

FIVE MINUTE SERMON

BY REV. WILLIAM DEMOUY, D. D.

FOURTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

THE NEEDS OF MAN

"Therefore I say to you, be not solicitous for your life, what you shall eat, nor for your body, what you shall put on." (Matt. vi. 25.)

There are two needs to be supplied in man: there is the necessary need and there is the need of taste. The necessary need includes many things. Some of these are mentioned in the text—food to keep life, clothing to cover the body. Many of these needs are absolutely necessary, others are essential but not absolutely so. Again, some of these needs were created by God, such as the need for air in order to breathe and live; others were brought about by man, such as the need for a certain kind of clothing to use in a particular country or when entering into the presence of certain worldly monarchs.

God recognizes these needs existing in man; and, in the Gospel of this Sunday, mention is made of some of them. The intention of Our Lord, in these passages of the Gospel, is to teach us to be more solicitous about the welfare of our soul than the care of our body. Christ says that we must "seek first the kingdom of God and His justice and then all things else will be added unto us." He adduces examples to show that God has an individual interest in us and will provide for our needs. As an argument from less to greater, He reminds us that the birds of the air are able to live without labor, and that the lilies of the field are clothed in all their beauty by Him. If, therefore, God is so solicitous of these irrational and inanimate things, how much more will He, in this respect, care for rational man when he is principally occupied about the salvation of his soul?

God does not make mention of the need which we have termed "of taste," though we may find a distant allusion made to it when He speaks of the beauty in which the lilies of the field are arrayed—a beauty surpassing that of Solomon decked in the most beautiful of his robes. We reasonably may say that this need is a creation of man, and, like most of man's creations, has become exaggerated. The Gospel of today seems to offer an open condemnation of this need "of taste" as it exists around us at the present time. Real needs God does not condemn; nay, in His providence He provides for them, or helps us to obtain them. But artificial needs—needs that are not ours by nature—He offers no assurance that He will aid us to satisfy. In fact, when these needs are not in conformity with true Christian ideals, they virtually constitute sin.

Now, we are wont to lament the fact that there is so much misery among men; that there is so much dishonesty; that there is so much pretense. It would appear that much of this evil is due to the fact that people are endeavoring to satisfy a need that is not necessary. There are numerous examples around us. How many convicts behind prison bars are there today because they tried to live up to a standard they imagined their position in life demanded, not in righteousness but in material things! In other words, they were living beyond their means. They cannot be excused for doing this, for did not this false need lead them to their dishonest acts? But why this need? No lawful reason can be assigned for it. It is a false need created by man, by a certain class of society to which he belongs.

But, to come down to more simple things in life: What is ordinary society in this country demanding of people today? Are its requirements such as they always can satisfy justly and honestly? Far from it. We need only mention a few. Every season or every half season will bring its new styles. It is practically a necessity that people conform to them. If they fail, we know the result. They are like the guests in the Gospel, who came to the wedding feast not robed in festive garments. In like manner society treats those who do not conform to the decrees of fashion. No doubt if many of the modern "palace dwellers" and "chariot-drivers" would change the "demands" of society, they would be more good for the suffering part of humanity than they accomplish now, by sitting pompously at meetings directed towards charity, or by driving the most costly of automobiles to the doors of the poor, or by having their names appear as great philanthropists in big headlines of the daily papers. New conditions must be created before humanity will be benefited. Of course, many people, especially charity workers, are in good faith and are doing their best. This we must admit, and we admire them for it. But good faith alone will not change things materially, or really better the condition of mankind.

Some may be inclined to think that these conditions have come about naturally; but this can not be true. God created a world abounding in all things necessary to sustain life, and, while He said there always would be poor, He never intended nor had He any intention of saying, that some were to starve. It is man's duty, and we may venture to say that it is the most efficacious and meritorious way of practicing charity, to create

such conditions as will lessen the number of the poor, and will provide for the destitute who still remain. Fortunately, America can offer the world a great example in this respect. It is a fact that within the limits of our great country, practically all who make an effort can be more or less comfortable. But even this struggle for comforts has created many a need, which, if unsatisfied, has caused suffering or, at least, much embarrassment.

The Christian may feel sure that his real needs will, with his co-operation, be provided for by God, if he serves Him properly. Needs other than the real ones, however, man has no assurance he will be able to satisfy. If he tries to keep pace with certain elements in the world, he may succeed or he may not. Often, if he so desires, he may try to provide for the needs of his position; but if he finds that he is unable to do so by lawful means, let him make the sacrifice and take a more humble rank. God will exalt him and will bless him more than if he had kept pace with those of his social class. To strive to satisfy every need in life is a great distraction and draws one from God.

THE CHOICE OF A VOCATION

For many at this time of the year the doors of the school close permanently and an entirely new situation confronts them. They step out of one world and are ushered into another. They are to seek for themselves a place in life and carve for themselves a position among their fellow-men. Much depends upon their right choice. If the decision is well made, the individual will find contentment and happiness and at the same time become a truly useful member of the community. If it is ill, regrets will follow and friction will be inevitable. Errors committed at this juncture cannot easily be corrected. A certain finality clings to the choice of a vocation. It requires, therefore, much thought and deliberation. Parents as well as children should give serious attention to this important matter.

Too many enter on life without any definite plan. They allow themselves to drift and, misunderstanding the counsel of the Gospel, take no thought of tomorrow. They slip into the first position that presents itself and later to their great sorrow discover that they have run into a blind alley. Life holds not many such opportunities. A rather cheerless and uninspiring existence lies ahead of them. They may resign themselves, in Christian spirit to their sad lot, but they miss much which they might have enjoyed had their choice been more thoughtful. This is an eventuality which should be avoided. It can be prevented by the exercise of prudence.

Everyone should carefully choose his life work and not permit external and accidental circumstances merely to thrust it upon him. Our life is a trust, and it is our solemn duty to make the best of it. He who does not use his life to the best advantage defrauds himself as well as God and humanity. Let no one say that after all it does not matter. That is a fatal error. It is just an account of such lack of vision that so many things in this world that might have been accomplished remain undone. The world would be far more advanced and civilization enriched, if everyone had shouldered the task that was meant for him. Everyone should try to count in this great scheme of things by finding the place for which he is fitted.

This is no false ambition. God actually wants everyone to mean something. It is pathetic to see so much talent run to seed and so many lives frittered away in utter trivialities. It is enormous and tragic waste.

There are various considerations that should guide us in our choice of a life work. A man expects to live by his work. If he selects a job for which there is always demand in society, this expectation will be realized. There is certain work that always must be done. If you can do it the world will need you and it will be glad to pay you for it. The useful man will rarely taste want. But if you can only fill a place which a thousand others can take equally well, sooner or later you will be crowded out and thrown on the mercy of the world. The world has many and tempting prizes to offer but it exacts efficient service in return. The soft and easy berth may have its attractions for the thoughtless; but since it requires no individuality and specific ability, its tenure always remains very insecure.

He who would choose well will take into account his native abilities, his preferences and inclinations. Genuine satisfaction can only be derived from work which we really like and which we can do well. If a man has chosen his work in this manner, it will be always to him a source of comfort and happiness. He may be robbed of other things but he will still have his work to which he is devoted, and in the mere performance of which he takes pride.

Pride of workmanship and joy of performance are important factors in human happiness. The work we love, whatever may be its nature, will never degenerate into mere drudgery. For us it will have a perennial charm and an interest that does not wear off. Find

healthy work suited to your peculiar capacities and adapted to your individual tastes and you have found the essentials of happiness. There is a wide range to select from; choose with a discriminating eye. There would be fewer misfits in this world and less discontent, if men selected their life work with a view to their natural endowments and their inborn tastes. We should get happiness out of work; if we fail to do so, it is because we have made a poor and foolish choice.

Life need not be a monotonous grind. It need not be a routine of uninteresting tasks done only because there is no escape from them. It can be made keenly and absorbingly interesting, paying us not merely in monetary returns but rewarding us with a full measure of joy, rest and happiness. Whether it will be the one or the other, will be determined by the wise or unwise choice of a vocation.—Catholic Standard and Times.

A TOUCHING ACT OF LOVE

A touching incident occurred during the audience of the Boston pilgrims with the Holy Father. As the Holy Father passed between the ranks of the kneeling pilgrims he noticed among them a ten year old boy on crutches. The kind hearted Pontiff paused before the boy, inquired his name, and the nature of his affliction. Then patting him on the shoulder His Holiness turned to His Eminence and said, "Tell him, we will pray for him."

The incident made a profound impression upon the pilgrims and upon all who read about it in the reports cabled by the daily press. It illustrated in a striking manner the qualities that have endeared Pope Pius XI. to all Catholics. On one of his busiest days, and in the midst of one of the largest audiences ever assembled in the Vatican, the great hearted Pontiff halted the important affairs on which he was engaged long enough to gladden the heart of a little child with the promise of his prayers.

Like His Divine Master, whose representative he is, the Holy Father loves little children. The sight of this crippled boy touched his heart, as the sight of afflicted childhood always touched the heart of Our Lord, when He was on earth. And like His Divine Master, the Vicar of Christ, turned aside from his work for a moment to render this exquisite testimony of his love for the little ones of his flock.

This gracious condescension did more than call attention to the sweet simplicity and tender sympathy of the Sovereign Pontiff. It also called attention again to the extraordinary faith that has characterized the Boston Pilgrimage. For the parents of this child, a cripple for many years, brought him on the pilgrimage to receive the blessing of the Holy Father, and to effect, if it were God's will, his restoration to health. Such faith, of which this is but a single shining example, is enough to justify the significant phrase used by His Eminence in presenting the Boston pilgrims to the Holy Father, when he referred to them as "exemplars of our holy religion."

Such incidents, with which, by the way, the Boston pilgrimage has been filled, manifest a remarkable spirit of faith and devotion, that seems like a breath from the ages of faith, rather than a product of the twentieth century. But they are also a proof that marvellous spiritual benefits, promised by the Holy Father in his Bull proclaiming the Jubilee, are already beginning to appear, and they justify the hope that a renaissance of spirit and a reflowering of faith, both among individuals and nations will be, with God's help, the result of the Jubilee Year, and the prelude to the establishment of the Peace of Christ in the Reign of Christ.—The Pilot.

A PROTESTANT ON THE PAPACY

The late Dr. Briggs, of Union Protestant Seminary, New York, in his work, "Church Unity," has a chapter on the Papacy in which occurs the following: "The Papacy is one of the greatest institutions that ever existed in the world; it looks forward with calm assurance to a still greater future. Its dominions extend throughout the world over the only ecumenical Church. All other Churches are national or provincial in their organization. The Papacy has a much firmer basis in a number of texts of the New Testament and in Christian history than most Protestants have been willing to recognize."

"Protestant controversialists have minimized the importance of these texts and emptied them of their true meaning. Jesus, in His vision of His kingdom, when St. Peter recognized Him as the Messiah, said: 'Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church (house) and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.' All attempts to explain the 'rock' in any other way than as referring to Peter have ignominiously failed."

This saying of Jesus is confirmed by the history of the apostolic age. Peter was certainly the chief of the apostles, according to all the Gospels, during the earthly life of Our Lord. The early chapters of the Acts represent him as

the acknowledged chief of the apostolic community down to the Council of Jerusalem. If we had the continuation of the narrative of St. Peter's work in Antioch, Western Asia, and finally Rome, in all probability the same undisputed leadership would appear. . . . I cannot undertake to give even a sketch of the history of the Papacy. We shall have to admit that the Christian Church from the earliest times recognized the primacy of the Roman Bishop, and that all the great Sees at times recognized the supreme jurisdiction of Rome in matters of doctrine, government and discipline.

"All the evidence sifted, the statement of Irenaeus stands firm: 'Since it would be tedious in such a volume as this, to reckon up the successions of all the Churches, we do put to confusion all those who in a vain manner, whether by an evil self pleasure, or by vain-glory, or by blindness or perverse opinion, assemble in unauthorized meetings: (we do this, I say) by indicating that tradition derived from the Apostles, of the very great, the very ancient and universally known Church, founded and organized at Rome by the two most glorious Apostles, Peter and Paul.'"

DEVOTION TO THE HOLY SPIRIT

In one of his luminous and instructive encyclicals Pope Leo XIII. deplored the fact that perhaps "there are still to be found, even nowadays, some who, if asked, as were those of old by St. Paul, the Apostle, whether they have received the Holy Ghost, might answer in like manner: 'We have not so much heard, whether there be a Holy Ghost.'"

Well instructed Catholics of course are not open to this reproach. They know that the Holy Ghost is the Third person of the Most Holy Trinity, that He has a definite mission to fulfill as the enlightener and sanctifier of souls, and that they receive this Divine Spirit with all His gifts in the Sacrament of Confirmation.

But where Catholics sometimes are deficient is in devotion to the Holy Ghost. How many are there in the world who cherish a real and practical devotion to the Holy Spirit, invoke Him in prayer, thank Him for his manifold favors, and ask His assistance? Yet, this kind of practical devotion to the Holy Ghost is enjoined upon us by our holy religion, and is the fertile source of innumerable spiritual and temporal graces and blessings.

Our Lord came into the world ultimately to put men in possession of the eternal life of glory, and proximately to secure to them the life of divine grace in this world that is destined to blossom into the life of Heaven. He did not will to complete and finish entirely His office on earth, but transmitted it for its completion to the Holy Ghost. Our Lord made it clear in speaking of the coming of the Paraclete that the Holy Spirit would complete in His office of Intercessor, Consoler, and Teacher, the work which Christ Himself began in His mortal life.

This office is accomplished by the indwelling and miraculous power of the Holy Ghost, by the extent and efficiency of His action in the whole body of the Church and in the souls of her individual members, and through the glorious abundance of His divine graces. To cultivate devotion to the Holy Spirit, Who has done so much for us, we should first of all strive to acquire a lively faith in the Holy Ghost. This we can do by repeating words of faith in the presence of the Holy Ghost, in His Divine Majesty, and in His mysterious and ineffable operations in our souls. This lively faith will lead to the adoration which is due the Holy Ghost as the Third Person of the Most Holy Trinity.

A second way to cultivate this devotion is to avoid displeasing the Holy Ghost. Indifference to Him, neglect of His wayings, and lack of appreciation of His graces displeases Him. But what displeases Him most is to be driven from the soul by mortal sin. This is the greatest injury and outrage which we can inflict upon the Holy Spirit. It is a violation of the temple of God.

A third way of cultivating devotion to the Holy Ghost is to pray frequently to Him. The Blessed Cure of Ars, who had a very real devotion to the Holy Ghost, used to say that the noise of the world drives the Holy Ghost away. "When we realize that we lack fervor," he would say, "we should at once make a novena to the Holy Ghost asking for faith and love."

Finally, we should direct our prayers to the Holy Ghost through the Blessed Virgin. As Pope Leo XIII. so beautifully says "You know well the intimate and wonderful relations existing between her and the Holy Ghost, so that she is justly called His spouse. The intercession of the Blessed Virgin was of great avail both in the mystery of the Incarnation and in the coming of the Holy Ghost upon the Apostles. May she continue to strengthen our prayers with her suffrages, that in the midst of all the stress and trouble of nations, those divine prodigies, may be happily revived by the Holy Ghost which were foretold in the words of David: Send forth Thy Spirit and they shall be created, and Thou shalt renew the face of the earth."—The Pilot.

THE TRUE PERSPECTIVE

A little child knelt at its Mother's knees. The "Our Father," the "Hail Mary" and the "Act of Contrition" had been recited with an occasional prompting. And now comes the special little prayers that mother's drill into their children's souls—"God bless Grandma and make her better and God bless Daddy." "God make all the bad people good" and then as one little child added in her artless way, "make all the good nice."

That child expressed an important truth. For even good people, and very good people, err occasionally through lack of tact or lack of thought and hurt their neighbor's feelings. And so the child in expressing a truth teaches also a lesson.

No one knows just how heavy may be the burden that one of his companions may be bearing. No one knows perhaps of the ill-health, the home conditions or the uncongenial working conditions of one's associate. Why add to already hardly tolerable sufferings with heartless jests or bitter words.

Why twit a person on being economical when that person is doing his honest best to support a sickly mother or brother or sister? Why be quick-witted at the expense of someone, whose ordinary backwardness may be still further blunted by the preoccupations of a heavy heart.

Yes, a little gentleness, a little thoughtfulness, and a little tact will sometimes make even good people—"nice" and better.—The Pilot.



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