

FIVE MINUTE SERMON

BY REV. M. ROSSAERT

THIRTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

INGRATITUDE TOWARDS GOD

"Jesus, Master, have mercy on us"; these were the words with which the ten lepers, standing afar off, implored our Saviour's help, and they did not ask in vain for He extended His miraculous power and cured them. Imagine their happiness at being suddenly delivered from a painful and disfiguring disease, so that they could go back to their families and friends, and associate once more with their fellow creatures. Was it too much to expect them to be grateful? Yet only one of them turned back to offer the thanks due to his benefactor. That the ingratitude of the rest caused pain to our divine Lord is plain from His question: "Were not I made clean, and where are the nine?" We all feel indignant at their behavior, but are we not sometimes also guilty of ingratitude? We all receive countless benefits from God day by day, and how few of us ever feel really thankful to Him! Let us consider briefly today how we show ingratitude to God.

1. In the first place we show ingratitude by failing to recognize His benefits. A grateful man thinks of all that God has done for him, and appreciates His gifts at their proper value, looking up with thankful heart to the Father of light, from whom cometh every good gift. But an ungrateful man does nothing of the kind; he enjoys God's benefits daily without a thought of the Giver. He is like a careless child, who sits down at his parents' table and eats what he likes, without thinking of their kindness and without considering how much better he fares than many other children, who are glad to eat their hunger with dry bread. This is how an ungrateful man gets towards God; he never reflects that all good things are gifts to which he has no claim; he enjoys them without thinking of the Giver.

Most of you no doubt consider that you do not belong to the class of men devoid of gratitude; you say your prayers morning and evening, and grace before and after meals; yet it behoves you to examine yourselves and find out whether your prayers really proceed from a full heart of gratitude, or are uttered merely with the lips. There is a great difference between lip service and the prayer of thanksgiving.

2. Secondly, we show ingratitude by not making a good use of God's benefits. Whenever He gives us anything, He intends us to use it in some particular way; He entrusts us, His servants, with few or many talents, not that we may bury them, but that we may employ them for our good and that of our fellow creatures according to His holy will. He gives us intelligence to acquire useful knowledge and so to benefit ourselves and others; He gives us health to enable us cheerfully to discharge the duties of our calling; He gives us property that we may not only live in comfort ourselves, but may be able to help others. Now an ungrateful man enjoys all these gifts, but overlooks the intention with which God bestows them upon him. He has intelligence, but does not use it in acquiring useful knowledge; he is healthy, but fails to appreciate his good health and takes no care to preserve it; he has property, but does not good with his money and does not attempt to lay up imperishable treasures. In fact, he takes all the good things that God gives him, without remembering that he will have to render an account of them.

3. Finally, we show the basest ingratitude when we make a sinful use of God's gifts and benefits. It seems hardly credible that a reasonable being could act so outrageously, and yet it happens only too often. In their ingratitude men employ their gifts of mind and body for wicked purposes. God gives us a sound constitution, and you presume upon your strength and throw it away by yielding to drunkenness and excess. God gives you an abundance of worldly possessions, and you either hoard them up or squander them. God gives you good, kind parents, or loving relations, and you embitter their existence. God gives you intelligence, and you employ it in gratifying your feelings of pride, vanity, etc. God called you to Christianity, and you are no better than a heathen; you have misused all your good gifts!

Let us henceforth not shut our eyes to God's infinite goodness and still less make a bad use of what He bestows upon us. Rather let us be grateful for the benefits that He showers upon us so bountifully day by day, and show our gratitude by using them for His honor and for our own good and that of our neighbors. May we impress upon our hearts St. Paul's words: "Give thanks always for all things, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, to God and the Father," and may we ever practice what He teaches. Amen.

IT BEGINS AT HOME

"We heartily commend to all our readers,—feeling that there are few who can fail to profit by it,—the reading of the following paragraph, quoted from the Leader of San Francisco: "Sir Arthur Helps had the happy faculty of putting expression of wisdom into a few words. It was he who said, 'Familiarity should not swallow up courtesy. Perhaps one-half of the rudeness of

youths of this day, that later in life will develop into brutality, is due to the failure of parents to enforce in the family circle the rules of courtesy. The son or daughter who is discourteous to members of the family, because of familiarity with them, is very likely to prove rude and overbearing to others, and to be a tyrant in the household over which he or she may be called on to preside. There is at this day, undeniably, among the rising generation a lack of courteous demeanor in the family. Of all places in the world, let the boy understand that home is the place where he should speak the gentlest and be the most kindly; that there is the place, above all, where courteous demeanor should prevail. The lad who is rude to his sister, impertinent to his mother, and vulgar in the house, will prove a sad husband for a suffering wife, and a cruel father to unfortunate children. The plans for politeness, as Sir Arthur Helps says, it is where we mostly think it superfluous." There is a sad inconsistency in the attitude of those who reserve the essence of courtesy and consideration for the outsider, the casual acquaintance, and cannot be even decent with those who are constrained to live with them. Were the above suggestions heeded, and courtesy more generously observed, some people's lives would be more worth living.—Catholic Transcript.

WHAT SHALL I BE?

It is a sensible boy or girl who begins early in life to ask this question. Occupations are many and varied. But in the maze of paths which stretches out before the dream views of youth there is for each a particular path to be followed. That one must be found. The world offers many possibilities in vocation, many of them laudable. Never before has any such occupation promised greater financial return or more decided material advancement. But while the world attracts and invites, our Divine Lord, too, is calling, eagerly and insistently. His reward is rich and assured. There is no uncertainty about it. Returns a hundred-fold, and the grace necessary for service leading to everlasting life are the inducements held out to youth who would leave all to follow Him. Never was the need nor the opportunities greater. Help in saying souls is an imperative appeal. Priests and religious teachers are everywhere in demand. The urgency of the situation means the loss of many souls unless the need be met. Those whom God has called may not then ignore or postpone the Divine suggestion. The same voices which urged and inspired the saints come to those selected today. Listen and act. Interest in the work of Christ and anxiety to further the progress of His church will yield to a yearning to share in the service. And what higher or better life could any boy or girl embrace that to enroll in the army of the Lord? It is not sentiment which prompts a call. Faith and reason, the will to do good, have ever brought saints into the fold. A special call or a particular sign need not be expected or awaited. It would be presumption so to act. But if a right intention and certain qualifications of one's life be present, the advice of one's confessor should at once be requested.

Parents and elders will be careful to discourage or ridicule a religious vocation in youth. Unfortunately, some parents look upon such a call as a sort of social calamity. We would urge upon them that a vocation to serve as a priest, a brother or a sister, is not only a blessing in itself to all the family, but to have a share in encouragement, perhaps, even to shape the call would be God's work. Encourage, support and pray for youth in its trying hour of decision, and the young people will go out fearlessly and perseveringly to the work of the Lord wherever they may be called.—New World.

MORAL CONFUSION

Although the New Orleans pastor denounces as sensationalism the story published broadcast by the press that he stopped a wedding because the bride was "shockingly attired, he acknowledges that before the bridal party entered the church they were requested to veil themselves on account of wearing gowns unbecoming at the reception of a sacrament. It is remarkable, however, how our newspapers, far from Puritanical though they be, almost unanimously approve the alleged action of the pastor and deplore the loss of the sense of modesty in dress by the devout female sex of our age. The loss of moral balance was commented on by the President of Princeton University, Dr. John Grier Hibben, in his baccalaureate sermon on June 13 to the graduates of 1920, when he declared: "In our social relations we are weakly allowing ourselves to be ruled by the goddess of folly, slaves in her domain to the fashion of the hour. The modern dress, the modern dance, modern music and modern manners are symptoms indicating that something in this age we have lost our bearings and that the old values of life, once so highly prized, have been forgotten. . . . The very helplessness of the world today is in itself a repudiation of that self-sufficient and self-confident view of life that the world in its progressive development has outgrown the need of religion. It is religion that gives to the world what it now most needs—a standard of

right living, a cause to maintain and defend, a leader to follow and a law to obey." Undoubtedly the War has caused a deterioration of moral standards not only in Europe but in America as well. The present day styles in the garb of women are often set by the demi-monde of Paris and accepted by Christian women as slaves of fashion. The emancipation of the new woman however is proceeding too far when it comes to throwing off the shackles of clothes. There is no reason why the human form divine cannot be beautifully dressed, even when bow-legged, without shocking Christian modesty. The latter is never out of fashion and should be insisted upon by parents and educators as a priceless jewel in the diadem of virtue. Miss Fanny McLean, a veteran teacher in the Berkeley schools, now connected with the Board of Education there, recently exhorted doting parents whose children have become the bane of modern pedagogues. She said: "Parents no longer understand their children. They send them to us disobedient, extravagant, spoiled."

Superintendent Fred C. Nelles of the Whittier State School for Boys in an address delivered before the Sacramento Rotary Club, on June 24 states that 90% of the inmates of that institution come from the public schools, although the A. P. A. orators would like to credit the Catholic schools with all the crimes and misdemeanors in the catalogue. Evidently the fathers and mothers of today are neglecting the home training of their children.

There is no religion in the average home, and no formation of character and moral training of our youth. A state of moral confusion and intellectual anarchy is widespread; especially outside Catholic circles. To make confusion more confounding, the Socialists and Bolsheviks aim at capturing the public school system and closing religious schools. Cheap fiction, corrupting movies, a sensational press propagating lies, the crowding of population in flats, tenements and apartments—all these influences are deteriorating the morale of our young people and setting them aloft early on the uncharted sea of life without a guiding compass, drifting aimlessly into the laxness and stupidity of town life today.—The Monitor.

WHAT CIVILIZATION OWES TO ERIN

The following facts taken at random from Early Irish history show what European civilization owes to the people of Ireland: How many know that Pepin and Charlemagne had to send in the eighth and ninth centuries, for two Irish scientists—O'Farrell and Dungal—so explain to the disturbed minds of Europe the significance of certain natural phenomena? That the "De Mensura Orbis Terrarum" of an Irishman—Dicuil—written 825 A. D., was published in French and German because of its scientific value in the eighteenth century?

That according to Zenas, the true history of the peoples of Western Europe cannot be written until the resources of early Irish literature have been fully uncovered? That astronomical scientists of world-wide repute have established the absolute accuracy of early Irish annals—a fact not true of any other nation's writers? That in early Ireland it was a common custom to banquet and fete men of learning?

That wandering poets in Ireland kept alive the flame of nationality through the ages of persecution? That in ancient Ireland there were free schools, free colleges, free universities, both lay and ecclesiastical? That a course of two years' study and research was prescribed for the degree of Doctor (Ollamh)?

LANGUAGES OF EUROPE

That Greek, Latin, and the languages of Europe were included in the curriculum, and Latin was spoken as freely as Irish? That the people of the country were passionately fond of music, accounting it one of heaven's delights and a necessary of life on earth?

That in works of art, in stone, canvas, metal, enamel, on parchment and canvas, the examples in the National Museum and the libraries of the world are a mute testimony to excellence not elsewhere attained?

That the land belonged to the free, the members of which were interdependent and free?

That the aged were honored and maintained in ease and comfort by the tribe?

That special hospices, lay and ecclesiastical, were to be found in every part of the land, dispensing free rent and comfort to all travellers?

That, further, every house was open house?

That Irish physicians and surgeons—men and women—were in high repute and constant demand throughout Europe?

MEDICAL LITERATURE

That in the early Irish language is to be found the largest collection of purely medical literature in existence in any one tongue?

That devoted duty and gratuitous aid were given by Irish medical men at a time when the same was deemed improper by other peoples?

That in pagan Ireland every tribe had its free hospital.

That a doctor falling through proven neglect, carelessness, or lack of skill to effect a cure had to compensate his patient? That injury caused to another's person was punishable by adequate compensation? That Turkish and medicated baths were common to all (cf.—Romish-Irish Baden)?

That the highly critical and involved surgical operation of trepanning was regularly and successfully performed? That early Irish obstetricians were familiar with and performed the Caesarean operation?

That cupping and stitching of wounds were not new to ancient Ireland? That anaesthetics were used from pagan days?—The Pilot.

INSIGHT AND SYMPATHY

In discussing a book, "Father Maturin: A Memoir With Selected Letters," the reviewer in the current number of The Ecclesiastical Review says that his success as a preacher and a convert-maker lay "in his insight into human souls and his equally profound sympathy with their difficulties." A convert himself he knew by experience what perplexities confront the sincere seeker after religious truth. According to him it is a grave mistake to suspect the majority of outsiders as being of bad faith. And souls are not won by calling them hypocrites. Indeed, Father Maturin said once to Cardinal Vaughan, upon the latter's question what he thought to be the reason why the movement toward the Church in England was not more widespread: "If you want me to be perfectly frank with your Eminence I should say it was yourself." And by way of explanation Father Maturin added that the Cardinal in his public utterances seemed to cast doubt on the good faith of so many Christians outside the Catholic Church—a mode of proceeding that only served to hurt their feelings and to prevent them from drawing nearer to the Church.

This no doubt correct position of Father Maturin is based on the fact that the approach to souls is through kind appreciation. Of course, when there is question of leading a soul to the knowledge of divine truth, the grace of God is the principal factor. Human agencies are only supplementary. But these human agencies are two-edged swords—they can both help or hinder the working of grace. If they are to be helpful they must bear the characteristics of insight and sympathy. This is why religious controversy so rarely accomplishes any good, namely because it is often wanting in both insight and sympathy.

"I am right and you are wrong," this is the language of controversy. How much better is it to begin, "This is what we believe," and then upon questioning state the reasons. If the reasons seem good to the inquirer, he will be induced to pronounce himself in the wrong—a much more hopeful situation than if he is told to be wrong by another.

But not only in matters of religion are insight and sympathy the passport to useful influence, they are of immense importance in all our daily relations with our fellow men. Learn to know your neighbor, not to eep his faults but to discover his good qualities; place yourself in his position, and 99% of the disagree-

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ments that trouble the peace of families or communities will either be avoided or easily remedied. For nearly all our faults have their foundation in mistakes.—S. in The Guardian.

A FAMILIAR TYPE

The "half-hearted" Catholic is a familiar type. He belongs to the class who adopt the "get it over as soon as possible" motto. They skip their daily prayers, go to an early Mass on Sunday to avoid a sermon, and if by chance they do manage to hear the word of God they are only too ready to criticize the preacher, his method of delivery, and even the doctrine he propounds. Good spiritual reading they largely cold-shoulder and indulge in books which if not actually forbidden by the Church are a real danger to the faith they hold. Half-hearted Catholics often take the wrong view of vocations. There are Catholic parents who dread nothing more than to hear that their children have a vocation. They will do everything they can and sometimes they succeed in quenching that divine spark. They voice the worldly view: "Why not go in for something more lucrative?" They refuse to see what an honor it is for their children to serve God on the altar or in the convent.

Another class of Catholics are addicted to false shame. These are "neutrals." In passing a church or a priest they are afraid to raise their hats, and in the presence of non-Catholic friends they are equally nervous in acknowledging God and His religion. They detest charity in their hearts by keeping non-Catholics from entering the Church through the disparaging attitude they adopt. "Just as good men outside the Church as in" is their usual formula.

Now, the true Catholic, on the other hand, says his prayers with devotion. His delight is to salute God each morning and evening, and it is a real pleasure to him to hear God's word from the pulpit. A vocation in his family is a source of indescribable joy. Real Catholicity preaches by the very efficacious method of good example. Non-Catholics lead good lives outside the Church, but they could lead better

ones with the help of the Divine Sacraments. Good Catholics ally themselves with the confraternities of the Church, and give their support to the movements sanctioned by the Church and having for their purpose the promotion of right principles of thought and action in various spheres of human activity.—The Sentinel of the Blessed Sacrament.

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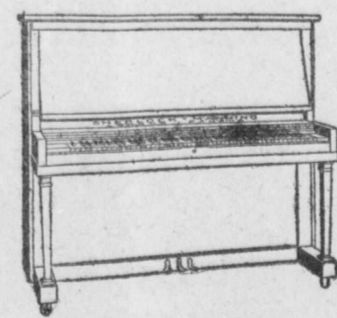
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