

FIVE MINUTE SERMON

FOURTH SUNDAY IN LENT

"Whence shall we buy bread that these may eat?" (John vi, 5.)

A great multitude was following Jesus, because they had seen the miracles that He wrought on the sick. These words show us why the Church has selected this Gospel to be read during Lent. This holy season should encourage us to follow Jesus with zeal, to cling to Him without wavering, and to be loyal to Him always. The miracle of the feeding of the five thousand ought to quicken and strengthen our zeal. The events leading up to this wonderful occurrence were the following: Our Lord had sent out His disciples two and two, that they might preach the Kingdom of Heaven and the coming of the Redeemer. On their return they reported to Him what they had done. About the same time Herod began to be suspicious regarding Jesus, of whose teaching and deeds he had heard. St. Luke says: "Now Herod, the tetrarch, heard of all things that were done by Him, and he was in doubt because it was said by some that John was risen from the dead, and by other some that Elias had appeared, and by others that one of the ancient prophets had arisen. And Herod said: 'John I have beheaded, but who is this of whom I hear such things?' and he sought to see Him. And the Apostles, when they were returned, told Him all they had done" (Luke ix, 7-10). Our Lord knew well what Herod meant by wanting to see Him, and to avoid this danger, and also to give His disciples some rest after their journey. He ordered by boat from the west to the east side of the Sea of Galilee, and went into a desert region. The multitude, however, having witnessed His miracles and heard His teaching, watched with dismay the departure of Him Whom they revered so much; and sorrowfully looked at the boat that was conveying Him across the lake. In human existence weeping and lamentation are of no use at all, if we do not steadily resolve to acquire that which we cannot see absent without grief. If these people had stood weeping on the shore, and had gone home despondent, after Jesus had passed out of their sight, their zeal would not have been of the right sort, and would never have enabled them to find Him. Our resolutions are often of this kind; we see that Jesus is no longer beside us; we are in a state of sin calculated to drive Him still further from us, and our resolutions are nothing but mere wishes to be reunited with Him, mere lamentations over our faults. Because we talk a great deal of Jesus and His love we flatter ourselves that we possess really pious zeal; but unless we follow the example of the multitude by the Lake of Galilee, our zeal is unprofitable. They looked after Him, not simply mourning His departure, but in order to see in what direction He was going. Having watched the boat start, they guessed where He would land, and then they made haste to go round the lake. Thus they set us a good example of zeal for Jesus. We ought first to ask: "Where is He? where shall we find Him, in what good work? in what act of self-denial?" And when once we know where He is, and in this duty we are in that action, or that He demands this or that of us, then let us press forward and follow Him. That is not the time to ask whether it is convenient to us or not—whether it is easy or difficult, our business is to overtake Him. The multitudes of old forgot the necessities of life in their anxiety to be with Him; and we, too, ought to set aside all earthly advantages, all worldly considerations, if it is a question of being near Him, of clinging to Him and of being faithful. This is true zeal for Jesus Christ, and if we possess it we may be sure that He will never forsake us, but will care for us tenderly.

He cares for those who trust Him. What a consoling truth! How plainly is it revealed to us in today's Gospel! And yet experience often seems to point the other way, and those who trust Him appear to be forsaken. But did not the poor, hungry people seem forsaken? Did not Our Lord Himself appear to be somewhat embarrassed about them? "Whence shall we buy bread that these may eat?" Neither Jesus nor His Apostles had money enough to buy bread for so many. This is plain from St. Philip's answer: "Two hundred pennyworth of bread is not sufficient for them, that every one may take a little." And even if the necessary money had been forthcoming, there was not so much bread available, there was only a boy with five barley loaves and two fishes for sale, so that in addition to the want of money, it would have been impossible to buy enough bread. Jesus, instead of consoling the hungry multitude that had followed Him so faithfully, seemed to deprive them of their last hope by acknowledging their pitiful plight, and saying: "Whence shall we buy bread?" Yet He allowed them to realize their helpless condition so thoroughly only that they might be more firmly convinced by the miracle that He was on the point of working. They were to seem forsaken, in order that His love and power might be revealed more gloriously.

It is often thus in the various difficulties and misfortunes of life. So many obstacles and trials present themselves that a man seems hopelessly lost. In many cases he has neither money nor bread, or, in other words, he has no prospect of help; in fact it appears impossible

for him to escape from his difficulties and troubles. Moreover, it frequently happens that external misfortunes are accompanied by inward desolation; Jesus seems to have forsaken him. Yet this intense sense of helplessness in many cases is the precursor of wonderful help. Just when all seems lost, Our Lord's voice rings out unexpectedly: "Sit down, ye who are weighed down by misery,"—and He comes to give them strength and power.

Jesus said: "Make the men sit down," and there was much grass in the place. We often hear that many who are faithful to Him die in misery without ever experiencing His wonderful help. Has He, therefore, really forsaken them? Is earthly happiness the highest form of happiness? The place where the weary multitude sat down reminds us of that far more glorious abode where those who follow Jesus loyally will some day have their rest. Is earthly misery the most intense that can befall us? Do Our Lord's promises all apply to this world? Those crowds of Jews, eager for knowledge, sat on the grass, whilst He stood before them as their Provider, from whom they received food and nourishment. How vividly does this scene represent the glorious future, when all the elect, gathered together as one great family, will rest round Jesus in His Kingdom, receiving from Him the bread of everlasting life and unending happiness.

Then all will be made good, then He will repay us with unspeakable bliss for all that we have suffered for His sake. Therefore let us often renew our resolution to seek Him with holy zeal, and to be faithful to Him until the end; then we shall often experience His wonderful help even in this world, and when in His incomprehensible wisdom He sees fit to withdraw this help, we ought to know that our souls, now hungering after righteousness and thirsting after rest and consolation, will be crowned with all joy in His eternal Kingdom. Amen.

TEMPERANCE

CARDINAL FALCONIO

His Eminence, Diomedes Cardinal Falconio, has recently celebrated the Golden Jubilee of his ordination to the priesthood. The Catholic Total Abstinence Union of America congratulates His Eminence, and prays that many years may yet be vouchsafed him, rich in honors as well as in service to Christ and His Church. During the years spent by Cardinal Falconio as Apostolic Delegate to the United States, His Eminence won the respect not only of all Catholics but also of all citizens who came within the reach of his influence. Among his admirers none were more devoted than the officers and members of the Catholic Total Abstinence Union of America. We knew that his wide vision, his apostolic spirit, his thorough knowledge of men and things, and above all, his zeal for souls had made him a friend of every good cause, and we knew at all times that he would support every honest effort at making men sober. His Eminence never fell short of our expectations.

Six years ago we sent out a plea for co-operation to the bishops and priests of the United States. Some splendid letters of encouragement came back to us. Among these was the following letter from the Apostolic Delegate.

Washington, D. C., Feb. 12, 1910.
Very Rev. P. J. O'Callaghan, C. S. P.,
490 Wabash Ave., Chicago, Ill.

Very Reverend Dear Sir:
In answer to your favor of last January, I beg to offer to you and to all the members of the Catholic Total Abstinence Union of America, my sincerest congratulations on the gratifying success which up to the present has been achieved by your society.

May God grant that this holy and most important institution continue, with renewed zeal, its beneficent work, so that as in the past, so also in the future it may prove one of the most efficient agencies in preserving our people and especially our youth from the degrading vice of intemperance in drink.

Indeed the nature of your Union is such as to deserve the encouragement and support of everyone who has at heart the spiritual and temporal welfare of our beloved people. It has the formal sanction of the Holy See and is earnestly recommended by the whole Hierarchy. Hence, I have no doubt that your noble determination to oppose and uproot the baneful vice of drunkenness by total abstinence will be crowned with success.

May God, in His goodness, assist you in this noble endeavor with abundance of His Grace, and may He bestow upon you and every member of the association His choicest blessings.

With best wishes, I remain,

Sincerely yours in Christ,

D. FALCONIO,

Apostolic Delegate.

We first published this in the Advocate of February, 1910. In an editorial in the same issue we said: "One of the first fruits of our appeal to the clergy has come in the shape of congratulation and commendation from His Excellency, Monsignor Falconio, the Apostolic Delegate. We are glad it has come in time to appear in our February issue. We shall treasure it, not only because it comes from the representative of the Holy Father, but also because it breathes so cordial a spirit of sympathy for our Catholic Total Abstinence Union that we feel that it is the utterance

of a friend who understands and appreciates the work of our National Union. Those of us who have had the honor of knowing the Apostolic Delegate realize how intimately he is acquainted with the conditions of our country, and how lofty are his ideals for the leaders of the Church and State. His sympathies are Catholic in every sense of the word. We appreciate his letter, therefore, because of his personal worth as well as because of his official position. In the name of every member of the Catholic Total Abstinence Union, we thank him. Our only desire has been, and it always will be, to think as the Church would have us think and to do as the Church would have us do."

His Eminence was the guest of the Catholic Total Abstinence Union of America at its convention held in Scranton, August, 1911. His visit made the occasion one of the most memorable in the annals of our Union. The reception accorded him upon his arrival in Scranton will undoubtedly abide in his memory, in spite of the crowded experiences of his long and busy life. The occasion will never be forgotten by us. The inspiring words uttered by His Eminence during his stay in Scranton will be treasured among those precious approbations of ecclesiastical authority which have given to our Union its chief claim upon the devotion of its members.

In a notable address delivered at the great public meeting of the convention, His Eminence said: "While, therefore, I appreciate fully the efforts which are being made to do away altogether with the traffic in liquor, especially in districts where moral standards are low, no response among the people, I do believe that the real secret of success in the temperance movement lies principally in the firm determination of each individual person to live a sober Christian life so that, even if the temptation be offered, he or she may be able to resist."

His whole address was replete with noteworthy sentences and emphatic in commendation of every effort made to eradicate the evils of intemperance and to suppress pestiferous saloons that made their patrons to be victims of drunkenness. If the enemies of the Church are to be defeated in their attempt at besmirching the Spouse of Christ with the oft-repeated charge that she palliates intemperance, the Recording Angel will write down the name of His Eminence, Diomedes Cardinal Falconio, as amongst the chief of those who redeemed their time and upheld the honor of Holy Church.

The years have deepened our admiration for Cardinal Falconio. We rejoice that his high character as well as his great services to religion have earned for him so high a place in the confidence of our Holy Father, Benedict XV, now gloriously reigning, and in the great Congregations of Rome through which the Universal Church is governed. His Eminence may be sure of the undying gratitude of the Catholic Total Abstinence Union of America. The prayers wherewith we are now beseeching Heaven for his continued health and happiness will be taken up by the thousands of our readers. May abundant answer be vouchsafed them and the choicest favors of Heaven fall upon the cup of happiness of this loyal friend of temperance and this exalted yet humble Prince of the Holy Roman Church. Ad Multos Annos.—Catholic Temperance Advocate.

CERTAINLY

If the people who are worrying their heads about "chain prayers" would say the "Our Father," the "Hail Mary," etc., go to Mass regularly, and approach the sacraments, as often as possible, they would be in a healthier condition, morally and spiritually than they are at present.—Pittsburg Catholic.

CHRISTMAS AT THE FRONT

The special correspondent of the Catholic Times of Liverpool, writes as follows from Paris under date of January 2nd.

The second Christmas since the beginning of the war, was kept throughout France with a solemnity not touched with pathos, but without, as far as my experience lay, any note of discouragement. In a hospital where, for the last year, I have been my privilege to make close acquaintance with our wounded fighting men, Midnight Mass was celebrated in a chapel made bright with lights and flowers. Before the war, it was the chapel of a novitiate; since August 2nd, 1914, the white-robed novices have left Paris, and their house and chapel are filled with soldiers whom the Sisters of the same religious Order nurse back to health or gently prepare for death.

Except a dozen severely wounded men, whom it was impossible to move from their beds, all our soldiers were present at Midnight Mass. Most of them are peasants and they keep a loving remembrance of the Christmas nights at home, in the granite churches of Brittany, among the olive woods of Provence, or in the wild regions of central France. Even Luke-warm French Catholics love Midnight Mass, with its local customs and its spirited "cantiques." This year a deeper feeling was added to their traditional love for Christmas celebrations. Midnight Mass in this quiet chapel presented

an impressive as well as a homelike scene. The men in their faded blue uniforms energetically led the singing, and through the little sanctuary, echoed the familiar words that brought back a thousand reminiscences of home; old-world "Noels," full of simple faith, that have pictured the wonderful story of Bethlehem to generations past and gone. Closest to the altar were the most seriously wounded; those who, though on their way to be cured, are obliged to lie or to sit down. A Vendean peasant lay on the couch, and near him a Breton, hopelessly injured at Arras.

Seated in front, at the place of honor, was a sturdy Parisian, who before the war helped his old mother to push a cart full of vegetables through the busy streets of a crowded working suburb. He was brought to the hospital in an almost hopeless condition, having spent three days without his wounds being dressed, crouching in a big hole, whence a devoted comrade rescued him with incredible trouble. Skill and care, and, above all, the grace of God, saved his life, and one day, after some months' stay at the friendly hospital he timidly informed the chaplain that he had never made his First Communion, less from hostility than from carelessness on the part of his devoted old mother. The Abbe, who is himself a militarized infirmarian, as prudent as he is kind; he allowed the Parisian's ideas on the subject of his First Communion to ripen, but when the soldier expressed a wish to be instructed, he willingly set himself to the task, aided by one of the little Sisters, whose devotedness played no small part in our Parisian's resolution. "It sometimes troubled me on the battlefield not to have made my First Communion," said the latter when relating his experiences. He had dimly felt that he was deprived of the spiritual assistance that his more favored companions enjoyed, but was too ignorant to discern clearly in what that assistance consisted. Our soldier's First Communion at Midnight Mass supplied the want that had made itself felt in the hour of peril; his attitude was perfect—that of a happy child who has found his way home to his Father's house.

During that solemn, peaceful, Midnight Mass, to which the presence of our soldiers on crutches, arms in slings, and bandaged heads, gave a touch of pathos, the thoughts of many present wandered to the line of fire where their dear ones are stationed. He wondered how and where these fighting men, whom we love, were spending Christmas night. The answer, as regards some of these soldiers, lies before me as I write these lines. In a letter written from the trenches that are closest to the enemy's lines, in the "Somme," a young captain describes how Midnight Mass was said in an underground cavern by a lieutenant who is a priest and served by a captain who is the priest's brother. Around the rough-and-ready altar knelt officers and men, most of whom went to Holy Communion. The poverty of Bethlehem repeated itself in the surroundings of this Midnight Mass; the angel's hymns echoed in the hearts of the kneeling, while in their ears sounded the German cannon, that had been hard at work all day.

"I shall never forget that Mass, writes my officer correspondent; nor shall I forget what followed." An officer present, who possesses a splendid voice, stepped out of the trench, when Mass was over, and, standing on the parapet facing the German trenches, he sang the solemn "Minuit, Chrétiens," Adam's majestic Christmas hymn that is sung at every Midnight Mass alike in the cathedrals and village churches throughout France. He sang slowly and distinctly, his voice rolling grandly across the dreary plain, and when he had finished an "encore" rose from the enemy's trenches in front. At some miles distance, the colonel of the same regiment was present at another Midnight Mass; the men being further removed from the enemy's cannon, it was celebrated in the open, close to a ruined village, where not a house is left standing. The night was mild and tolerably clear, and although big black clouds occasionally swept across the moon, it shone out at intervals and lit up the altar, surrounded by kneeling groups of fighting men. The familiar "cantiques" rose from their ranks, bringing into their rough environment the sweetness of the peaceful past and the hope of a victorious future. Whether the crown of victory be theirs here below or above, the solemn Christmas of 1915 will have done its work in drawing nearer to the Child of Bethlehem those "men of good will." Ignorant they may be, neglectful, perhaps, in the past of their duties towards God, but, chastened and elevated by the steady performance of a tragic duty, they have in many cases risen by the sheer force of their "good will" to a high standard of unconscious heroism. "I cannot say how much I admire my men," writes the captain whose experiences on Christmas night we have recorded.

The religious revival at the Front is a reality. It would not be correct to treat it as a universal movement that implies the wholesale conversion of a nation, but I am safe in saying that, in consequence of the war, many souls have been saved; and that among the survivors prejudices have been dispelled and dormant convictions revived. The influence of suffering nobly borne

has brought many simple, ignorant, but sincere souls to a point of self-sacrifice, that in times of peace they would never have reached.—Catholic Opinion.

PRAYER ON A VIOLIN

A chaplain to one of the divisions of the French army, tells the following pretty story:

On the eve of Whitsuntide, I went to the little church where I was to officiate the next day. It was after the dinner hour and I came with the intention of placing myself at the disposal of whomsoever might require my ministrations. As I was nearing the door, I heard the sound of a violin and I thought at once there was some rehearsal such as take place on the eve of a feast. I entered the church, cast a look around me and saw no one. The violinist was there alone. I let him finish his piece, to which I listened with a delight you will understand when I tell you that our "poilu" was first violin solo at the famous C—concerts in Paris. Then I advanced toward him and complimented him upon his execution: "It is a beautiful piece of music you have just been playing, what is it?" My question seemed to perplex our modest artist, who answered with some hesitation: "Oh, it is not much, just a little extempore, voluntary." "An extempore production!" I exclaimed with astonishment. "If such be the case, it seems to me that you have put all your heart and soul into it. One would have thought it was a prayer, the sweet prayer of a little child."

"Your surmise is right, Monsieur l'aumonier," replied the violinist. "It certainly was a child's prayer I was playing—my own prayer. It happens to me now and then. When I am free, I come here alleging a rehearsal, and I never go away without having played a piece to the Blessed Sacrament and to the Blessed Virgin. It seems to me that when I hold a bow in my hand is the time when I pray best. I think of all those I love and in the church, in front of Our Lady's image, all my past years as an altar boy, the day of my first Communion comes back to my memory. Then, feeling the want of saying a fine prayer (which does not come to my lips) I begin to play and I feel I am more capable of praying with my violin than with words. Unfortunately, I have only a wretched instrument of the value of 30 francs; ah, if I had my own!"

"As the chaplain excellently remarks the soul of 'Our Lady's Juggler' lives in the French people.—Sentinel of the Blessed Sacrament, Montreal.

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