

Amy, E. Paul  
Two stars... -  
ADJ 0148



THE  
CATHOLIC  
HOUR

*Two Stars in the  
Drama of Life*

REV. E. PAUL AMY, S. J.

June 29, 1958

Deadified

## TWO STARS IN THE DRAMA OF LIFE

May I begin this concluding talk in our series by defining what is a saint? A saint is one who has reached his final and ultimate goal of eternal happiness with God in Heaven.

In the drama of life God wants all of us to strive for sanctity. He wants all of us to become saints. For all this is a difficult task. Many appear to fail completely in their striving. Many others, striving with difficulty, appear to attain to a degree of sanctity before death comes. For knowledge of the success or failure of all of these to reach the goal of eternal happiness, we shall have to await the day of final judgment. But there are other many who have given incontestible proof that they have won the highest rating for their acting. The quality of their performance on the stage of the world, and the miracles worked after their deaths through their intercession, are the evidence that they have been given the coveted Oscar of saint and shine today in God's heaven as stars.

But the difficulty of living a holy and saintly life can be and often is discouraging. Accordingly defense for failure not infrequently is expressed by the notion that saints are born and not made. This notion easily is refuted. The saint who is known as Mary Magdalen had been leading anything but a saintly, a holy life before she met the Master in the home of Simon the Pharisee. In fact, according to the Evangelist, because of her, Simon questioned even the quality and character of Jesus Himself, as he harbored the thought: "This man, if he were a prophet, would know surely who and what manner of woman this is that toucheth him, that she is a sinner." There is another who is credited with having won the award of sainthood from Jesus Himself when He said, "This day thou shalt be with Me in Paradise." Dismas, the name commonly given to the "Thief of Paradise," had just spoken his own evaluation. Two criminals had been condemned to die by crucifixion with Jesus. "And one of those robbers who were hanged, blasphemed Him saying: If thou be the Christ save thyself and us. But the other answering rebuked him saying: Neither dost thou fear God, seeing thou



art under the same condemnation? And we indeed justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds; but this man hath done no evil." Late come to the acknowledgment of the divinity of Jesus, it was at the very end of his sinful life that Dismas turned to Jesus and said, "Lord, remember me when Thou shalt come into Thy kingdom." No one truly would say that Mary of Magdala was born a saint! That Dismas was born a saint! Each became a saint in the humble acknowledgment of personal waywardness and in the subsequent whole submission to the divine will.

Discouragement in the task of becoming a saint sometimes is defended on the score that sanctity is for the learned. When we think of the brilliant minds of Saint Augustine and of St. Thomas Aquinas we feel a hopelessness in trying to become saints. Then should we be encouraged by recollection of a saint of the last century, whose dulness of intellect prompted serious doubt as to his fitness to become a priest. Today this saint lovingly is called the Cure of Ars, Saint John Vianney. Another excuse is offered as to why there are not more saintly people in our own day. Saints lived only in the days of long ago! Saint Pius the Tenth, Saint Maria

Goretti, to mention only two saints of the Twentieth Century, give the lie to that notion. The fact is that there are saints of all centuries; there are saints who were young and old; saints who were martyred, saints who died natural deaths; saints from every station of life, saints from among the laity and from amongst priests and religious. In fact so many and of such varied backgrounds are the saints that one and another tell us that we too can strive for sanctity and become saints if we make the effort, with the help of God's grace, to rise above whatever may be the difficulties that beset us.

Inspiration and encouragement to make the effort is given to all of us by the Princes of the Apostles, Peter and Paul, who have proven themselves outstanding stars in the drama of life. In the one and the other, each of us can find something of a likeness to ourselves. Neither of them was born a saint. Each of them is known to have made serious mistakes. For all that Peter never seriously had opposed the teachings of Jesus, he was the only one of the Apostles who denied that he knew the Master. Paul on the other hand, as Saul, professedly persecuted the fol-

lowers of Christ. The strivings of both against their human weaknesses can't but raise our hopes. As we plod our ways across the world's stage, thought of them can confirm us in the mind that we too can become saints.

Peter was the brother of Andrew. Andrew, a disciple of John the Baptist, had been led to Jesus by the Baptist when he said: "Behold the Lamb of God." Thereafter Andrew said to his brother: "We have found the Messiah... and he brought him to Jesus." On seeing the two of them Jesus said: "Come ye after Me and I will make you to be fishers of men. And they immediately leaving their nets followed Him." Humble indeed was the origin of Peter. He was a simple fisherman. His worldly possessions were hardly more than the nets he used to ply his trade. Even according to the standards of his own day he was an unlettered man. None the less, he became a close follower of Christ. For all that Peter was in intimate association with Christ for the next three years, his human weaknesses were constantly in evidence. More than once did he receive rebuke from the Master for his failings. Indeed it was strong language that Jesus used when He said to Peter: "Go behind me,

Satan, thou art a scandal unto Me, because thou savorest not of the things that are of God, but the things that are of men." When in the midst of a storm, Peter and his fellow boatmen saw Jesus walking on the waters, they thought it was an apparition and were afraid. To comfort them, Jesus said: "It is I, fear not!" Peter presumed to demand proof of the truth of Christ's words and said: "Lord, if it be Thou, bid me to come to Thee upon the waters. And He Said: Come!" With supreme confidence Peter descended from the boat and walked on the surface of the water. Presently a greater fear replaced bold presumption and he began to sink. Crying out. "Lord save me," again he merited rebuke as the Master said: "O, thou of little faith, why didst thou doubt?" When Peter, full of self confidence, dared to say: "Although all shall be scandalized in Thee, yet not I," Jesus replied: "Amen I say to thee, today, even in this night, before the cock crow twice thou shalt deny me thrice."

In spite of all his faults there were in Peter noble qualities. When the disciples were asked by Jesus: "Who do you say that I am?" Peter in a full profession of faith answered: "Thou art Christ, the Son of the living God."



When many of Christ's followers went back and walked no more with Him because they found His promise of the the Bucharist a hard saying, Peter pledged his loyalty. Christ asked: "Will you also go away? And Peter answered: Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life." And the pride which led to Peter's denial of Christ was quickly replaced by humble repentance. When the Lord looked on His apostle after his triple denial, Peter remembered the word of the Lord and going out wept bitterly. After the Resurrection and Ascension of Jesus, and following the coming of the Holy Ghost on the Apostles, Peter put no bounds on his faith, his zeal, his determination to follow closely in his Master's footsteps. In the end he welcomed the same fate that terminated the mortal life of Jesus. Peter too was crucified, but with head downward. How fully true humility has replaced the bold, presumptuous pride of his earlier years. Though he would submit to cricifixion, he deemed himself not worthy to die e exactly as had his Master. Though not born a saint, though he had many failings, he did rise to the heights of sanctity and gives encouragement to

all of us to-day to become saints. Self and self interest are frightful obstacles to sanctity. They were overcome by Peter. They can be overcome by us!

Paul, co-apostle with Peter, was of a different character. As Saul, he had not had the good fortune to be a personal follower of Jesus. In fact he had been antagonistic, if not to Christ personally, at least certainly to His teachings and His disciples. Scripture tells us, "Saul made havoc of the Church, entering in from house to house, and dragging away men and women, committed them to prison." "He breathed out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, and went to the High Priest and asked of him letters to Damascus, to the synagogues, that if he found any men and women of this way, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem." Surely no one would say that Saul was born a saint! Possibly he was honestly convinced that he was doing God a service in striving to preserve all the old laws and customs, but actually he was opposing the teachings and the revelation of Jesus Christ. On his way to Damascus, to carry on his persecution of the followers of Christ, Saul was smitten by God's grace. Struck from his

horse he heard a voice: "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me?" To which Saul replied: "Who art Thou, Lord?... What wilt Thou have me to do?" Enlightened and instructed, thereafter Saul became Paul and he verified the words spoken about him by Christ to Ananias: "This man is to me a vessel of election...I will show him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake." Paul himself has given us a clear picture of some of his sufferings for Christ when he wrote to the Corinthians: "Five times did I receive forty stripes, save one; thrice was I beaten with rods; once I was stoned; thrice I suffered shipwreck; a night and a day I was in the depths of the sea. In journeying often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils from my own nation, in perils from the Gentiles, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils from false brethren; in labor and painfulness, in much watchings, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness."

This recital of his sufferings was made by Paul not proudly but humbly. He was well aware of his own human weakness. As he wrote on another occasion: "I chastize my body and

bring it into subjection lest perhaps, when I have preached to others. I myself should become a castaway." Conscious that pride in God's favors towards him easily could lead to his own undoing, he has not hesitated to record for us: "Lest the greatness of the revelations should exalt me, there was given to me a sting of the flesh, an angel of Satan, to buffet me. For which thing thrice I besought the Lord that it might depart from me. And He said to me: "My grace is sufficient for thee; for power is made perfect in infirmity." And Paul continues: "Gladly therefore will I glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may dwell in me. For which cause I please myself in my infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecution, in distresses for Christ. For when I am weak then I am powerful." Humbly he acknowledges: "I can do all things in Him who strengtheneth me."

Saint Paul was outstanding as an Apostle for many reasons. He journeyed indefatigably over most of the then known world. He preached incessantly for God's honor and glory. He endured all manner of trials if only he might win souls to the truth. He counted not

the cost as he made himself all things to all men, that he might save all. But the real greatness of this Prince of the Apostles is to be found in the qualities of his soul so fully and humbly expressed when he wrote to the Calatians: "God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord, Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified to me and I to the world." "With Christ I am nailed to the cross, and I live, now not I, but Christ liveth in me." He has one only objective in life. He feared no trial or adversity, no physical affliction or spiritual suffering. As he put it: "I am sure that neither death, nor life, ...nor things present, nor things to come, nor nor might, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus, our Lord." And so it is no surprise, when his end was near at hand, that he wrote to his faithful disciple, Timothy: "I am even now ready to be sacrificed, and the time of my dissolution is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. As to the rest, there is laid up for me a crown of justice which the Lord, the just Judge will render to me in that day, and not

only to me, but to them also that love His coming."

Princes of the Apostles, Peter and Paul, star performers in the drama of life, saints to-day in God's heaven! What hope and encouragement they give all of us. Their struggles during life and their glory after death instill confidence in us who, like them, have not been born saints. They have reached the goal destined for them by God. We too can reach that goal of sanctity and eternal happiness. Whether we have complete freedom to roam the stage of the world, or are confined to the imprisoning walls of the shut-in's restricted quarters, Saints Peter and Paul are an example to all of us. Their years of active apostolate teach the busy man how to spend himself for love of God. Their imprisonments for their loyalty to God are an inspiration to those whose activities are restricted, be it by sickness or infirmity. One and all of us, as we play our parts in the drama of life, can win the Oscar of Saint in imitation of these two outstanding stars in the drama of life.

---

ADDITIONAL COPIES  
ARE AVAILABLE FOR \$.10 EACH.

BULK LOTS MAY ALSO BE  
HAD AT THE FOLLOWING RATES:

10 TO 99 COPIES.....\$.05 @  
100 COPIES AND OVER..... .04 @

THE NATIONAL COUNCIL OF CATHOLIC MEN

1312 Massachusetts Avenue, N.W.  
Washington, D. C.

*Presented by*

THE NATIONAL COUNCIL OF CATHOLIC MEN