

FIVE MINUTE SERMON

THIRD SUNDAY IN LENT

"Every kingdom divided against itself shall be brought to desolation, and house upon house shall fall." (Luke xi. 17.)

Our Lord was proving that He did not drive out devils by aid of the devil, and pointed out that wherever strife, emulation and division prevail, desolation and destruction must inevitably follow. He took as His illustration a kingdom divided against itself, the people being engaged in civil war; and He argued that it was impossible for the devil to be helping Him to drive out devils.

These words may, however, teach us another excellent lesson, viz.: that if we suffer discord to reign within us, we must expect nothing but misery. Yet such discord is very common; it is a state of discontent, due to absence of peace of mind, in spite of the enjoyment of temporal prosperity. We want to serve God without denying ourselves; we accuse ourselves again and again of our faults, repent of them and mourn over them, and then commit them afresh.

This discord entered into us with original sin, since which time, as St. Paul says, the flesh has been warring against the spirit; and we can overcome this inward disturbance only by the grace of Him who has crushed the serpent's head. It ceases to torment us when what is good and noble in us has obtained permanent dominion over what is evil and base. If with our whole mind and strength we are in union with God, peace and harmony will reign in our hearts and make us happy, for we shall be freed from that inward discord that drags us this way and that, now to what is good, and now to what is evil, and is an incessant source of restlessness and spiritual misery.

If we wish to avoid this inward discord and discontent, this sense of unhappiness at heart, we must be resolute. First of all try to ascertain clearly what God wants of you; for where there is no real recognition of His will there will be constant uncertainty and questioning whether we ought to do this or that; and in such a state of doubt determined action is impossible. A man, wandering in the dark in an unknown locality, cannot take a decided step forward. We need, in the first place, a definite knowledge of our duties, and our reason will enable us to obtain this. It is, therefore, most essential to avail ourselves of every opportunity of developing our reason. The less training is bestowed upon our reason, the more apt is our imagination to run riot, and imagination is never a safe guide to tell us our duty. We may strive in vain to be pious if we allow our imagination to decide what is our duty; for it is easily influenced by sensuality and self-love, it is ready to take a false view of things and to regard what is absolutely wrong as permissible, or even as good and noble. No inconsiderable part of modern literature bears witness to this truth, for barefaced wickedness is often represented as harmless and justified, whilst the moral teaching is so distorted, and absurd eccentricities so highly praised as genuine virtue, that it is really no wonder if uncritical readers store up in their minds the most contradictory views regarding morality. The peculiar moral teaching in such books is no whit better or less injurious than downright immorality. Even if the teaching has a good tendency, making for virtue and piety, it is not on that account much less dangerous than if it diverges altogether from the right path; perhaps it discovers sins where there are no sins, and makes exaggerated demands upon its victims, plunging him into deep depression, because he is unable to comply with these demands, and, by robbing him of all courage, it leads him astray from what is good. A truly religious training of the intellect is most essential to give us clear and definite principles regarding our duty. When you have once recognized something as a duty, pleasing to God, "Be strong in the grace which is in Christ Jesus" (II. Tim ii. 1.)

When you have made a good resolution, be true to yourselves and to Christ; do not waver to and fro. Doubts may arise within you, and various opinions and temptations; hours may come when you are inclined to change your mind, since what appeared at first to be right may seem doubtful and uncertain. Do not yield to these temptations; renew your resolution that you formed after due deliberation and after earnest prayer.

To act in one way to-day, and in another to-morrow—to sow to-day and to root up to-morrow, to build to-day and to pull down to-morrow—all this leads to nothing, especially in striving after piety. If we go on in this way, one day will pass after another and the day of our death will find us as devoid of merit as the day of our birth. Be strong to resist all feckleness that is due to your own changes of mind.

Be strong, too, against feckleness due to outward influences. It is not much good to have a pious heart if it is not at the same time steadfast. If it were our lot to be always with friends like ourselves, anxious to lead good lives, then it would be easy enough to be good. If we always had a hand to guide us, or a voice to warn us, our own want of determination might be replaced by that of others. But a Christian has to go out into the world and stand his ground there. It is not difficult to be resolute in quiet retirement, but to abide by what has once for all

TEMPERANCE

PROHIBITION IN RUSSIA

MEMORIAL

"On the report of the Most Holy Synod as to the desirability of keeping in force for the future and in all places the prohibition of the sale of spirituous drinks, most humbly presented by the Synodal Chief Procurator on April 27, 1915, at Tsarskoe Selo, the Emperor deigned to write in his own hand: 'The sobriety of the nation is a hopeful foundation for its power and well-being.'

THE HOLY SYNOD'S MOST HUMBLE REPORT
"Your Imperial Majesty, Great Tsar: The prohibition of the sale of spirituous drink, realized by the most high will of your Imperial Majesty, has placed your faithful nation in heretofore unknown conditions of a new, sober life, and has bestowed upon Russia countless benefits. It has restored to the Russian people the full recognition of its sacred duty before God and history, in view of the importance and responsibility of the momentous period through which we are passing; it has created in its God-born soul a love for the eternal sanctities, for the Orthodox Church, for the Orthodox Tsar, and for the Orthodox-Russian native land.

The ecclesiastical authority, in the person of the Most Holy Synod, which has to guard these great spiritual treasures of the Russian people, cannot help registering its feeling of deep satisfaction when observing the fact of Russia's moral regeneration. From wide information it can be seen how, according to your Majesty's wishes, the Russian people, from whose weakened will-power have fallen the chains of alcoholic servitude, has turned its soul towards the Temple—that soul which, in its sobriety, you have actually led out from the dungeon of misery. There has awakened in it the fear of God, and reverence for sacred institutions and ordinances. The ancient faith and religious zeal are renewed; the industry of the population and the productivity of labor have visibly been increased; crimes have diminished; bright holy days are no longer darkened by excesses; quarrels have ceased; all the nationalities of many-tongued Russia have grown into a one-souled family, ready to the last drop of blood to beat off the impudent attack of the enemy. In social relations greater strictness and purity of morals may be observed; peace and quietness are reigning in families; parents have rescued their children from perishing, wives have found their husbands, children their parents. In short, the face of the Russian land seems changed. The moral self-confidence of the nation has been raised, and in it has been created a serious, purely religious attitude towards the trials sent upon it by God. All this has strengthened our physical and moral energies, which find their forcible expression in the

ACHIEVEMENTS OF OUR VALIANT AND VICTORIOUS ARMY.

It is difficult to rehearse and count up all the beneficial consequences, so deeply penetrating life, which have come from the great historic act of turning Russia sober. But one cannot help seeing that with the complete sobriety of the Russian people are associated its manifold essential interests, and, above all, the awakening and development of that invincible spirit of Faith which has ever saved Russia. We confidently believe that the dawn of the sober, industrious life, which is breaking in these days of our countless trials sent down upon us by God's providence, will shine forth with the glow of those creative powers, which lie hidden in the soul of the Russian people, to be fully awakened in the days of peaceful development.

At the same time the Holy Synod cannot pass over in silence before your Majesty the sense of anxiety provoked by the efforts of those so-called friends of the public good, who are striving to maintain the free sale at least of beer and wine. Just when the nation almost unanimously expresses its joy at being saved from alcoholic slavery, arrested in its destructive and deadly course by the mighty act of your Imperial word, some persons, interested for some reason or another in the spread of alcoholic drinks, are trying to make a breach in the obstacle before them, through which alcoholism would soon find its way back to the people, and take possession of them more than ever. This danger is especially great because of the seductive taste of these drinks, the use of which is attended by results no less disastrous than accompany the use of distilled liquors. Hence neither beer nor wine can be reckoned useful allies in an honest struggle against alcoholism.

Therefore the Most Holy Synod, in the name of the pastors and congregations, bowing before the great historical act of your Imperial Majesty directed towards making Russia sober, considers it to be its sacred duty to address to you, great Tsar, the universal prayer that the prohibition of all alcoholic drinks should in the future preserve its active power for the weal and salvation of your faithful Russian people.
Signed:
"The humble servants of your Imperial Majesty."
Vladimir, Metropolitan of Petrograd and Ladoga.
Flavian, Metropolitan of Kiev, and eight other Bishops and Arch-

bishops.—Catholic Temperance Advocate.

RARE FRIENDSHIP

A touching story of two friends is told by William Beatty Kingston in his "Journalist's Jottings." They were two officers in the English army who quarreled about some trifle, and although they had been the closest of comrades, became in consequence entirely estranged. The fact of their separation was extremely bitter to both of them, and one Christmas day one of them received from the other a card bearing a dove with an olive branch.

The recipient kept the message by him for a twelvemonth, and on the following Christmas sent it back to his fellow officer, who in turn laid it aside for a year, and then dispatched it on the next anniversary.
Through three successive decades, at each Christmastide, the mute messenger was regularly sent in token of continued friendship, until a year came when it was forgotten because the present possessor was too harassed by financial losses to remember it. In the course of the Christmas week, however, his wife came upon the card and sent it off to her husband's friend, with a newspaper cutting referring to her husband's bankruptcy. The returning post brought her a letter enclosing a thousand pounds, and explaining that the sender had just come into a fortune, and that in return for this trifling sum, intended for his old friend's rescue, he should keep the Christmas card as his most precious possession.—Intermountain Catholic.

QUITE A CHANGE

Who would have thought, only a year or two ago, that the city council of Rome would pass by acclamation an enthusiastic vote of welcome to a Cardinal of Holy Roman Church? Yet that is what happened just after Cardinal Meyer had arrived. What ever political tendencies may find expression for the moment in notices from news agencies or elsewhere, that is a simple fact, which shows that things are not as they used to be in Rome. And the wonderful stories, which continue to come through from the front, show that the same must be said of all Italy. Here is an authentic one:
A company had gone ahead a bit and dug themselves into a sheltered and apparently secure position on the edge of a hill. An enemy shell

came and demolished the foundations on which their carefully prepared retreat rested; and it went slithering down into the valley. They slithered too, but picked themselves out of the debris and found that there was not one badly hurt. Having called the roll, the officer in command, seeing how badly shaken up they were, told them to get back to the canteen and have a tot before beginning all over again; and he gave them the money for it. After a short consultation the men said they would like to put the money by, if they might, and use it for votive candles to the Madonna for their miraculous escape. The officer agreed that it was miraculous, but sent them off all the same, saying that they would, all of them, carry

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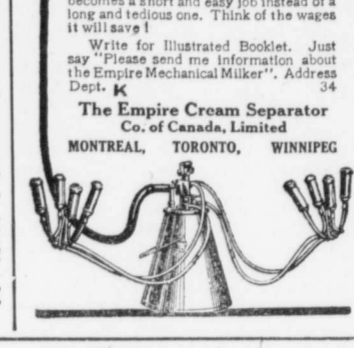
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