

FIVE MINUTE SERMON

BY REV. F. PEPPIERT
SIXTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER
PENTECOST

"For this cause I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ..."

As all outward mortifications are merely means of perfection, and not an end in themselves, they ought to be recommended and employed only in as far as they do not interfere with health...

How absurd it would be to give to one patient the medicine prescribed for another, and to imagine that a drug which proved beneficial in one case, must be a cure for all sick people...

It does not at all follow, because a confessor orders one man to practice one particular mortification, that another person ought to practice it too; on the contrary, what is beneficial to one may be harmful to another...

To sum up what I have said to day: We may be sure that no exterior practices of mortification ought to injure our health or interfere with our duties...

What kind of piety is this, that does this or that simply in order not to be unlike others? Experience teaches us that those who do things that attract attention, solely from a desire to copy others...

With regard to bodily sickness, we often see that ignorant people, with all the good will in the world, do a great deal of harm by their advice, and precisely the same thing is true with regard to the soul...

All the saints are agreed that, in practicing works of exterior mortification, it behooves us to be on our guard against injuring our health and strength. This is a proof that their penances, which would destroy our health or perhaps actually kill us...

St. Jerome says that whoever injured his body immoderately by such exterior mortifications, offered God a sacrifice obtained by violence and a similar opinion when he writes: "Let it be regarded as more honorable and profitable to provide for the preservation and increase of physical strength than to diminish it by mistaken austerities..."

St. Bernard, too, agrees with the saints to whom I have just referred, and gives a reason, derived from and experience, for carefully avoiding excessive severity in this respect. He says that people who go too far in their blind zeal as a rule grow tired of all the exercises of piety, and either return to a worldly existence, or, under the pretext of wishing to recover their strength, indulge in every imaginable luxury...

SHE RECOMMENDS "FRUIT-A-TIVES"

Mrs. Corbett Read the Advertisement and Tried It

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There is no need for me to prove that our exterior mortification ought no more to interfere with the performance of our ordinary duties than be prejudicial to our health. Our duty is always the chief thing for us to keep in view, as it is imposed upon us by God, and is the expression of His will. It is by no means right to undertake any voluntary good works that cause us either to neglect our duty, or to discharge it in an imperfect manner; it is in fact absolutely wrong, and an unmistakable token of thoroughly false piety, unless the mistake is due to some mental weakness.

To sum up what I have said to day: We may be sure that no exterior practices of mortification ought to injure our health or interfere with our duties. Let us be guided by our principles, and we shall then be in no danger of giving way to false piety, for we shall undertake such practices only as are conducive to our true welfare. Amen.

TEMPERANCE

THE OTHER SIDE OF HOLIDAYS

No one of us would deny the honest workingman, the laborer in shop, office or factory his holidays, and every citizen is pleased when cheerfully smiles upon all! But there is another side to the question of holiday making which is not appealing and bodes little good for the future of America's youth!

The too early closing of factories and shops is breeding intemperance! This increase in drinking has been noticed for some time and any one who wishes to be better informed as to the truth of this statement needs but to walk the public squares in any large city in this country, and he or she will quickly learn that instead of making much of this awful increase in a desperate evil, there has been very little exposure made and in consequence the youth of the land are well on the path to a tippler's record long before they have reached their twenty fifth year.

Public cafes, in which liquor is dispensed, cater to young men as well as women. Boys scarcely out of their teens, stagger along the streets, very often half dragging the young girls, whose condition is a disgrace to womanhood and a shame to the man who allows and encourages such viciousness. One of the lamentable sides to this depressing question is the fact that in nearly every case the tipplers bear all the earmarks of prosperity. They are well dressed, have money to spend and are out to contract vicious habits, simply because they have too many idle hours and the devil has plenty of amusement in store for those who love the rosy path.

TOTAL ABSTINENCE WORK A SOCIAL SERVICE

That temperance work is one of the highest forms of social service, has long been recognized. It is especially gratifying to note the following editorial which appeared in a recent issue of the Boston Journal:

One of the most useful organizations in this city, from a constructive point of view, is the St. Joseph's Total Abstinence Society of the West End, which was organized fifty years ago and which celebrated its golden anniversary in April. It is the oldest association of its kind in Boston, and it is doing welfare work in its section of the city when welfare work as such, had not even won its modern designation.

The West End, which was once the court end of Boston, has changed much in fifty years. Its population has increased, and the pitfalls for young men have not diminished, but the fact conservatively. Every charter member of the Society has passed away, but it has continued to do good in a modest manner, and enjoyed the membership and co-operation of distinguished men, lay and clerical, and has rescued from the dangers and evils of alcoholism more than a few who are now prominent and respected citizens.

Too much cannot be said for the good work done by an association of that kind, during an existence of fifty years, without endowment or the patronage of wealthy men. Its history furnishes a striking lesson for those who social service and uplift is of a comparatively recent growth in Boston. It should be an inspiration

for mutual helpfulness in every parish of every faith.

SOBRIETY, AN ESSENTIAL VIRTUE

"Sobriety is the essential virtue of a successful railroad man and the chief requisite for permanent employment in any railroad service. Especially in every man connected with the movement of trains, a clear head and steady nerves are necessary for the correct judgment that will prompt right action at the right time to avert danger and insure safety. The officers of every railroad know that the employee who gives a part of himself over to the slavery of liquor is not the man they want. They want a complete man, not a part of a man."

IS LIFE WASTED IN CONTEMPLATIVE ORDERS?

ON THE CONTRARY, THE WORLD OWES THEM INESTIMABLE DEBT FOR PRAYERS

Because a daughter of a prominent Denver family, says a writer in the Denver Catholic Register, has entered the postulancy of a contemplative religious order, there has been much talk, within the past few days, about whether this is really an ideal state in life.

It was possibly all right in the middle ages," the writer heard one good Catholic say, "but I doubt whether, with so much work needed in the world, it is advisable at this period."

The Church has always encouraged the contemplative life. It was true that certain saints who wished to lead it were prohibited by heaven for a time, as there was other unfinished work for them to do in the world. But these cases are exceptional. When Christ refused to comply with Martha's wish long ago and would not chide Mary for neglecting her household duties to listen to His words, He proved what He thought of the contemplative life.

God only knows what punishments the Trappists, Discalced Carmelites and other cloistered orders have kept from the world. The Old Testament gives some startling instances of how punishment was withheld from the wicked at the prayers of the just. Christ Himself showed the value of contemplation when He withdrew to the desert to pray and fast for forty days. I hear some of the contemplative life say: "Oh, yes, but He did not spend His entire life there." No, but He did spend most of His life in retirement. The world knew Him as a public figure only three years of his thirty-three on earth, and these forty days were part of those three years. John the Baptist also prepared for his ministry by the contemplative life. Many other religious leaders, in imitation of these, have led the contemplative life.

From all we know of the Blessed Virgin, it is reasonable to suppose that her entire life was practically contemplative. She could not have had many household duties, for she had too small a family. But did you ever hear of her participating in any public affair? It is true that she attended a wedding once. But even attending a wedding is an occasional duty. We recently learned of one who was exceedingly annoyed when an applicant for a wrist watch. The good watch had never seen such an ornament.

After Christ's death most of Mary's life must have been spent in contemplation. All Christians agree that she was the greatest woman that the world has ever known. Catholics believe that she enjoys the highest gifts and power which Almighty God can give to a creature. And she herself, in visions to saints, has declared that she obtained these graces, not merely because she was the mother of Christ, but because she deserved them.

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In every age of the Church we have had contemplatives. The story is told of an anchorite in the early Church who lived forty years within a radius of four feet.

It is not God's will that all our orders should be contemplative. Christ has plainly told us that His expects Christians to care for the sick, the poor and the ignorant. His Catholicity, as in nothing else, His command is strictly carried out. The religious orders devoting themselves to this work are extremely popular, even among non-Catholics, in America, for there is a vast wave of humanitarianism extant. But the religious orders devoting themselves to this work are extremely popular, even among non-Catholics, in America, for there is a vast wave of humanitarianism extant.

It is a relief, too, to think that there are spots in America where men and women are not money-mad; where the rush for material things does not penetrate. If the contemplative life was a waste of time, so was it a waste when Christ retired to the desert for forty days; when He hid Himself at Nazareth, before His public life. He could have made thousands of converts and healed hundreds of the afflicted in this time. But He thought the world needed His prayers more. Certainly He did not need prayers Himself.

TALKING ABOUT PEOPLE

Talking against people of any sort, no matter whether clergy or laity, is one of the commonest besetting faults of humanity. Whether such talk is harmful or not depends entirely on the circumstances of each case. If people do things which ought not to be done, they can only expect to be talked against. In such cases, if the talking is confined to the truth, and is done with due moderation, this amounts to "fair criticism," and not a word can be said against it.

At the same time the principle of Christian charity always dictates the least rather than the more. This means that our habit of censure should be first, to the best interpretation we can put on what is done. Secondly, if people do things which ought not to be done, they can only expect to be talked against. In such cases, if the talking is confined to the truth, and is done with due moderation, this amounts to "fair criticism," and not a word can be said against it.

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