

FIVE MINUTE SERMON

BY REV. WILLIAM DEMOUY, D. D.

PALM SUNDAY

THE PASSION OF CHRIST

"At that time Jesus said to His disciples: 'You know that after two days shall be the Pasch and the Son of man shall be delivered up to be crucified.' Matt. XXVI, 12."

Wisely does the Church put before us on this Sunday the history of the Passion of our Divine Lord. It is true that she wishes us to have it ever before our minds; but especially so, now toward the close of the season which is intended as a preparation worthily to recall Christ's sufferings, and to celebrate gloriously His Resurrection. She recognizes in the passion of Christ nourishment of our spiritual lives. It is not the passion itself, it is something that flows from it, or through the merits of Him who underwent it.

This and closing of the life of our Saviour, besides being our spiritual wealth, is also an example and encouragement for us. It easily is recognized as such, if we consider what our life upon earth is. It is not a paradise, it is not free from worries and sufferings. It is not a satisfaction of our nature in its present condition; it is a warfare from day to day. We have our little hills of Calvary to climb, and our little passions to undergo. We should not begrudge these. They were Christ's lot infinitely more than they ever can be ours. He faced His sufferings courageously; nay, in His inmost heart rejoiced at them, because by them He was doing His Father's will and sealing His love for man with His blood, showing thereby its intensity and sincerity. There is an end intended by God, when He allows sufferings to come over us. But it lies with us to carry out this end by willingly accepting these sufferings. We must, in other words, not suffer in vain. Many suffer and blaspheme God, or at least exercise no patience. To such as these, sufferings are no Calvary, no passion; they are rather an occasion of sin of the subject's own making. To suffer rightly and meritoriously we must imitate our Saviour with His cross. A minute knowledge, a keen perception, a true love of Jesus' sufferings, is necessary for this. The Church affords us every opportunity of becoming true sympathizers with Jesus, and of fitting ourselves to suffer for Him and with Him.

Then, we must contemplate the terrible passion and agony of Christ in order to arrive at a true conception of the malice of sin. There is no place, whether in the Bible or outside of it, where we can learn sin's gravity as fully and as well as from the sufferings of our Lord. They contain the true and real and complete account of sin; they alone would expiate for it; hence they alone put it before us as it is in itself. It does not seem so terrible now, since satisfaction for it, through the merits already gained by Christ, does not demand so much from us. But yet, it is a crime, an insult to God, disobedience to Him, and ingratitude to Christ, our greatest of benefactors. It is even worse, in some sense, than it was before God sent His Divine Son into the world, because, besides being an open rebellion against God's law, it is an endeavor to put to naught the passion of Christ. Or it is an attempt to bring about another passion and death of a Christ, were it possible that God would permit it. Really to learn the malice of sin, there is one thought that in this regard must prove most efficacious; namely, that man will be condemned if he dies in grievous sin, even though Christ has died to placate His heavenly Father. The work of the Redeemer, then, was not to change the nature of sin, but to acquire more helps for man to avoid it, and make it more easy for him to do penance when, through weakness, he has disobeyed God's law. No one who understands the passion of Christ can deny the existence of hell for him who dies in grievous sin. Had Christ not been God, it would have been necessary for Him to suffer the pains of hell, and even then He could not have done justice to God in attempting to expiate for the sins of the world. The passion of Christ was the most terrible and the most bitter of sufferings imaginable. Yet had Christ not been God, they would have been greater, could nature have stood them; and in the end they would have been sufficient to satisfy the justice of an injured Maker. So, we must remember that it was not the passion of a man that conquered sin, but the passion of a man-God. How terrible, then, is sin! What base creatures we are to continue it upon this earth!

The passion of Christ must teach us also the goodness of God. God the Father willed such sufferings, and God the Son underwent them because He loved man. He could have plunged man, as He did the disobedient angels, into an abyss of eternal misery, but He would rather suffer Himself to save him. Man was more ignorant in his sin than were the angels; hence, the strictest justice of God allows him another opportunity. But man became more ignorant after the fall of Adam and Eve, and as a consequence, would have fallen more and more into sin had God not taught him again through our Saviour's passion the true malice of sin, and furnished him with the means of overcoming the weakness of his will. What

a proof of God's goodness and love for us! The mightiest and the truest of benefits have been granted us.

Catholics should realize well that it is an essential duty for them to think often on the passion of Christ. In no other way can they fully learn the grievousness of sin. Many a worldly today imagines that this earth is offering him and he is enjoying, all that nature can expect to have. When it is so, sin never is absent. Upon earth was Christ's Calvary for sins committed upon earth. There alone can be learned what in truth earth's pleasures are; and the serious, earnest Christian will desire to suffer His Calvary here where sin is committed, and not enjoy his paradise here and his Calvary—oh, terrible it is to say it!—where his paradise ought to be.

TRADES UNIONS

Trades Unions is the general intention recommended by His Holiness, Pope Benedict XV., to the members of the League of the Sacred Heart for the month of March. The formation of associations of workingmen with religion as the guiding principle has always been encouraged and commended by the Church. Long before the days of excessive profits, when a millionaire was a rarity and when a more equal distribution of wealth made the relations of the worker and the employer less strained. Workingmen's Guilds rendered the lot of the worker happy and his employment prosperous. But these happy days passed too quickly and as Pope Leo XIII. declared "the ancient workingmen's guilds were abolished, and it has come to pass that workingmen have been surrendered all isolated and helpless to the hard-heartedness of employers and the greed of unchecked competition."

Up to the second half of the nineteenth century no other organization took the place of these ancient guilds. Then under the inspiration of Bishop Kettler in Germany, Frederick Ozanam in France, and Pope Leo XIII. and his successors associations gradually were formed to protect the worker against the powerful forces arrayed against him.

The rise of Trades Unions to their present position was not accomplished without a bitter struggle. Through the days of struggle the Church through her Popes and Bishops counselled, exhorted, and encouraged the growth of workingmen's associations. The right kind of Unionism has ever found strong support in the Church and her leaders. Once the power of Trades Unions was established their good began to be seen.

They forced higher wages from greedy capitalists, secured better conditions in factories, regulated hours of toil, insured workingmen against accident, sickness and injury, raised the standard of living, protected women and children, opened up new opportunities for physical, mental, and moral improvement, and greatest victory of all, they upheld the dignity and rights of the workingman as a human being.

It is not to be expected that Trades Unions should be altogether perfect. It is not surprising when we consider the provocation that they have had that some men should be indoctrinated with false principles and become the prey of Socialistic agitators. Hence the need of religion to guide the passions and impulses of men and to keep them within legitimate bounds in the exercise of their rights.

Religion points to the Carpenter of Nazareth as the model for the working man. She bids him to follow in His footsteps, be content with his reasonable comfort for himself and his family, to look beyond this present life for the reward of his labors, and cautions him against the socialist and radical, who rant against Christianity, deny the consoling doctrines of faith, and blotting out the hope of any reward or happiness outside this world degrade the ideal of Christian manhood into a pagan discontent and despair.

The Church has always defended the rights of Labor. The Church at this time of social unrest depends upon her Catholic workingmen to spread the principles of righteousness among their fellow workers. She urges them to be advocates of her principles in their Unions and in their councils against the violent doctrines of Socialists.

By reading and studying, the Catholic workingman can acquire an intelligent grasp of Catholic principles and be unaffected by false prophets seeking their own ends. Every Catholic workingman should read and ponder the masterly Encyclical of Pope Leo XIII. on the Condition of the Working Classes, and should familiarize himself with the pronouncement of our Catholic Bishops on Social Reconstruction. Father Hustein's books are excellent manuals for Catholic workingmen. For sound Union principles we are asked to pray this month that the victories won for labor by the sterling virtues of her pioneers may not be sacrificed to radicalism, and that religious principles may be the guide of workingmen to a just performance of their duties and to an instant and courageous demand for their rights.—The Pilot.

THE ANNUNCIATION

"Hail, Full of grace," such was the salutation, Dear Virgin-Mother, that the angel spoke. When the strange greeting of his lips awoke Thy soul enrapt in holy contemplation, From the delights of that sweet meditation In which it loved to linger and invoke His aid who placed on thee a special yoke That blessed morn of the Annunciation.

And, lo, each springtime, when the early grasses Call on the sleeping flowers to show their face, All the world over, ere the winter passes And March to April yields reluctant place, Thy children honor thee with votive Masses. And like the angel, hail thee, "Full of Grace."

—WILLIAM D. KELLY

ST. PATRICK'S BLESSING

A short time before St. Patrick's death, he ascended a high mountain and blessed the whole island. The blessing put in poetry is as follows:

Be Erin blessed at evening hours, When sunset glides her fragrant bowers; When whirlwinds howl, my blessings be, My generous Erin, still with thee;

To thee be every blessing given From favoring skies in bounteous heaven;

Be blessings on thy bashful maids, Be blessings on thy battle blades; Blest be the fisher tribes that roam Thy blacking surge and whitening foam;

Oh! blessed be thy stormy night, And blessings on thy morning's bright;

Be blessings on thy castle towers, Be blessings on thy village bowers; My blessings on thy warrior corn, And every hane in Erin born;

Blest be thy thunder's angry roar, And every wave that laps thy shore, And blessed be the smiles serene Of sunshine on thy forests green;

Where meadows spread and hillocks rise, Where lordly mountains kiss the skies, On every hamlet, vale and hill, My blessings be with Erin still.

Oh! blessed be the rain and dew And every breeze that visits you, And blessed be thy warriors' fall, Thy chieftain's dun, thy abbot's hall;

My blessings on thy matrons fair, Thy mineral treasures rich and rare; The flocks that bleat, the herds that low,

The streams that warble as they flow On every cottage, hall and hill, My blessings be with Erin still.

ALL PRAISE TO ST. PATRICK

All praise to St. Patrick who brought to our mountains The gift of God's faith, the sweet light of His love!

All praise to the Shepherd who showed us the fountains beside which in the heart of the Saviour above!

For hundreds of years, In smiles and in tears, Our saint hath been with us, our shield and our stay;

All else may have gone, St. Patrick alone, He hath been to us light when earth's lights were all set,

For the stories of faith they can never decay; And the best of our glories is bright with us yet,

In the faith and the feast of St. Patrick's Day.

There is not a saint in the bright courts of heaven More faithful than he to the land of his choice;

Oh, well may the nation to whom he was given, In the feast of their sire and apostle rejoice!

In glory above, True to his love, He keeps the false faith from his children away;

The dark false faith, That is worse than death, Oh he drives it far off from the green sunny shore,

Like the reptiles which fled from his curse in dismay; And Erin, when error's proud triumph is o'er,

Will still be found keeping St. Patrick's Day.

Then what shall we do for thee, heaven-sent Father, What shall the proof of our loyalty be?

By all that is dear to our hearts, we would rather Be martyred, sweet Saint! than bring shame upon thee!

But oh! he will take The promise we make, So to live that our lives by God's help may display,

The light that he bore To Erin's shore; Yes! Father of Ireland no child wilt thou own,

Whose life is not lightened by grace on its way; For they are true Irish, oh yes! they alone, Whose hearts are all true on St. Patrick's Day.

—REV. FREDERICK WILLIAM FABER, D. D.

THE ANNUNCIATION

We fix our thoughts for the time being upon that touching episode recounted in the opening chapter of the Holy Gospel according to St. Luke, wherein we read that "the Angel Gabriel was sent from God into a city of Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David, and the virgin's name was Mary." (By the way St. Luke was an artist; and in the Church of St. Augustine in Rome there is a picture of the Blessed Virgin, over the high altar, said to have been painted by the Evangelist.)

As chaste souls today revel in the possession of Jesus, and in participation in His Kingdom come upon earth, and as, in proportion as they love, the greater is their desire to be in the "Real Presence" of their Beloved, so the ardent ones of Israel's Day wrapp'd their souls in the ecstatic joy of the thinking of His coming, and of the peace and comfort and quietude He was to bring to earth. Mary was most chaste, and therefore in her this joy of contemplation had reached its most perfect measure. She is most generally represented as at prayer when the angel, being come in, said to her: "Hail, full of grace!"

But we know that, since the Renaissance, pictures of The Annunciation have been quite frankly pagan. The Mother of God humbly kneeling, and the angel, the messenger sent to her from God, standing with flamboyant wings before her!

We are quite certain that the conditions were reversed. The chief effect of Adam's fall is that men fell from grace. Sin is the genius of evil. Grace is the gift of God for the overcoming of sin. Redemption means just that—the overthrowing of the powers of darkness and sin and death, and the establishment of the kingdom of life and light.

This latter began with the "Hail full of grace" of the angel, and, naturally, the salutation was to the virgin, then at that instant made Mother of the Word made Flesh, forever after dwelling amongst us.

Jeremiah, mouth-piece of His coming purified of sin's defiling, even in his mother's womb; John the Baptist, the Angel that was to go before His face, sanctified by the near presence of Him—what then was to be expected of her, who was to fulfil the prophecy that a virgin should conceive and bring forth a son, who was to be the Emmanuel, the God with us? Why, such a one must of necessity be the fairest of all the daughters of earth, more serenely beautiful than the fairest angel of the celestial skies, one before whom the mighty ambassador of the God of angels might bend the knee and salute with the most comprehensive of all greetings, and hail as "full of grace!"

It is too bad that the Feast of the Annunciation is no longer a Holy Day of Obligation. Because it is really the birthday of redemption. All the wealth of all the love of all our earthly mothers is this day embodied in Mary, who, on this twenty-fifth of March, became the Mother of our Saviour, as, some thirty years later in her travail of the Cross, she was to become the mother of us.

But perhaps we have no need to have devotion to Mary on Annunciation Day laid upon us as an obligation. Perhaps voluntarily at Mass on that snow-draped day we shall turn our gaze towards this star of our hopes, this beacon of our shipwrecked way!—The Tablet.

PASSION SUNDAY

Passion Sunday marks the beginning of the last two weeks of the holy season of Lent. The richness, splendor, and soul gripping appeal of the Church's liturgy are now put forward in one intense endeavor to bring home to Christian minds the awful tragedy of Calvary. The hushed church, the sombre weeds of mourning, the stripped altar, the veiled images and the sepulchral tones of the liturgy, all breathe forth an atmosphere of sorrow tragic and profound.

The effect produced upon the souls of Catholics is akin to that wrought in the Apostles. Today, twenty centuries after the event commemorated by the Church, we feel something of the horror that filled the minds of the first faithful disciples. We mingle with the throng in spirit on the way to Calvary. We see the Mother of Sorrows pressing through the out-skirts of the assemblage that lined the way to catch a last glimpse of her Divine Son. We behold the bleak hillsides, the darkening skyline, the companion crosses and the white body between them cold and bare suspended between earth and heaven.

The thought with terrifying swiftness flashes over our minds that we, not the soldiers, are the real executioners. We see ourselves in vision plying the knout, wielding the hammer, and mocking the innocent victim of a world's injustice. Our transgressions rise up before our minds to convict us of our guilty participation.

Face to face with the Passion of Christ, the problems of the world yield into insignificance. Thrones have reeled, dynasties crumbled, and nations decayed without producing an infinitesimal fraction of the effect upon men that the Passion of Christ visualizes. Proclamations the most momentous, decrees the most drastic, and ukases the most revolutionary have been sent forth by princes and

parliaments clothed with a little brief authority; but what are they compared with the Words of Christ to His Apostles. "You know that after two days shall be the Pasch and the Son of Man shall be delivered up to be crucified."

For two weeks the Church bids us put aside thoughts of earth and concentrate upon the eternal truths of Christ's Redemption. Viewed in the light of Calvary temporal concerns are inconsequential. All that troubles is but momentary. All that pains quickly passes. That only is important that is eternal.—The Pilot.

MY LITTLE SPRIG OF SHAMROCK

My little sprig of shamrock I brought from Erin's ale; Although your leaves are withered Your roots cannot defile.

With tears of love I've watered And treasured you with care, In hope thy green sprouts deck my grave When I am resting there.

I plucked this dearest sprig of green In lovely Shrule town; With bended knee I knelt to pray And kiss the holy ground.

When severed from its sprouting root I wrapped it in the soil, And voiced this prayer: You'll deck my grave When far from Erin's Isle.

From North to South from East to West Wherever I may roam, Our children rest beneath your spray, Though far away from home.

Oh? Erin with your beauty rare, Your bogs and valley too; Your sod of greenest velvet, Where my little shamrock grew;

In dreams your life buds forth anew In freedom's love and care; God grant we all may see the day In answer to our prayer.

But should I go before the time, To my eternal rest, I beg you plant upon my grave The flower I loved the best.

—MARGARET KAIN

THE INDIVIDUAL, LENT AND GOD

In the insistent urging of a Lay Apostolate to achieve by Catholic effort the great results of religion and patriotism so vital to the welfare of this country, too much emphasis cannot be stressed upon the personal note of individual worthiness. The value of the Lay Apostolate may indeed be measured by the personal worth of the men who constitute its membership.

There is, therefore, particular need that the Catholic individual be found willing to use the various helps offered by his Church to keep himself worthy of his exalted mission. Consequently, the season of Lent should bring to every practical Catholic a spirit of sacrifice and of penitential endeavor to correct anything that has been wrong or unworthy in his life. If he hopes to share the Easter joy, to feel renewed within him power and courage for right and truth, he will at any sacrifice be faithful to the special devotions of this holy time.

Nor will he be content with the prescribed public functions of religion. He will find time to make in some silent church the beautiful round of the Stations of the Cross, steeping his soul in the gracious story of his Master's loving sacrifice for him. The incidents and holy traditions perpetuated there will, every one, prove a source of comfort and inspiration to him. From the craven judge, afraid of what the world would say, he will take thought to hold himself a free man and faithful to Jesus Christ. The sorrowing Mother there will steel him against wilful part in the shame of sin. Veronica holding out the homely towel of service will turn his soul in loving compassion to the suffering so ripe of the world at this time. The picture of a man helping his God to carry a cross will inflame him with a fervor that will help some weaker brother. And if he stand but for a moment speechless before his crucified Saviour, temptation must lose its power and eavor for him. Fifteen minutes so spent will make him a better man, and so a better neighbor, a better workman, a better citizen.

Greatest of all, however, would be his gain if morning after morning found him in the presence of his God at holy Mass. The day cannot contain much of evil that is begun by even a few minutes of intimate friendship with our good and loving Master. Men and women, who will so use this Lenten time, will be the fit soldiers for the great work of the Church in this country. They will be the apostles on whom will depend the advance of religion and of those eternal truths among our fellow-citizens that will safeguard this republic from any and all the dangers that threaten.—Catholic Standard and Times.

Of all the riches that we hug, of all the pleasures we enjoy, we can carry no more out of this world than out of a dream.—Bonnell.

Character is not cut in marble; it is not something solid and unalterable. It is something living and changing, and may become diseased as our bodies do.—George Eliot.

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