

FIVE MINUTE SERMON

BY REV. WILLIAM DEMOUY, D. D.

SECOND SUNDAY IN LENT

THE BLESSING OF LIFE

"And Peter answering, said to Jesus: Lord, it is good for us to be here: If Thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles, one for Thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias." (Matt. xvi. 1.)

What a blessing to us that we exist! In their present condition many would probably be inclined to doubt that life is a blessing to them. Poverty stares many in the face; sickness—life-long sufferings—is the lot of others. There are some who know no peace; discord reigns about them and often also within their hearts. Misfortunes of various kinds have checked for life the progress of millions of people, and they seem never to be able to resign themselves to their fate. All this and much more is true, but nevertheless, life is a great blessing to every one who possesses it. All the misfortunes, troubles, trials, crosses, temptations—everything, in fact, adverse to the cravings and comforts of nature—may become sources of great blessings to man. But he must transform them into blessings through his own efforts. Of themselves, they will avail little, even in a spiritual sense. But man, by knowing the truth, professing it, and, by the proper intention, ordering all things to his spiritual end, can gain much, and will be able to say truly that life, even when accompanied by innumerable and continuous difficulties, is a wonderful gift from God.

Life is the greatest of blessings we can have here, not for what it brings us during its temporal duration, but because of the eternity of happiness it will bring us in God's kingdom. Did we not exist as human beings, we could never attain to this great and never-ending happiness. How much above other living things are we! The poor brute beasts have life, have feeling, suffer, and finally die, but no other world awaits them. All living creation, save man, ends with death. The living things that possess this irrational life, existence means nothing. They have no intellectual realization of their existence, and are the dumb slaves of man. Man has freedom and boasts greatly of it. He knows why and how he exists; he is bound to serve no one save his Maker, and generally subjects himself to no one but his legitimate superiors. Death does not annihilate him; it only separates his soul from his body—the former to live on forever, the latter to be reformed and again united to the soul at the end of the world.

But it is not particularly because of all these advantages that it is good for us to be here—or that life is our greatest blessing. It is, we repeat, because of the great future that we may make our own. How overpowering the thought that after a few years of faithful service in this world, we shall rise, become glorified, and face God as He really is. When Christ was transfigured before the three apostles, they forgot everything except the scene that was overpowering them. They totally were consumed by the vision, and would have been satisfied to remain forever before their transfigured Master. Yet what was that transfiguration in comparison to the real glory of heaven which, as we are told, "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man, what things God hath prepared for them that love Him?" How infinitely greater must be the vision of God and His heavenly court? And how consoling to think that we who yet exist may attain to this great happiness! Truly it is good for us to be here; it is good for us to be living.

The Christian should be encouraged by this truth to rejoice over his state and thank God unceasingly that he was given so great a blessing as to be born into this world. He must remember, however, that this blessing will be of little value unless he faithfully does his duty to God. It is a free blessing from God, but once in our possession we are not morally free to use it as we please. We are rather bound to use it as God has ordained. If we do not, then it should be said of us, as was said of Judas, "It were better for that man if he had never been born,"—not that it were better for us never to have been born, but that it were better for us not to have been born and to have lived as we did. It is better for every one to have been born, and to have been given the opportunities of salvation that God affords to all, than never to have existed. If any one is lost, it is his own fault; he abused the greatest blessing that God gave him.

We have at our disposal all the aids that we need in order really to feel that it is good for us to be here, or to have been born into this world. We also realize that we can profit, as we should, by the life that God gave us and that we yet enjoy. We have the great gift of

faith. It teaches us what life really is; it tells us of God and the future that awaits us; it also directs us how to avoid the dangers opposed to our welfare. Do we fully appreciate it? Do we solve the problems of life according to the rules it lays down for us? Certainly not to the extent that we should. Notice how misfortunes will cast us down; see how easily we are swayed by bad example, by human respect, and by the promptings of our inferior nature! Few receive the full richness of the sacraments, because they are not properly disposed and prepared for their reception. There are not many who face the difficulties of life with the proper spirit.

Let us ever be mindful of the fact that we are blessed in being alive, because we can do God's will and realize fully why it is good for us to be here. It is good for us to be here, not exactly for what we get in this life, but for what we can prepare ourselves to receive in the world beyond the grave.

ST. PATRICK

A wave of memories of one of the greatest national apostles sweeps over a great part of the world annually when, on March 17, occurs the feast of St. Patrick, Apostle of Ireland. Through woe and wee descendants of his Irish converts, now scattered over much of the world, have kept him enshrined in their hearts and paid him the honors that are his due.

He was born at Kiltpatrick, near Dumbarton, Scotland, in the year 387, his parents being Calphurnius and Conchessa. The former belonged to a Roman family of high rank, and held the office of decurio in Gaul (France) or Britain, while Conchessa was related to the Patron of Gaul, St. Martin of Tours.

At the age of sixteen Patrick was carried into captivity by Irish marauders, and was sold as a slave to a chieftain, Milchu, in Dalradian, in the present county of Antrim. He tended flocks and obtained a knowledge of the Celtic language, also becoming familiar with Druidism. Later, fleeing from his cruel master, he went to Britain.

HEIGHTS OF CHRISTIAN LIFE

His heart set on devoting himself to the service of God in the sacred ministry, he went to St. Martin's monastery at Tours and to the island sanctuary of Lerins, and, in general, to places where he could well learn the heights of the Christian life.

When St. Germain started on his mission at Auxerre, Patrick went under his guidance, and at this Bishop's hands Ireland's Apostle was raised to the priesthood. When Germain, commissioned by the Holy See, went to Britain to oppose the error of Pelagius, he chose Patrick as a missionary companion.

Pope St. Celestine I. crowned his Pontificate with an act of far-reaching consequences for the spread of Christianity and civilization when he entrusted St. Patrick with the mission of gathering the Irish into the one fold of Christ. On his return journey from Rome, Patrick went to Turin and received episcopal consecration from the Bishop, St. Maximus. He went to Auxerre to make preparations for his Irish mission under the guidance of St. Germain.

It appears to have been in 433 that St. Patrick and his companions landed at the mouth of the Ventry River, near Wicklow Head. He stopped for a time at the mouth of the River Boyne, and there some natives joyously heard the tidings of Redemption. Proceeding to Strangford Lough, he continued on his way toward Slieveish. A chieftain, Dichu, tried to stop him. He drew his sword to smite the Saint, but his arm became rigid, it is said, and remained so until he declared himself obedient to Patrick. Dichu then sought instruction, and gave a large "sabbal" (barn), in which the sacred mysteries were offered. This was the first sanctuary dedicated by St. Patrick in Erin.

FEAST AT TARA

St. Patrick learned that chieftains of Erin had been summoned to celebrate a feast of Tara, on Easter Day, the feast of the Supreme Monarch of Ireland. The assembly was to meet at Tara on March 26, Easter Sunday, in the year 433. It was decreed that from the preceding day fires throughout the Kingdom were to be extinguished until the signal blaze was kindled at the royal mansion.

St. Patrick came to the hill of Slane, at the opposite extremity of the valley from Tara, on Easter Eve, which that year was the Feast of the Annunciation, and on the summit kindled the Paschal fire. Druids told the King that this fire, lighted in defiance of the royal edict, would blaze forever in the land unless it was put out that night. Attempts were made to extinguish the fire and punish the intruder with death, but the fire was not extinguished, and Patrick came out unscathed from the snares and assaults against him.

Impressive indeed was the great event next to be recorded. On Easter Day the missionary band, having at its head the youth Benignus, bearing a copy of the Gospels, and followed by St. Patrick, who, with mitre and crozier, was in full episcopal garb, went in processional order to Tara. Patrick pleaded for the Faith before Leoghaire. The King had ordered that no sign of

respect should be given to the strangers, and the youthful Eric, a royal page, rose to show him reverence, and the chief Bard, Dubhtach, also showed honor to the Saint. Both became disciples of the Faith and ornaments of the Church in Ireland.

DOCTRINE OF HOLY TRINITY

It was on one of these occasions that the Saint is said to have plucked a shamrock to explain, its triple leaf and single stem, the doctrine of the Blessed Trinity. On that Easter Day the victory of religion at Tara was complete. The Ard-Righ gave permission to Patrick to preach the Faith throughout Erin. From then on the triumphs of St. Patrick were widespread and lasting. Eventually the people in general were converted to the Faith, and became, as history shows, one of the greatest Catholic peoples in the world. The Saint had his difficulties and obstacles to overcome, but he overcame them, and laid the solid foundations for the great life of faith which was to mark his people through the succeeding ages.

It is supposed that the beautiful prayer of St. Patrick, known as "St. Patrick's Breast-Plate," was composed by him in preparation for the victory over paganism. The first public administering of baptism, recognized by royal edict, was a historic event in the work of the conversion of the country. St. Patrick remained for a time at Slane and Tara, teaching the divine truths. The national games were celebrated at Tallten (now Teiltown) and St. Patrick went there and solemnly administered baptism to Conail, brother of the Ard-Righ Leoghaire, on April 5. This was the first public administering of baptism, recognized by royal edict.

EVANGELIZATION WORK IN MEATH

St. Patrick left some of his companions to carry on the evangelization work in Meath, and himself planned to visit the other territories. The momentous events which marked the progress of the Saint in his mission are too many to detail in a short space, but one or two may be referred to briefly. It was in 440 that St. Patrick started the special work of conversion of Ulster. In 444 a site for a church was given by Armagh by Daire, a chieftain of the district. St. Patrick selected the beautiful hill on which the old Cathedral of Armagh stands.

It is related that, while he was marking out the church with his companions, they came upon a den and fawn. The Saint's companions wanted to kill them for food, but St. Patrick would not allow this. Taking the fawn on his shoulders, and followed by the doe, he went to a neighboring hill, laid down his fawn, and announced that there, in future times, great glory would be given to the Most High. It was on that hill that, a few years ago, there was solemnly dedicated the new Catholic cathedral of Armagh.

From Ulster St. Patrick probably proceeded to Meath to consolidate the organization of the communities there, and thence he continued his course through Leinster. As usual, St. Patrick's primary care was to gather the ruling chieftains into the fold. The Saint went through Gowran into Ossory and then went to Munster.

Until his death St. Patrick continued to visit and watch over the churches which he founded in all the provinces of Ireland. It is recorded in his life that he consecrated no fewer than three hundred and fifty bishops. The many virtues by which the early saints were distinguished shone forth remarkably in the life of St. Patrick.

SHROUD WOVEN BY ST. BRIGID

Not only did St. Patrick shine resplendent in preaching and teaching and the other active work of the missionary, but in prayer he besought great favors and welfare for his faithful. Many a spot and many a memorial of the great Saint deserve special prominence in any story of his life which has sufficient space to deal adequately with them.

It was at Saul Sabbath that St. Patrick received the summons to his reward on March 17, 493. His remains were wrapped in a shroud woven by St. Brigid's own hands. The remains were interred at the chieftain's Dun or Fort two miles from Saul, where, in later times, arose the Cathedral of Down.—The Pilot.

DEVOTION TO ST. JOSEPH

It will always be lovingly remembered of Pius X. that he gladdened the hearts of the millions of Catholics, who love St. Joseph, by increasing the liturgical honors with which the Saint's two feasts are celebrated. The words of our late Holy Father have enhanced the tender gratitude and filial devotion of the whole Catholic world toward the foster-father of Jesus, and the patron of the Universal Church.

In that intimate union of the Holy Family the Catholic heart longs to consider the interest and intercessory power with which St. Joseph is ever mindful of the workingman, living and dying. Living faith is always prompting in the individual soul some special holy affection and attachment. The thought of the carpenter doing hard work with his hands to provide for his loved ones the essentials of holy life, and with his work done sinking to rest with his head pillowed on the Heart of his God, may here and there have much of legend

interwoven with the meagre annals of the Gospel. Faithful hearts, however, for long ages have found solace and help in this ennobling thought; and they have done hard work more cheerily and more patiently, and have faced eternity with greater peace, because they have added the name of Joseph to their invocation of Jesus and Mary.—Catholic Standard and Times.

THE LESSON OF THE ASHES

One of the beautiful prayers which the Church uses in blessing the sacred ashes at the beginning of Lent, it will be remembered, implores Almighty God in His infinite mercy.

"To bear with the weakness of our human nature, and vouchsafe to bless these ashes which in sign that with humbled heart we crave forgiveness from Thee, we are about to put upon our heads. Bestow thou upon us, who confess that we are but dust, and for our deserts unto dust have to return together with Thy forgiveness for our past trespasses, the grace and favor which Thou has graciously promised to every repentant sinner."

Altogether in harmony with the foregoing petition is the striking symbolism which the "poet of her children," as Newman calls the Church, uses on Ash Wednesday. For she takes the gray ashes made from the triumphant palm branches of last Passion-tide, and signs with them in the form of a cross the foreheads of the kneeling faithful, saying as she does so: "Remember, man, that thou art dust and unto dust thou shalt return." Then a little later in the Ash Wednesday services the priest exhorts the repentant worshippers, saying: "Let us amend and do better for those things in which we have sinned through ignorance; lest suddenly prevented by the day of death, we seek time for penance, and be not able to find it."

Marked on the brow, the seat of pride, with somber ashes, the emblem of sorrow, humility and of cleansing penance, signed with the symbol of Christ Crucified, and bearing words meanwhile which tell how fleeting is our little life in this vale of tears, Catholics are thus impressively reminded by the Church at the very opening of Lent that it is high time that they began to address themselves with earnestness to the important business of amending their lives and sanctifying their souls, before the night cometh when no man can work. For it will be eternity in a little while, and then the season of grace and merit and repentance will be over. "In a few short years," the Church warns her children as she scatters the cold ashes on their bowed heads, "your bodies will return to their kindred dust and your deathless souls will be called to judgment. Let the beautiful ritual of my Ash Wednesday services remind you therefore, to have your loins always girt with purity and the lamp of faith ever burning in your hands, that the heavenly Bridegroom, when He comes, may find you all watching and ready to enter with Him the everlasting nuptial feast."—America.

CONVERTS FORM GUILD

The formation of a Convert Guild at the Denver Cathedral, Denver, Colorado, to complete the remarkable system that has been worked up in that parish to lead people, under God, into the Catholic Church, will round out a plan that, if universally adopted, might practically settle the convert question for the United States. Within the ten years of its operation, almost 700 persons have been converted to the Church, as a result of the Cathedral convert class.

The modern operandi is simple. From the pulpit every Sunday morning, at all the Masses, it is announced that a lecture for the instruction of non-Catholics will be given in the basement chapel of the church on Monday evening, and the lecture is announced. Catholics are invited to bring their non-Catholic friends. There is never a lecture without at least fifty Protestants or unbaptized persons present, and sometimes there are 400 to 600. Within ten years not more than five of the persons who have taken the full course of instructions have failed to become Catholics.

The lectures are now given by the Rev. William Higgins. Non-Catholics attend from all over the city. Young Catholics often bring non-Catholic sweethearts; Catholic wives and husbands bring their non-Catholic spouses. Catholic neighbors bring their Protestant friends, and the result is that the non-Catholics, in many cases, become Catholics.

The converts are the most zealous lay apostles in the Denver Church today. This is why they are to be organized. The new guild will have no dues, but its members will promise to bring non-Catholic friends occasionally to the Monday evening instructions. Persons who were reared as Catholics will be admitted to honorary membership on the same basis. The members of the Guild will also seek higher instruction in the faith, by means of lectures, to be able better to answer questions put to them by non-Catholics. Prospective members of the Guild handed in their names last Sunday at the Masses.

He who waits to do a great deal at once will seldom do anything at all.

Fortunes are made by taking opportunities; character is made by making them.



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Dr. Chase's Kidney-Liver Pills, one pill a dose, 25c a box, all dealers, or Edmanston, Bates & Co., Ltd., Toronto.

Newfoundland Representative: Gerald S. Doyle, St. John's.

Advertisement for Scott's Emulsion, featuring a fisherman carrying a large fish on his back. Text: "Where there is a persistent cough or general run-down condition, there Scott's Emulsion is a positive help."

Advertisement for Vapo-Resolene, a vapor treatment for coughs and colds. Text: "A Vapor Treatment for Coughs and Colds, easy to use and effective. You just light the little lamp that vaporizes the Resolene and place it near the bed at night. The soothing antiseptic vapor makes breathing easy, relieves the cough, soothes the sore throat and congestion, and protects against epidemics. Recommended for Whooping Cough, Bronchitis, Croup, Asthma, Influenza, Brachitis, Croup, and Nasal Catarrh. Resolene has been used for the past 40 years. Its benefit is unquestionable. Send for descriptive booklet. Free on request. VAPOR-RESOLENE CO., Leaming-Hills Bldg., Montreal."

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Advertisement for The Woman Who Wished She Could Play the Piano. Text: "And How She Found an Easy Way to Turn Her Wish Into a Fact. A year or so ago this woman didn't know one note from another. Today she plays the piano—entirely by note—better than many who have been playing for years. Here she tells how she learned, and why it was so easy. Thousands of others, from school children to men and women of 60 to 80 have also learned music in the same easy way. From the time I was a child, I have always had a yearning and longing to play the piano. Often I felt that I would gladly give up half of my life if some kind fairy would only wish into a fact. You see I had never learned to play, and I was 55 years old—and the mother of a small family—before I knew one note from another. Until I learned to play, hearing music—especially the piano—always gave me almost as much pain as pleasure. My enjoyment of music was somewhat soured by envy and regret—envy of those who could entertain and charm with their playing, regret because I myself had to be a mere listener. And I suppose it is that way with every one who has to be satisfied with hearing music instead of playing it. Again and again, parties and other social gatherings have been spoiled for me because I myself could not play. I felt 'left out'—a lone soul wall flower—a mere look-on, instead of part of the party. I was missing half the fun. The newly blossomed out of my music almost overnight, you might say, has been a big surprise to all who know me, and to myself as well. I can't seem to think it must be that I had a previously undiscovered genius for the piano. But if there was any genius about it, it wasn't on my part, but in the lessons I took—a new and a simplified method that makes it remarkably easy for anyone to add music or singing to their daily lives. Anyone anywhere can now learn to play any instrument or learn to sing just as easily as I did. All the hard part, all the big expense, all the old difficulties, have been swept away by this simple new method. I learned entirely by home study—in my spare time—from fascinating Print-and-Picture lessons that make everything so simple and easy that one simply can't go wrong on them. It is a short-cut way to learn—it is so much simpler and so entirely different from the old and hard-to-understand methods. I know that I made better and faster progress than I ever could by toiling with a private teacher, or joining a class. In fact, while I don't like to brag, within six months after I took my first lesson, my playing was better than that of many of my friends who had studied two or three years under private teachers—my teachers were not better than they, but simply because the wonderful Print-and-Picture lessons sent me by the U.S. School of Music were so easy to understand. Within a year after I took my first lesson I began teaching my two little girls to play—using exactly the same lessons I myself had studied. And I notice that both of them seem to be getting along better than any of their playmates who are under the same teacher. In addition, I am saving the money I would have had to pay a private teacher—I figure it would cost at least \$2 to \$3 a lesson, and in the last, the total cost of learning the way I did averaged only a few cents a lesson. My only regret is that I didn't know of this really wonderful method years before."

Advertisement for U. S. SCHOOL OF MUSIC. Text: "U. S. SCHOOL OF MUSIC. 2933 Brunswick Bldg., New York City. COUPON. Please send me your free book 'Music Lessons in Your Own Home,' and participate in the following course: (Name of Course or Instrument) Name Please Write Plainly Address City Prov."