



REV. L. LALONDE, S. J.

A Striking Lenten Sermon

BY

REV. L. LALONDE, S. J.

AT THE

GESU, MONTREAL

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH

BY

Miss Bellelle Guerin.

the solidarity of action of a universal people, whose chief is Christ and whose fatherland is Heaven!

With these conclusions, which are so evident in theory, it is difficult to understand that in practice we meet with contrary results. It is because the present state of society has reversed the order of things. Our neighbor has become an adversary, or a subject of speculation, each action is of value only in so far as it is of value to ourselves, and in the materialism in which we are submerged, that which pays is alone of consequence. Our age with its rush of business, its struggles for existence, its ferocious appetites is not worse perhaps than other ages have been, but it is different. It stands with outstretched hands, eager to grasp all within its reach; "Make room, make room," it cries, while with restless eyes, dilated with cupidity, eyes that dare not look up to Heaven, it watches for the gold that may have dropped from the hands of another. Our age in fact, has so accustomed us to "Each man for himself" that the word and action have passed even into Catholic lives. One would believe that the verb "to have" had taken the place of the verb "to be." For do we not, with the most innocent cynicism say of our friend that "he is worth so much," when we mean that he possesses a certain amount; and strange to say, the unflattering imputation does not offend him. In fact, to conjugate the verb "to be" nowadays, one must include the verb "to have;" formerly it used to be said: "I am just, thou art noble, he is good." Now it is: "I am, thou art, he is just, good, or noble, inasmuch as I have, thou hast, he has—riches."

This false conception of true Catholicity has so impregnated us, that many,—and good people, too—smile at the mere name of a practical Catholic, just as they would at the ridiculous figure of a Don Quixote. Alas, it is because the picture of some that they have known, passes before their eyes like a caricature. The picture is that of a false Catholic.

THE FALSE CATHOLIC. — Unfortunately, this mistaken idea is held by a great many. They will call a man a good Catholic, for instance, who has been baptized, goes to Mass on Sundays, prays, or at least seems to do so, and who approaches the sacraments at Easter time. One who is peaceful, submissive and neutral; who will never tell you either what he is nor what he believes, even if you were to do injury to his Faith, so long as you do not trouble him. Scandal touches him not, and if he has been discovered in an intrigue, he takes care to show that he has been the victim, for a dove does not attack a serpent, nor do lambs devour wolves. His reserve is so great that it might be called cowardice, since he seems generally to be craving pardon of his friends for being a Catholic. In the presence of a blasphemer, he would be confused that you should think him innocent of mortal sin, and he would blush, as at an insult, if you called him devout.

Such a one, in his home, leads a well regulated life,—three meals a day,—abstains from meat on Friday. In his intercourse with his children, his gentleness seems, at least to himself, to be evangelical. He gives orders which are not obeyed, he changes them to advice, which is not heeded; then, he expresses sorrow, but rather than have unpleasantness, he who should command, ends by becoming himself the obedient one.

His idea of social life is to approve of all things, that he may be well thought of by all men; so wherever he goes he bows to right and left, with equal courtesy to those who persecute and to those who are persecuted, and he grasps, with the same warmth, the hand of the friend and of the enemy of his religion. He avoids every society or Catholic undertaking, which the world might disapprove of, for, above all things he wishes to gain approbation for himself, and just as he takes up his convictions when he enters his home, he drops them at the door behind him, when he leaves it. Why, indeed, should he be asked to make unnecessary sacrifices, since he performs his duties, pays his dividends, keeps his boys at college and makes brilliant matches for his daughters?

This is the picture which the world forms of a good Catholic, it resembles him in just as much as a caricature resembles an original. There are some traits that might be recognized, but the ridiculous side has been so often represented by our enemies, that timid minds become afraid and we behold men to whom baptism has given the proudness of names, the highest of dignities, the most beautiful traits of soul, and a nobility whose crest and titles are emblazoned by God

Himself, and yet, who dare not raise their heads!

Alas, it is a sad truth that there are Christians, who by hanging on to devotion with fangs of hypocrisy are a discredit to Catholicity. They are the parasites who fasten like moss to the trunk of a great tree. But the Church should not be judged by these unworthy exceptions, nor should we, by neglecting to accomplish her works, allow ourselves to be classed with them. Does a great and sincere mind judge of a whole by some minute details which disfigure it?

What would we say of a traveller, who from the summit of Mount Royal, gazing at the marvellous view before him, the distant mountains upon the blue horizon, the fields overflowing with yellow harvests on which the midday sun poured down its ripening heat, the river St. Lawrence flowing on calmly and majestically between two curtains of green, seeming, after the tumult of Lachine Rapids, peaceful as a beautiful soul which has conquered a great passion, what would we say if such a one, turning from the magnificent landscape before him with a disdainful smile, remarked that within the fields of waving corn some ravishing insects might be hidden, that some caterpillars crawled on the swaying branches of the trees, or that perhaps a snail was measuring its slimy length on the emerald banks of that azure stream. Such a one would indeed be unworthy of the glorious landscape, his path should lie in lanes.

Nevertheless, such is the conduct of those who, while contemplating the divine whole of Catholic action, offer as a plea for their want of interest, the fact that amongst individuals there may be found parasitical hypocrites, creatures who sometimes succeed in daubing all with their infamous colors. And they exaggerate the number of these, in order to find some excuse for the human respect they would like to call dignity, and the indifference they find would justify.

There was once a man who was the predecessor of this type, we are told in the Gospel that his name was Nicodemus. He too, was a Disciple of Our Lord, but being afraid of the censure of the Jews, he came to the Saviour under the shadow of the night. He seems to have been the first who loved a religion whose works and worship sought obscurity.

CONDITIONS OF ACTION.—Having indicated the obligations incumbent on each member to act in with the whole of that body of which he forms a part, it remains for us to study the principal conditions by which this activity should be directed.

First, we must be persuaded that every Catholic, be he ever so humble, has an influence to exert and works to accomplish; temporal works, on which we will not insist here, as they appeal so largely to sentiment, and even the strongest minds are more easily led by sentiment than by principles of Faith or Reason; and spiritual works of which Our Lord has given us an example and which, He told us, cover a multitude of sins.

These works concern us all, even as the precept of loving our neighbor, and principally of loving our neighbor's soul, concerns us. Therefore, in order that they may be accomplished, it is a necessary condition that there be no rivalry in the ministering of them. Although the one is spiritual and the other temporal, no opposing interest must ever forge a separation between the laic and the clerical.

And, why should we fear such a separation? Are not we all working for the same end, to which all are subordinate? Are not we all members of the same family, soldiers of the same army, commanded by the same chief? We profess the same Faith, receive the same sacraments, adore the same God, then why should we fear the distrustful voice which calls out that there is an enemy in our midst? An enemy? Does it not seem impossible? Have not we all, though one may wear a frock coat and the other a cassock, learned the same catechism which has taught us that man was created to adore God, to know Him, love Him and serve Him, and thereby to acquire Eternal Life? Do we not know that the object of Civil Society is to help us in this service to obtain Eternal Life?

It alone is the great universal end for all. Not more for one than for another, not more for the layman than for the priest, not more for the King than for his ministers, not more, not less for the great lady who sweeps the rustling silk of her skirts over the gorgeous carpets of her brilliant drawing room on the way to her carriage, than for the little Sister, in her humble gown of black or grey, who spends the night by the bedside of the dying, in the miserable hovels of the poor.

Eternal Life, that is the end; and outside of it all else,—all—is but a means. The means, however is worthy of the end and derives its value from it. And whether it be called fortune, science, health, profession or trade, it is of worth only when united to that end which it helps to obtain. Fortune is worthless if it elates the soul instead of helping to save it, and so is science, unless it illumines the road to Eternal Life. Medicine is helpless if it helps not the life which cannot die, and health avails us nothing if by it we live not in such a way that we will live forever with God.

CATHOLIC UNION.—If, then, the end is one and indivisible and that all the rest is but a means to attain it, why in the very heart of the Church is there a species of antagonism between two powers, one civil, and the other religious, a sort of opposition of interests, one temporal, the other eternal?

Will not victory for one mean the undoing of the other since they have not been made to destroy each other by rivalry, but rather to consolidate each other by union and dependence?

It would be necessary to travel far back into the past, to find the origin of this distrust which stifles so many great impulses, destroys the germ of heroic acts, and makes purely human institutions out of noble works which a breath of Catholicity would have imbued with a life divine.

It was Protestantism, with its liberal judgment, that germinated the first microbe and cast it into our modern life. It fell among high places, and attacked Governments, and from thence the homicidal doctrine has descended to us. That doctrine which would cut a man in two, dividing his soul from his body, and which may be known as "The Separation of Church and State." Many a well-intentioned Christian on account of temporal interests, injured pride or ill-directed zeal, has caught the malady, and felt within himself in his own internal government this separation of Church and State. Once this occurs, it means disaster, for, although his actions may keep their external form, they are dead. They may preserve the appearances of a body, but the soul has departed and life has gone, the body is nothing but a corpse.

How shall we preserve ourselves from this death? We who would live in the body and spirit of Christ, who would fain accomplish works that will be registered in the books of Eternal Life?

Where is the hand that can dive deep down into our organism and drag out the evil and destroy it? Ah, it would be a long and wearisome task, better far to take such precautions as will preserve those who have not yet been tainted.

CATHOLIC FIRST.—A Catholic must always remember that before and above all else in life he is a Catholic. Generally speaking, a king must forget that he is a king, before he will lower himself to do a mean act, and so, when a Catholic forgets his dignity, it is not long before he subordinates it to his state of life, and to the exigencies of his temporal interests; yet, his state is merely an accidental means given him to effect his union with God. Numerous and varied as are our methods of gaining a livelihood, so also are the means given us for obtaining our salvation. They are as links in a chain which is riveted in God, and though they may be far distant from each other and very dissimilar, they are inseparably joined to the first ring which gives them their value and which binds them to the Almighty.

For instance, the politician may be indifferent to the tradesman, the grocer to the merchant, the doctor to the lawyer, but not one of these can detach himself from the Christian within him. To unlink himself from the chain which binds him, would mean to separate himself from God.

Politicians, doctors, lawyers, we may live without, nor must we be of their class. Jesuits may not be considered necessary, nor need we be of their Order; God alone is indispensable, and without Him we can have no life.

All, then, must ever remember that religion is first and before all else, since it gives to man his character. His profession or trade, whatever it be, is merely a qualification to tell the class to which he belongs. Has not the politician, before receiving a commission from his country, received a higher commission from his God? The doctor and lawyer, have they not, before obtaining these earthly degrees, obtained the noblest of all titles when they were made children of the Church by baptism?

How unworthy would he be who, although claiming to be a son of God's family, would in his profes-

sional or business life say: "It matters not whether those whom I employ serve God or not, so long as they serve me;" a doctor who would say: "So long as I cure the body, let others look after the soul;" or the founder of a benevolent institution who would desire to comfort and assuage the sufferings of humanity, but who would be indifferent to the religious spirit and administration of his work, leaving to others that which should be accomplished by himself.

Worse still would be he, who would harbor in his heart a spirit of antagonism towards those members of the great family who are, as it were, his older brothers and sisters; I mean the priests and nuns, who would decry them, invent and magnify their faults, who would struggle to lessen their influence by malicious jibes and jests? Ah, most unworthy would such a son be. Even those outside the pale of the Church must regard such a one as a renegade and a traitor.

MINFUL OF DIGNITY.—To be constantly mindful of one's dignity as a Catholic is a necessary condition to fulfill its obligations. Yet, this must be done with subordination. We are not permitted to take upon ourselves a sacerdotal mission; rather must we make the lay mission, which is our own, respond to the precept God has given us, when he confided to each one of us the care of our neighbor. Ours must be a ministry in which caution never excludes zeal, nor in which tact excludes ardor, where example given at the proper time, and counsel gently and decidedly offered will be productive of lasting good for the salvation of souls. Above all it is a ministry in which the ingratitude of those who receive must never have power to lessen the love of those who bestow.

Oh, how great must be our love, to reach the summit of this height where Jesus, our model, has stood before us!

To labor for others, and to be misunderstood by them. To do good, and have evil done us in return. It is bitter, but it must be endured.

Some day it may happen that having given a part of your life to awaken that life which never dies in the soul of another, when blessed and happy at the result of your labors, you have heard a heart throb with spiritual life, its cords vibrating at your kindly words and becoming attached to your own heart, because through it, it has become reunited to God. If at that hour, when desiring to do good, you are accused of doing wrong, when trying to console and convert, you are accused of dishonesty and perversion, when malicious lips will whisper vile untruths about you, and even those whom you thought your friends will allow your name to be bandied about with all the crudity of malignant and sensational slander. Oh, terrible indeed will be that moment, and bitter that trial to bear! And when the demon of calumny having caught you in its vicious clutches, striving to resist its power, tears blind your eyes, and your heart sinks with discouragement within you. When your pride revolts, and your whole being rebels against the insults offered to you, will you throw yourself on your knees and cry out from your soul before your crucifix: Oh! Jesus, too much do my sufferings resemble your own! If it belongs to the refinement of civilization to attack and destroy all those who would lend it a helping hand, then give, Oh, give us a place of solitude where the ungrateful enter not, lead us to some spot where tranquilly and peacefully we may dwell, where we need not have your works to propagate, nor call on others to bless Your Name!

But oh, no, no. Let us arise with courage! Catholic action demands just such a struggle. What must be crushed before bread can be made. Virtue bows its head to every breeze like a frail flower, if its roots are not buried in pain. Words are barren when they are not moistened by tears. The heart is cold and dry from which warm life blood does not flow. He is not a Christian who is not another Christ, who becomes a Saviour.

Ah, behold Christ the Saviour. He loved the world. He blessed it. He saved it, and what did an ungrateful people bestow upon Him in return? Only a crown of thorns to bind His brow. And nails to pierce His hands. Yet He has said to us: "Look upon Me, and do as I do."

I know that it requires a great deal of merit for me to get to Heaven, but what I lack I will obtain from my treasury, which is the Heart of Jesus.—St. Bernard.

The more you are beaten about by the winds of temptation, the deeper must you cast your roots by a profound humility, in the Sacred Heart of Jesus Christ.

ON JUSTICE MAHON.—One distinguished High Court

Province of Ontario. Hon. Hugh MacMahon native of Canada born in Guelph on the 1836. His parents were of Ireland. Justice Mahon was a gentleman, and he pursued the education of the law. For some time the sketch held employment in Canadian Government feeling that the civil prospects for an resigned and applied study of law. In 1870 he was admitted to practice, and into partnership with the late Thomas B. Mahon, whom he remained for Brantford. His parents came county judge of though the clientelle Mahon was large, at ventured on a change residence at London, where he acquired an extensive 1876 he received his from the Ontario Government in 1885 the Dominion him a similar distinction sented the Dominion

OUR CURBSTONE OBSERVER.

HERE is an open one able to a hi doubt all m

enced, from time to better in the end to ture of a danger the than to be ignorant existence. This g been expressed in so different ways that volume to repeat the different authors. O known is to the effect forewarned is to be fo all this has reference natural dangers that is, however, an ene can possibly defend and that is an evil tongue. The word of the victim of it is aware of it ever hav he has no idea th impressions are against him; and wh of the wrong, he is able of counteracting He may be able to s on the subject to on ple; but it is beyond follow the story in cesses of the social wherein it has deve pand its poisonous in itself, would form esting and a very th