

SEPTEMBER 10, 1904.

ABSOLUTION OF SIN.

Question. A friend of mine, a non-Catholic, says that because absolution of sin is so easily obtained by Catholics, we are more likely to be careless about committing sin. Will you give a little talk on this?

Answer. Whoever makes this charge fails to understand the essential dispositions for the sacrament of penance, which are sorrow and detestation for sin, and expressed purpose to commit it no more, and performance of the penance imposed by the priest. Says Dr. Stang in his admirable little book, "Spiritual Pepper and Salt":

"It is true that the change wrought in confession is quickly effected. A long life of sin is blotted out in an instant. In fact, the marvelous works of God are brief. His grace as they are wonderful in their effect. He spoke, and there was light. His divine plans are accomplished in silence; for He is not in the whirlwind nor in the storm, but in the gentle breeze. The greatest event in all history, the Incarnation of the Eternal Son, takes place in an obscure country town with the knowledge of one single human being, our Immaculate Lady. He enters the world at midnight, when the nature is in its deepest quiet and the world hushed in slumber; then He is born of Mary, in the stable of Bethlehem. And while on earth, he beholds, how quickly He performs His great deeds of mercy! One loving word cleanses the sin-stained heart of Mary Magdalen; one step brings salvation into the house of Zachaeus; one merciful look converts the heart of the unfaithful Peter. Thus, two brief acts only are requisite and sufficient to ensure the sinner's forgiveness: an act of clemency and condescension of God, reaching down to the sinner, and an act of sorrow and humiliation on the part of the sinner, leading up to God. It is an easy way to obtain forgiveness; its institution is worthy of the merciful Master. Notice, however, though the act of confession and absolving may be brief, the work of preparation for confession covers some time."

And yet, confession does not smooth the road to sin nor is it a license for it or an encouragement to commit it. It is absolutely impossible that confession should make sin easy or foster vice. Confession is the ordinance of the blessed Saviour who came to destroy sin, and not open the door for it. If a sinner rids himself of a heavy load of sins by a single confession, it is because he detests them and is firmly determined not to commit them again. He knows that he cannot presume on divine mercy; saying to himself: It matters little whether I fall back into the same sins; I can come to confession again. His next mortal sin may be his last one. He is aware that his life hangs on a thread, and if he falls again, God may cut that thread, before he has time and grace to repent and confess. "Far from being an incentive to sin, confession is the best moral tonic to the human conscience, as it reminds man of his sacred obligations to his Maker and gives him self-knowledge and a sense of humility. It has been fittingly called the safeguard of the Gospel Law. The impious Voltaire, who regarded it merely as a human affair, said: 'There is no more useful institution than confession; if it did not exist it should be invented and introduced immediately.' Luther preached against the necessity of confession, and his 'doctrine' was unfortunately welcome to many in his days; but he bitterly complained of the decay of morality, and openly regretted that he had abolished the confessional.

"Confession is the fruit of Christ's passion and death; it is one of the greatest blessings that God conferred on sinful man; it is a never-failing source of light and strength, of peace and happiness, to millions of souls."—The Guidon.

OUR LADY OF SORROWS.

MONTH OF SEPTEMBER DEDICATED TO THE SUFFERING MOTHER.

The month of September is dedicated to Our Blessed Mother of Sorrows. In the chronicles of the life of St. Elizabeth, so well known to us all by her wonderful charity and sweetness to the suffering and the poor, it is recorded that after the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin into heaven the beloved disciple St. John, to whose care she was entrusted by Jesus on the Cross, desired once more to see her. The prayer of St. John was heard and granted. In vision Our Blessed Mother appeared to him accompanied by her Divine Son. In that apparition, as if Mary's soul traveled back, so to say, over that life of sorrow through which she had passed, for sixty years, the evangelist heard her utter her Divine Son's bestow a special grace on those who in life should be devoted to her dolors. In answer to it, St. Elizabeth tells us that He promised four marvelous graces. The first was that those who before death earnestly invoked the help of His Blessed Mother under the title of her sorrows should obtain true repentance for their sins. In the second grace He promised that those who cherish by His love in their own sorrows, and especially in the sorrows of death. In the third, that in recompense for their sympathy for His Blessed Mother in her grief, He would impress on their souls the remembrance of His own Passion, and bestow on them a corresponding glory in Heaven. And, lastly, that in His Divine compassion He would confide such devout clients of His Blessed Mother's sorrows to her maternal love for her adopted children would suggest, and moreover, that He would enrich them from the treasury of His love with all the graces she should ask for them. The feast of the Seven Dolors falls this year on Sunday, Sept. 24.

It is horrible to hear a man profane the sacred name of Jesus Christ. To profanely name the Christian shudder. Even the devils do not dare take such a liberty.—Catholic Columbian.

THE MANHOOD NEEDED TO-DAY.

Bishop Conroy.

We are called to be leaders, and not followers, as our great Leo XIII. used to say. On us is the responsibility to help mould public opinion toward goodness of life. We are Christians and Catholics, as well as men and citizens, but we have a duty to society and to the home as well as to the Church. We live in an age when wealth and power lead the onward march of nations. Let us not be deceived. Material prosperity is not the only goal for a nation's success. Wealth and honors are not the ideals of life. Society is threatened with irreverence, irreligion, impiety. It needs men of reverent lives, of deep religious sense, of sound intelligent piety. On all sides we hear cries for greater moral development. Again, let us not be deceived. The only regeneration for mankind, the only salvation for society, the only upbuilding of mankind is through Jesus Christ. The manhood that is needed to-day is a manhood that understands authority, responsibility, obedience, sacrifice; that realizes that the one evil in life is sin, and the one knowledge is the knowledge and love of God. The cry for a better citizenship, for purer personal life, can only be answered by the morality which makes men good. Education never was more general, and yet Crime never expressed itself in more intellectual form. There is something wanting in the training of the man besides the cultivation of intellect and the broad principles of a general morality. We need a positive religion, which comes directly from the teacher whom God sends to show us the truth.

SACRAMENT OF BAPTISM.

A sacrament, as we have learned, consists chiefly in the words, actions and other sensible things which are made use of by the priest in its administration. These are termed the matter and the form.

Of course, it is well understood that all the sacraments impart grace. Moreover, it is well to remember, as we have already seen, that grace is a gratuitous gift of God, by means of which we are enabled to master sin, to sanctify our souls and to merit eternal happiness. In addition to imparting grace, three of the sacraments, namely, baptism, confirmation and holy orders, baptize an indelible spiritual mark on the soul.

The two things, therefore, essential to every sacrament are matter and form. These must also be applied by a proper and lawfully ordained minister. Thus, for example, in the sacrament of baptism, the matter is water. The form is found in the words, "I baptize thee in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, and of His Kingdom." The spiritual mark imparted on the soul by the three sacraments cannot be removed. For this reason these three sacraments cannot be administered the second time to the same individual without committing a sacrilege.

Hence we should frequently reflect upon the sanctifying effects produced in the soul by means of these visible signs. Frequently should we thank God for the graces which He thus imparts. What a magnificent exemplification of His power that these insignificant elements should work such wonders in the soul.—Church Progress.

TIMELY WORDS OF WARNING.

That crime is on the increase, that murders fill the columns of the daily press, that vice and sin, and man's inhumanity to man, overshadow Christianity to a degree to be deplored. The mind of the average youth is filled with the horror and excitement of the dime novel, and the evil suggestions of immoral weekly and daily literature. What the sensationalism of the yellow press does not accomplish, in perverting the young, the foolishness of the stage succeeds in completing. In the hands of the young can be found books reeking with filthy suggestions produced by base minds that care not if souls are lost so they obtain dollars. It is the sensationalism of the dime novel, the records of crime in the daily press, the exhibitions of brazen women and the language of immoral men upon the stage, that makes thieves, forgers, murderers, and jail birds. These agencies of the devil fill the world with sin in all forms, they bring misery and woe, and sorrow to homes, broken hearts to parents, and a suicide's grave to many.

The Catholic Church raises her voice throughout the universe, to warn her children to keep aloof from the maelstrom of sin which curses the world. Bishops and priests constantly admonish their flocks to beware of the devil's satellites who prow around the earth.

Men and women grow careless in devotion to God and Church duty by listening to the voice of tempters who beset them. Men and women, young or old, who call themselves Catholics, if they neglect their Church duties, grow apathetic in the faith and are treading dangerously near the precipice which has hurled many souls from God.

There are people who glory in leading young men and women astray. A bad Catholic is a great enemy to the Church, and the most dangerous element of irreligious Catholic youth can associate with. Along with dragging down themselves they wish to lead others to destruction.

Young men and women of the Catholic faith, for the sake of your own eternal salvation and for the glory of the Church keep away from theatres where immoral plays are presented; avoid bad company, and the occasions of sin; read pure literature; make your home happy by your good conduct, and pass within its sanctity many hours of your leisure. Listen to the advice of your pastors, attend church regularly and perform your duties as Catholics faithfully. By living the life of a practical child of holy Church God will bless you in this world and extend to you eternal bliss in His Kingdom when death quenches life.—Michigan Catholic.

THE SCHOOL OF CHRIST.

While youth is returning to school and college to resume the pursuit of knowledge, should not we older folk pause and reflect that there is also a school for us, namely, the School of Christ, wherein He would teach us the lessons of the eternal life? Our Lord was eminently a teacher and He was hailed and followed Him. He said "learn of me" and "I come to preach to you a new doctrine, namely, that you love one another." And so He taught during the whole three years of His public life on the mountain and by the lake, in the city and through the country, speaking "as one having authority" and "as no one spoke before." When about to leave this world Our Lord appointed His Apostles to take His place and bade them "to go forth and teach all nations," and said He would be with them all days, even to the consummation of the world. Thus the school which our Lord began among men is continued by the Church teaching in His name, and the lessons which first came from His divine lips are re-echoed by the Church to the farthest ends of the earth.

What is the burden of Christ's teachings? They are God and our neighbor. The glory of God, the good, temporal and eternal, of our neighbor. The folly of serving this world which we must soon leave, the wisdom of living for Heaven, the joys of which will be for all eternity. He taught the need of faith, the good of hope and the happiness of charity. Every virtue was inculcated, every vice condemned. He taught the principles of a perfect life and exemplified them in Himself in an infinite degree. He bade men to deny themselves, crucify their evil inclinations and come follow Him. "I am the Way, the Truth and the Life," says Our Lord; there is no other way than in Him, there is no truth outside of Him, there is no life but His.

Our Lord adopted our nature that we might share His. He became the new Adam that through grace we might "purify to His Father an acceptable people, a pure of good works." In a word He would lift up the whole human race by union with Him and live over again in each one of the life He had lived for all whilst on earth. And thus with St. Paul one might say, "I live, not I, but Christ liveth in me." This, is the meaning of the Holy Eucharist, Sacrifice and Sacrament in which we share.

One that our Lord might be the atone-ment for sin, and the preventive against relapse; the acceptable homage of the Father and the Son on the coming of the Holy Spirit, and the preservation unto eternal life. He championed our cause by assuming our nature, and He would share with us His glory and happiness by giving us of His. This is the lesson of life and the problem of salvation that Our Lord would teach us and which He makes clear by the elucidation of His ministers and brings home to the understanding of many lowly, humble souls taught by His inspirations speaking heart to heart. Our Lord exacts of His pupils humility and docility. Ignorant pride can have no place in the School of Christ, for as Holy Writ says, "God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble." He wishes faith in His promises, and expects to see signs of both in a united love for God and our neighbor. He likes simplicity, childlike simplicity, and unalloyed love, and so He placed the child in the midst of the Apostles, and bade them to be as little children, and declared that it was from the mouth of infants He had perfect praise. It is out of our acknowledged nothingness that He is to make us fit to be the citizens of Heaven. It is out of our confessed weakness that He will make us stronger than Satan and the devil, and more powerful than sin and death. In this school of life of life will pass peacefully into eternity well prepared. We will have learned truth and shall have practiced His teachings. We shall have known Christ and confessed Him before men, and He will know and confess us before His Father in Heaven. Nor will the mind alone be taught as in other schools, but in the School of Christ the heart will be sustained and the whole moral man will be nourished by the body and blood of Christ. The whole man will be regenerated because the whole man was redeemed. Let us then cast ourselves humbly at the Master's feet, that He may teach and lead and sustain us, that one day He may lift us up and place us among His faithful followers near Him in the Kingdom of Heaven.—Bishop Colton in Catholic Union and Times.

LOVE OF CATHOLIC DOCTRINE.

The general intention of the Apostleship of Prayer assigned for the coming month is "A love of Catholic Doctrine." That there is need for such a purpose none can question. Casual observation of the conduct of many persons demonstrate it only too clearly.

Were there existing a greater love for Catholic doctrine wonderful would be the results, both in the members of the Church and in the spread of the sacred truths it teaches. Indifference in the performance of religious duties, carelessness in complying with the commandments of God and the precepts of the Church, and want of real active participation in the way peculiar to the lay apostolate may find their solution in this subject.

Where our hearts are there, too, will be our ambitions and energies. Every life demonstrates the fact in its own peculiar fashion. Human action is generally directed to the attainment of that object upon which our affections are centered.

SERMON ON PRAYER.

By Right Rev. H. A. O'Connor.

Bishop O'Connor was in Gravenhurst, on Sunday, for the purpose of offering the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, in the absence of Father Collins (the parish priest) who had gone to Huntsville to fill the vacancy left there, by the Rev. Father Fleming, who is at present on an extended visit to his home in Newfoundland. On Sunday morning, he officiated at two Masses—the first at 9 o'clock, and the second at 10:30 o'clock. After the second Mass, he delivered a sermon about as follows, in a very able manner, taking for his text the Gospel of the day, and saying: "My dear brethren, in this necessary our Lord proposes to us two purposes, of altogether different characters, going up to the Temple to offer their prayers to Almighty God, and our Saviour distinctly points out the result of these men's prayers. One, the Pharisee, was regarded by the world as a great personage, because he was wealthy, and he looked upon himself as a superior being to the publican. When he prayed, he boasted that he gave alms to the poor, that he fasted, and so on; yet notwithstanding all of these actions which were very good in themselves, we find out from what our Lord teaches us that his prayers were not heard, from the fact that he was deficient in one of the requisite dispositions for prayer—that of humility. The other poor sinner, in praying, acknowledged that he was in sin and came to express contrition for his faults, acknowledging himself unworthy to appear before God, and with sorrow and regret and with desire to amend his life. He came with a totally different disposition, as you can understand, and God justified him, by forgiving his sins, and he returned to his home pardoned, because of his humility and sorrow.

Our Lord in this parable teaches us the utility of prayer, and also the conditions that our prayers should have, in order that they be acceptable before Almighty God. Prayer is not one of us but needs to be prayed. Why? Because we are all anxious to obtain Heaven. God created us for Heaven. Christ offered His life upon the cross to open Heaven for us. He purchased for us a right to the Kingdom of Heaven, and that right is imparted to us by grace—grace flowing from the merits of Jesus Christ. How are we to obtain this grace, whereby our souls are fortified, whereby we are strengthened to resist temptations, and overcome evil? We are enabled to do so only by grace, and grace is given to us chiefly when we pray, when we acknowledge our dependence upon Almighty God. If God gave us grace in abundance, without our acknowledging our dependence upon Him, then we might imagine that God was obliged to save our souls, without our co-operation. God gives to our conversion and sanctification, but these first graces will not lead us to the obtaining of eternal life, unless we receive other graces. Now, these subsequent graces are given us by our prayers, united with the merits of Christ. These additional graces help us to preserve in the service of God.

Since grace is so necessary for our salvation, and since it is given us upon our asking for it, the consequence is that we must pray for it—offer prayer for it. We must pray for the graces that are requisite, that will help to bring us to the service of God, and afterwards lead us to Heaven. Christ himself tells us that without His help, His grace, His assistance, we cannot obtain Heaven. "Without me, you can do nothing"—actually do nothing towards advancing ourselves in the service of God, and enabling our soul to resist temptations. Thus, grace is so requisite that without it we cannot obtain Heaven.

Grace is chiefly given us when we pray, when we ask it of God, when we acknowledge ourselves, when we acknowledge that we are entirely depending upon Him for all the gifts pertaining to our existence.

Now, we need therefore to pray, since prayer is so necessary for our salvation, that without the grace of God we cannot save our souls, and the grace of God is obtained chiefly through prayer. Christ says, "Ask and you shall receive, seek and you shall find, knock and it shall be opened unto you." If we ask God's help, if we ask Him for grace, if we ask for the assistance we need, especially for our soul, God will give them to us, so long as we ask sincerely for them, for He gives us the assurance, "ask and you shall receive, etc.

How, do we ask help? All know that it is chiefly through prayer; by raising our thoughts to God, to worship and adore God, to acknowledge that we are entirely dependent upon Him for everything we have, and in thus acknowledging Him, as our Lord and Master. Prayer, then, is requisite and essential to our obtaining eternal life to the fulfillment of our duties and obligations; to enable us to keep the commandments of God. The Holy Scriptures tell us that "we are continually exposed in this life to danger." "Man's life is a warfare." Christ tells us that Christians are engaged in spiritual warfare, spiritual fights, spiritual contests. Contending against whom? The devil and his agents. The devil, as the Scripture says, is like a roaring lion, going about, seeking whom he may devour, seeking to lead man into temptation. If he fails on one side, he attacks on the other, and you know that from your own experience, you are never free from danger—never free from temptations. And how are you to overcome these temptations? Not by your own help. You can do nothing to resist the devil, nothing to obtain salva-

tion, without God's help, without God's graces. Thus, you see how weak you are, how unable to resist the enemy you are. Yet, Christ is ever ready, always prepared to come to your assistance, but he wishes to make you dependent upon Him. If you do not pray to Him for help you will fall into temptation. "Watch and pray," says Christ, "lest you fall into temptation." One of the saints said, "the man who prays is saved, but the man who prays not is lost." Now at first thought, this seems rather strange, seems hard to believe, that the man who prays is saved, but the man who prays not is lost. Some may say there is a man who curses or swears, or is given to some other vice, yet you say because the man prays he is saved. How can this person be saved? If he prays with the proper disposition, then God will give him grace to overcome his vicious habits, to conquer his temptations, to overcome the defects of which he is the victim. So we may truly say "the man who prays is saved." But it should be the proper kind of prayer. If it is such, God will give him the grace to overcome his temptations. If not true prayer, then it is presumption on his part to expect help from God. There are many who in prayer also boast of their virtues, of the good they do, but do not look at their vices, are blind to their defects, and conceal their faults, as if Almighty God did not know them already. In their pride and vanity they do not look into the defects of their soul, into the publican did, they do not consider vices to which they are addicted. This is too frequently the case of many, who say they pray—pray to God their Master—but do not pray as they should. If they prayed as they should they would pray like the poor publican, with all simplicity of heart, looking into their defects, acknowledging that they are sinners, asking God to be merciful to them, sinners, and saying, "O, God help me, God forgive me." If they pray in this manner God will give them graces necessary for their salvation. But we must remember that the utterance of the words of prayer is not always a prayer. We must have the requisite dispositions. We must be recollected, pray with all humility and sorrow for our sinfulness, and degradation in the sight of God, and gradually know our own defects and vices. If we could see ourselves as God sees us then we would be continually ashamed of ourselves.

Too often we look with contempt upon our neighbor, because we imagine our neighbor is worse than ourselves. God does not wish us to compare ourselves with others, and if we are not as bad as this or that one, let us not say that we are better than they. God that we are better according to his own law, will judge us according to the faults or vices of our neighbor. Our neighbor will have to answer for his own sins, for his transgressions of the law, and we will have to answer for our own sins. Let us pray, looking at our own faults, and not like the proud Pharisee, looking at our neighbor's faults. When coming to pray we must have the proper disposition if we wish God to forgive and pardon us. Pray not if you hear our prayers. Pray not if you have not the proper disposition; otherwise we would be like those whom God does not hear, but whose hearts are far from Me.

Do we always give proper attention when we are offering our prayers? Sometimes Yes, sometimes No. How often do we think of our business or of our neighbors when we are praying? That is not prayer. Prayer is the raising of our thoughts and feelings to God, to Whom we are speaking. Let us rather say few prayers with more attention than many without recollection. Sometimes you hear people say, "I prayed for special requests, and my prayers were not heard. When God does not grant those prayers, I do not see that there is any use in my praying any more." Very frequently do we hear such utterances. Now, my dear brethren, such persons have not the proper knowledge of their faith. What does Our Lord say in the very prayer He has composed for us? "What is one of the conditions? It is 'Thy will be done.' We pray, and at the same time, we say 'Thy will be done.' Are we praying then, if we ask for special favors and feel disappointed if they are not granted? Such is not called prayer. But, if in praying, one says, 'I am prepared to submit to Thy Will, O God,' and says it with faith, it is praying. We must remember if God sees fit to refuse a particular request that is no reason why God does not grant us something else. We often ask God for blessings, for prosperity in business, for success in undertakings, that if granted would be injurious to our spiritual welfare. But if God does not see fit to grant our special requests, let us say "Thy will be done," and God will give us something more profitable for our souls, more profitable for Heaven. So that our prayers are always heard. God may not grant the special requests we ask, but grants something better, which will bring us more happiness. God looks to what is best for us. Sometimes God hears person's prayers, and grants requests that are abused. For instance, a mother will pray for her child to recover from sickness, and her prayer is heard. When the child grows up to be a man, it is a disgrace to the parents, and then the mother exclaims "What a blessing had God not granted my request!" How often does this not happen? So if God does not always answer our special requests let us say, "Thy will be done," and He will give us something better, something more beneficial to our souls.

"Pray without ceasing," and this will bring you happiness in this life, and eternal joys in the next—which is my wish to each and every one of you."

Want of "A Love for Catholic Doctrine" is the cause of all the apathy manifested by Catholics for their faith. Let us hope then that this intention of the Sacred Heart League September may be fruitful in results—Church Progress

A TALK ON EDUCATION.

Rev. Father Schoendorff read a paper on education, in Put-in-Bay, Ohio, Sunday evening before a fair sized audience. Our representative secured a copy of it, a synopsis of which we gladly give to our readers:

No question has been more discussed than the question of education. None has been further from a satisfactory solution. It is well to note the difference in the meaning of the two words, education and instruction, which appear to be synonymous terms. People have agreed as to their meaning. Plutarch a philosopher of old, calls education a process of nourishment. He makes a quaint comparison. He states that in a nursery, we have the process of raising wild plants. We nourish them, we graft and trim them and have as result sound fruit trees.

People confounding terms make much of information, intending to give their children an easier living than they themselves enjoyed. For that seems to be the only aim of parents and teachers. The fault lies in the misapprehension of the purpose of life. To teach our youths only to gain an easy livelihood will prove a failure.

Were our youths taught both at home, at school and church, how to live, the noble object of education would be fully attained. Everyone will find a way of making his living, especially in our country. Were our youths contented to assume that part for which they are fitted and act it well, no matter be it lowly or high, their lives would prove a success, not a failure. Instruction or information relates only to the mind. It means to know a number of subjects to be drilled in mathematics or geography, to know cipher. We say such people are well informed. But education of heart and soul forms good men. A well-informed man will be ill bred. A well-bred man will combine knowledge and delicacy of heart, politeness and reverence. Well informed people often indulge in cursing or swearing. Not so the well-bred. A learned person may prove his learning only when opportunity is given. An ill bred person is known at once as soon as he opens his mouth. An educated person is silent, knows how to listen and to be calm; a well informed but ill-bred person is loud-mouthed, high voiced, knowing it all, and is ever sure of himself. You may obtain information of things. If you have the money to pay for them and the memory to lodge them. Good breeding, which is the same as good education, means a daily training of mind and heart, a daily training of conscience. It supposes a consciousness of our relations to our Maker. It is a copying of the life of the greatest ideal of the race, the Lord Jesus. It is a daily reflection of his life in our daily lives.

AN EFFECTIVE REBUKE.

The audience which attended the opening of the Bijou Theater in Pittsburgh, Pa., last week gave a remarkable rebuke to a minstrel company which attempted some sacrilegious jests. In an effort to be humorous one of the end men pronounced certain problems, belief in which it was said, insured solution. The stories of Daniel in the lions den and Jonah and the whale were told. The interlocutor referred to the parable of the loaves and fishes, using almost the language of the scriptural text.

While this was being told there was not a sound in the theater. The audience waited as it stuned for the denouement.

At last an old man in the audience said, excitedly: "Beg pardon, gentlemen, please cut that out," which request was echoed from all parts of the theater. Further irreverence was eliminated, and the management promised that no repetition of the offense would be allowed.

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