

FIVE-MINUTE SERMON.

Third Sunday of Advent.

JOY IN GOD'S BLESSINGS.

"Rejoice in the Lord always: again I say rejoice." Epistle of the day.

Brethren: It seems to me like a reproach from God that we should have to be reminded to rejoice. It is as if a friend made you a handsome present and, observing your ingratitude, requested and urged you again to be thankful. Blessed is the man who remembers—the man who is thankful for favors received, for there is much in that remembrance to make the heart thoughtful, cheerful, hopeful.

Now, Catholic men and women, living in a Catholic atmosphere, you have much to remember, much to be thankful for and much to rejoice over. With the prophet Isaiah, you have good reason to say to yourselves: "I will remember the tender mercies of the Lord," and, remembering them, the command to "rejoice and again rejoice" will come home to you with profitable results.

I say it is like a reproach that God should have to call upon us, as He does in the first words of the holy Mass to-day, to rejoice. And why? Because as a matter of fact, we do not rejoice half enough over the blessings God is constantly bestowing on us. I take it for granted that these words are spoken to Catholics who have the great and inestimable privilege of living in a Catholic atmosphere, of living where they have ample opportunities of attending Mass, of hearing the Word of God, of having every desire of their Catholic hearts fulfilled—and to such Catholics, I maintain, it is a reproach that God should be obliged to command them to rejoice. And, brethren, is it not for true that we do not rejoice as we should over these advantages and blessings God bestows upon us? Who are we? What are we better than our fellow-men that we should enjoy the many blessings of which they are in part or wholly deprived? We think it a great sacrifice to walk a few blocks to attend Mass at any hour we please, while there are thousands of Christians who rejoice to hear Mass even though they have to travel miles to enjoy this blessed privilege. They who really make the sacrifice rejoice, while we sluggards fancy we are doing great things in fulfilling the ordinary and easy duties of religion.

No wonder, then, that God would be obliged to command us to rejoice. We are fools and ingrates if we do not, because of the advantages that are at our very doors. We seldom realize them until we are deprived of them, as the man who never realizes the value of money until he feels the pangs of hunger and discovers that he has not the means to supply his wants. Oh! God forbid that we should be ungrateful for the joy we have abundant reasons to rejoice. Think, my brethren, of all that God is doing for you. You might have been an outcast; you might have been brought up without the faith; circumstances might have placed you where the consolations of religion would be removed far from you—all these you have, the faith, the sacraments, the Mass, the frequent hearing of the Word of God—in fine, you have the Emmanuel, God with you, with all these blessings you have reason to rejoice.

Be joyous, then, from the bottom of your hearts; be thankful for the opportunities placed at your disposal; and if at times the difficulties you encounter discourage you, again I say, rejoice and think of those who have all these same difficulties without the advantages which you enjoy. Let your hearts be filled with joy on this mid-Sunday of Advent this season of expectancy, of hopes and joys to be fulfilled. Let the tender mercies of the Lord remind you of your great privilege, as well as duty, to rejoice always in the Lord.

QUESTION BOX.

WHAT MUST I DO TO BECOME A CATHOLIC?

From the Apostolate.

Question—"Suppose I wanted to become a Catholic and join the Church, tell me just what I should have to do."

Answer—I could tell you that much better in a personal interview, because from your question I can't tell just how far you are along. There are persons at all distances outside the Church, some of them very near and some of them afar off, and one would have to know just where you are and what's the matter with you to answer you satisfactorily.

If your watch is out of order, you may look at it and poke at it, and your friends may take a hand and work at it for a week and then not know what's the matter with it or get it going right. But if you take it to the jeweler, he tells you quickly what's the matter, cleans it up and gets it running all right. See a priest; see the experienced jeweler of souls.

In general and in all cases I may say: You would have to pray, to study the catechism and to believe.

You would have to pray hard and persistently to God for the grace of His Holy Spirit to see the truth, and strength to accept it at all sacrifices when seen. There can be no true conversion without plenty of prayer. "Ask and you shall receive." You can do nothing worthy of God without God's grace, and you must ask that humbly. "No one can come to Me unless the Father draws him," says our Lord. When Christ personally converted St. Paul, He first threw him down on the road to Damascus and overshadowed him by the splendor of His majesty. Then Paul asked: "Who art Thou?" "I am Jesus Whom thou persecutest." And Paul said: "What wilt Thou have me to do?" And Jesus told him to go into Damascus to one who would instruct him in all the details. Paul followed the advice and became the greatest apostle of the Church.

So you must ask, as St. Paul did, ask Jesus in prayer, and ask vehemently: "What wilt Thou have me to do?" And then do it with all your soul. Say one Our Father and one Hail Mary daily, and repeat incessantly: "Jesus, what wilt Thou have me to do?"

Having prayed and humiliated yourself, then seek a priest, who will instruct you in the elements of the Catholic religion. Get a little catechism; read and study it. Get a copy of "The Faith of Our Fathers," by Cardinal Gibbons, to supplement your study and ground you in the proofs.

Before you can become a Catholic and be baptized, you must believe, you must have faith in Christ and in the teachings of His Holy Church. That faith is a most precious gift of God to you, and you must be disposed in mind to accept it and believe. Be careful that you do not obscure the light of faith coming to you, and that you refuse it not when it comes. Let nothing tempt you to wait or delay when the gift comes. It may never be offered again, and you may be eternally responsible for the call. It is a most serious mistake to allow worldly considerations to interfere in your conversion to God.

Question—"Can non-members of the Catholic Church go to confession to a priest?"

Answer—"Non-Catholics can and do go to confession to a priest, but they cannot receive the sacrament and do not receive absolution. They often make confidants of priests in their spiritual affairs and receive much good advice and help, and it is often a means of grace which finally brings them into the Church to receive all the graces of the sacraments."

Question—"Are not all churches working for the same end?"

Answer—"If a canvass were taken, it may be doubted if all the churches would return the same answer. On general principles they all may be supposed to be working for the same end in theory, and some of them no doubt in good faith. But it must also be assumed as certain that Christ had but one end in view, and that He adopted but one Church to secure that end. He had but one truth and one object, and though it must be attained in various ways and by various means, we must be certain that He in His divine wisdom provided His one Church with the knowledge of all these ways and bestowed upon it all these means necessary to attain His end and object."

Christ's plan is divine. The "other churches" are but man-made, and the preference must be in favor of His plan. Christ founded one Church to be the salvation of all men. He could not be the author of the conflicting theories of to-day or of the various and contradictory means we see outside of the Catholic Church.

OUR SPOILED WALLS.

By Rev. J. J. Kavanagh, S. J., Loyola College, Montreal.

Many of the readers of the CATHOLIC RECORD, both lay and clerical, are interested in the preservation of the purity of their white plaster walls, while some have had painful experience of the spoiling of mural decorations by the appearance of dark bands upon the frescoed surface.

The defacement of lath and plaster walls and ceilings by the laths showing through is a common matter of complaint. Certainly the dark lines in question are very unsightly on a plain white surface, but they are more than unsightly when they appear upon a decorated surface. However, it is a mistake to suppose that these lines are due to the laths showing through. In point of fact, they really mark the intervals between the laths. This assertion can be easily verified by the prod of an awl, but the explanation of the fact may need some reflection.

Few people appreciate at its fair value the amount of ventilation that goes through brick and plaster walls. Air or any other gaseous substance simply cannot resist their natural tendency to penetrate into the smaller than microscopic pores that permeate most solids. Selecting common illuminating gas to illustrate my point, I find I can get light enough to write these lines from a jet, the gas for which has to pass through four inches of pressed brick or plaster. If the brick or plaster were damp, or would be stopped. This easy passage of air through dry unpainted brick and plaster explains why the atmosphere of new edifices, halls and churches, maintains itself so much purer than after the paint brush of the decorator has checked this desirable and draughtless supply of fresh air.

In some cases, however, this transpiration is not desirable. For instance, if a living room be above a kitchen or next to it, then heavy painting on wall and ceiling will conduce to a pleasanter atmosphere, and a less general diffusion of news from the kitchen.

We may now undertake the explanation of the dark lines which are always and unobscurely and sometimes so disastrous. The splendid Mayer frescoes in the Gesù at Montreal barred and marred by them is a case in point. The air of our dwellings and assembly halls is always more or less charged with a very varied and unnamable assortment of dirt. This dust-laden air oozes through the plaster, and all the more abundantly when there is no wood backing. As it filters through, it leaves behind on the surface all its solid or non-gaseous cargo; more air passes where there is no lath, and it is along the line between the laths that most dirt is deposited and greater blackening takes place. The dryer the wall, the more abundant is this transpiration; hence it is that there is more blackening near ventilators or heating apparatus.

Near taking up the question of prevention, one cannot refrain from suggesting that our walls and ceilings ought to get more cleaning than they do. If one has a fancy for germ hunting, the wall of a living room would afford ample and diversified sport.

If the objectionable banding is to be avoided and the plaster surface be still retained for purposes of fresco decoration, one has the alternative of completely suppressing the transpiration, or equalizing this transpiration all over the wall. Heavy painting might avail for the former, while the latter might be secured by inserting seamless paper in the thickness of the plaster and backing it with close-jointed boards. The new ready-made plates of plaster ought to be perfectly effective in this relation, equalizing this transpiration the most of the trouble in question they would soon find means to suppress it.

Peace is not in the heart of the carnal man, nor in the man who is devoted to outward things, but in the fervent and spiritual man.—A Kempis.

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The Roman theatres have opened their doors for the new season. The fact burst upon you with unusual force one day this week just as you arrived at the Church of St. Roch, in the Via Ripetta. The whole side of the sacred edifice on the broad new Via Tomacelli was gay with posters, announcing the dramatic attractions of the hour. One of these is decent enough—at least it is decent enough in the original English version, though that hardly guarantees its character in the Italian translation. The poster is for the Church of St. Roch, and one of them is literally putrid in its immorality. Strong and ugly language? No, that the facts should warrant it? Nor is this church an exception. The purveyors of low spectacles seem to have made a deal set on the walls of churches since these have been let out for advertising. "All thy walls are precious stones," sings the Church of her temples—"All thy walls are to be foul with obscenity" is the answer of

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