then proceeds to dwell on the moral effects of the Holy Father's peace appeal. We quote:

"Never has the Roman Catholic Church shown itself so great as when the Pope, as its official head, endeavored to induce the fighting powers to consider the possibility of making peace. When the spiritual ruler of a people far more numerous than those which owe allegiance to any of the kings and emperors and presidents at war urges them to end the strife, his voice is heard, his protest is considered. Even if no immediate action is taken, he has done his duty, has laid the foundation for that peace which must come in the end."

It is the hope of millions in war-torn Europe that on the foundations laid by Benedict XV. an enduring peace will be upreared in the near future.—N. Y. Freeman's Journal.

"THE MAKING OF A LIFE"

IS THE PURPOSE OF EDUCATION

(Dr. George A. Green, president of DePaul University)

In our schools the spiritual is also needed. The educational movement is one of great significance at the present time. What is your chief purpose in sending your children through school and to college? It very largely depends upon the spiritual purpose of the school, whether they are worth while or not. Are these schools spreading knowledge and kindling higher ideals in the minds of the students that they may become good citizens? Is the aim of the school of today, social or more deeply involved in the spiritual? Learning and religion should be taught, clamour to-day for practical teaching, but that is not the important thing. The important thing is not the making of a living, but the making of a life, and this is the great aim of the school.

In the world of industry, the spiritual is badly needed. We are impressed by the wealth that is being piled up by many at the present time and contemplate these conditions of prosperity with good feeling. But that feeling cannot exist for a long time, for we see all about us strikes, riot and the destruction of property and life as well. What is the remedy? Too many men are in business to succeed, regardless of principles. A man's education is of little benefit to him unless he has been uplifted by it. The man who has not been touched by the church, and by the spiritual note of which I speak, is the cause of these conditions, and we can only solve this industrial problem by seeking the spiritual more than the material side. The best investment a man can make is in the churches and like institutions which are sounding this spiritual note, which alone can save the community, and not business prosperity as is often believed.—Munice (Ind.) Star, Feb. 6, 1916.

THE INCARNATION

When Millet's "L'Angelus" was on exhibition once, two persons unheeding the crowd, stood before it in admiration. But what, asked one, would that picture be after all, without the Angelus? Just two peasants in a potato field. What would the world be without the Angelus? said the other, "Just a spinning globe with hopeless toilers crawling on it." Life without the Angelus? Let us stop and think what that means. It means life without that which the Angelus is a reminder: life without hope, without love, without understanding. It means men and women sullenly giving their lives like beasts of burden, for a bite of bread and a shelter from the storms. It means toil without recompense, fruitless tears, ceaseless sighs, pain impatiently borne; death dreaded because it is terrible, yet longed for because it is the end of a weary journey. Are any words too strong to set forth what life would be without the incarnation, and that and that alone is what the Angelus typifies.—Truth.

Advertisement for McClary's Florence Oil Cook Stoves. Includes an illustration of a woman in a kitchen and text describing the stoves as economical and reliable. Text: "The 'Florence Kitchen' Makes the happy family. McClary's Florence Blue Flame Oil Stoves simplify your cooking. Easy to use, clean, safe, economical, and reliable—an ornament to any kitchen. McClary's FLORENCE OIL COOK STOVES. Wickless, Valveless, Blue Flame, Automatic. No hot summer kitchens. The Florence is ALWAYS ready with AS MUCH heat as you want, right WHERE you want it—in the cooking, and NOT out in the room. Costs less than a cent an hour per burner. You can keep one or four burners at an intensely hot flame, or merely simmering. To regulate the heat, you simply turn the lever according to the dial. There are no wicks to trim, nor valves to leak. The oil supply is automatically constant. All Florence stoves and ovens are fully guaranteed. Ask your dealer to show you the Florence. If he cannot supply it write to our nearest branch. London Toronto Winnipeg Vancouver St. John, N. B. Montreal Hamilton Calgary Edmonton Saskatoon 515

Advertisement for Stained Glass Memorial Windows and Leaded Lights by B. Leonard Quebec P. Q. Includes an illustration of a stained glass window. Text: "STAINED GLASS MEMORIAL WINDOWS AND LEADED LIGHTS. B. LEONARD QUEBEC: P. Q. We Make a Specialty of Catholic Church Windows

Advertisement for ENO'S Fruit Salt. Includes an illustration of a bottle and text describing its benefits for health. Text: "When you Rise in the Morning take a dose of ENO'S FRUIT SALT—for your health's sake. It's good for you. ENO'S FRUIT SALT is so pleasant to take, too. It prevents functional irregularities, corrects disorders of the liver and promotes good health. ENO'S FRUIT SALT makes a cooling, sparkling drink—effervescent and refreshing. You can drink it at any time with benefit. Prepared only by J.C. ENO, Ltd., 'Fruit Salt' Works, LONDON, Eng. Sole Agents for North America HAROLD F. RITCHIE & CO. LIMITED 10 McCALL STREET, TORONTO (5) Beware of Substitutes.

Advertisement for Maple Leaf Paint. Includes an illustration of a painter and text describing the quality of the paint. Text: "'What's the true test of paint value?' Says the Old-time Painter. SERVICE—Service and MAPLE LEAF PAINT have come to mean pretty much the same thing to me. My painting worries began falling away the day I ran across MAPLE LEAF PAINT. Good painting, like my reputation as a painter, depends on results—both of them sure do get a boost when MAPLE LEAF PAINT is used. We painters are all the time running up against conditions and we can't overlook them—but I'm finding that MAPLE LEAF can pretty much take care of itself under most every kind of condition and score high marks with all the others in covering, wearing, appearance, and keeping things in good shape. It's always ready for a good tussle with the weather. I don't wonder at them saying that. Makes good because it's made good. It means life without that which the Angelus is a reminder: life without hope, without love, without understanding. It means men and women sullenly giving their lives like beasts of burden, for a bite of bread and a shelter from the storms. It means toil without recompense, fruitless tears, ceaseless sighs, pain impatiently borne; death dreaded because it is terrible, yet longed for because it is the end of a weary journey. Are any words too strong to set forth what life would be without the incarnation, and that and that alone is what the Angelus typifies.—Truth.