

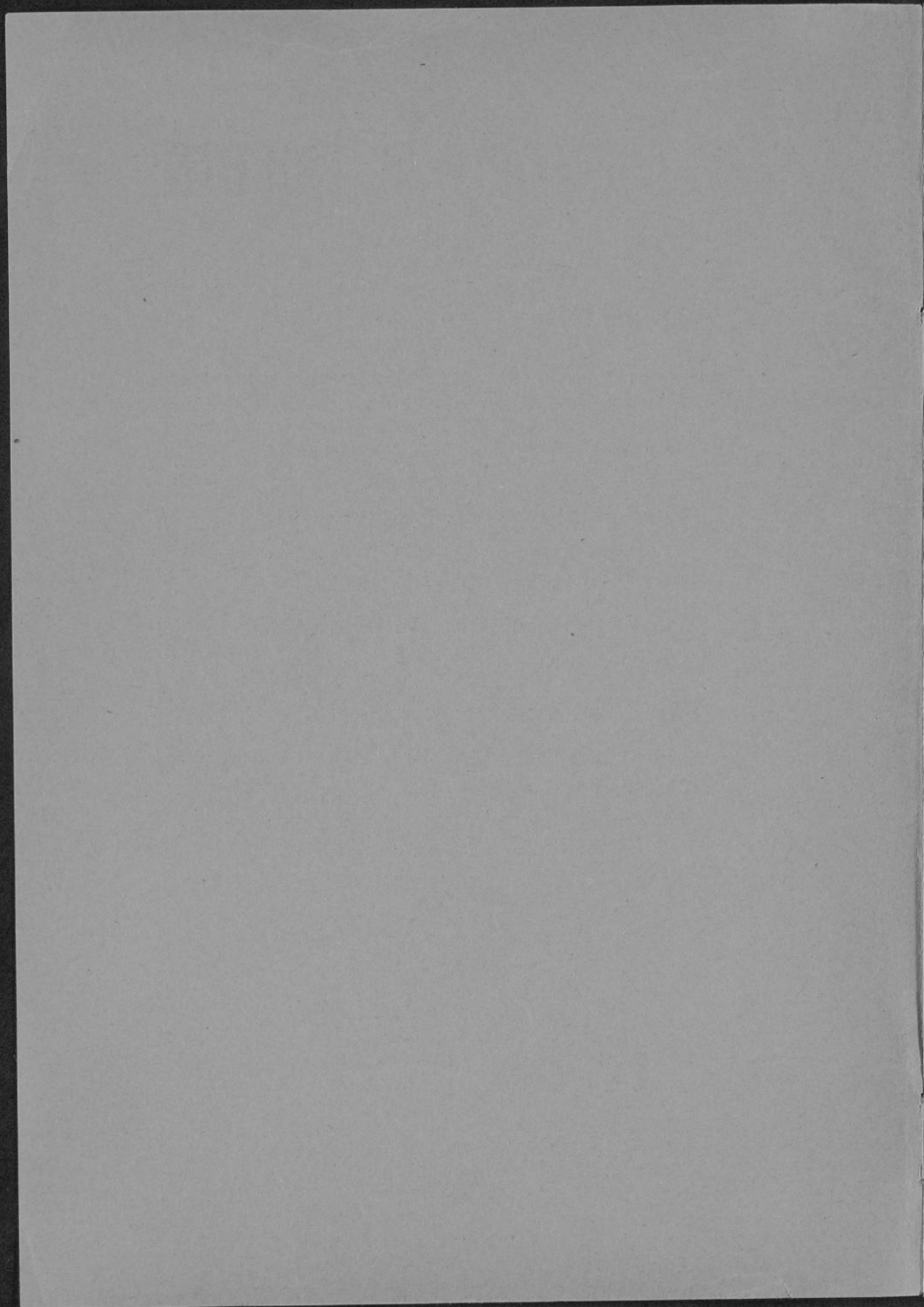
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The Coin of Our Tribute

by

Thomas F. Conlon, O. P.





THE COIN OF OUR TRIBUTE

by

Very Rev. Thomas F. Conlon, O. P.,
National Director of Holy Name Societies.

Five addresses delivered in the Catholic Hour, produced by
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(On Sundays from April 26 to May 24, 1936)

- I. Show Me the Coin of Tribute.
- II. The Tribute of the Will—Faith.
- III. God Pays Tribute—Mother's Day.
- IV. The Tribute of the Heart—Love of God.
- V. The Coin of Our Tribute—Unselfish Service.



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SHOW ME THE COIN OF TRIBUTE

Address delivered on April 26, 1936

In verses seventeen to twenty-one of the twenty-second Chapter of the Gospel of St. Matthew we may read the incident in which the words of the title of this talk were spoken by Our Lord. On that occasion the enemies of Our Lord tried to ensnare Him in His speech. "Is it lawful to give tribute to Caesar, or not?" was the question. Those who asked this question hoped to receive an answer on which they could question the patriotism of Christ as a good Jew and prefer charges of disloyalty against Him.

To say that we live in an age of conflicting loyalties is not merely to utter platitudes. It is to forget that every age is likewise one wherein loyalties, and fundamentally the same loyalties, conflict.

The conflict now raging between the Churches and the totalitarian state is literally a revival of that strife which we call the "era of the Persecutions". The early Christians were persecuted not only as Christians but also as bad citizens. The Romans cared little or nothing about the way a man worshipped God, nor even which god he worshipped, provided that, alongside his ordinary worship there was a determining and controlling worship of the Empire in the person of the Divine Caesar. The great struggle between Church and State during the Middle Ages, which saw the murder of Thomas a Beckett before the altar of his own Cathedral in Canterbury, which saw the Emperor Henry IV of Germany do penance at Canossa, and Rome sacked

by Marshal Bourbon, were but the continuation of that conflict of loyalties. At heart, even the Communist attack on religion arises not only from the denial of God but also from the refusal of Communism to permit anything to function which is not an integral part of the State.

All this strife and bitterness goes to the very root of Christianity. It has its beginnings with the beginnings of the Christian era. From the point of view of purely human history, the fundamental charge which from the beginning stirred up resentment against Our Blessed Lord and caused the plots and manoeuvring which were to bring about His death, was His failure in political conformity. Because the Scriptures so often describe His adversaries as the "Chief Priests" we are inclined to think of the affair as wholly a religious or ecclesiastical quarrel. This is to forget that Judea was a theocracy. Nominally, God alone was king. Hence the High Priest and the Sanhedrin formed not merely the ruling body ecclesiastically but also politically. Less than two hundred years before, the rebellion of the Maccabees emphasized this and an added depth had been given by the bitterness of Roman political domination. This was especially true in the time of Our Blessed Lord.

Despite this Roman domination so obviously unshakeable, there was still a profound confidence amongst those Jews who still believed that the ancient prophecies must be fulfilled, that sooner or later, probably sooner, the old Kingdom of the Jews would be restored. The Messiah it was wrongly believed would set up again this kingdom which would far surpass that of Solomon. Yet here was Jesus

of Nazareth Who claimed to be the Messiah and so far nothing had been done by Him towards the restoration of the kingdom. He was much more interested in what seemed to them a somewhat vague and unworldly "Kingdom of God". Meanwhile the tramp of the Roman soldier echoed through the streets of the Holy City. Clearly Christ was diverting the minds of the people from their patriotic duty. The ruling body decided that Jesus Christ must prove His patriotism as a good Jew or forfeit His power with the people. If, in so doing, He should fall foul of Roman authority, that would concern the ruling clique in the Holy City very little. They felt themselves to be capable of leadership without the aid of Jesus Christ.

This is the background of the events described in verses seventeen to twenty-one of the twenty-second Chapter of the Gospel of St. Matthew. The leaders of the Jews were determined to end the menace of Christ. While it is doubtless true that there were many whose motives were largely selfish, it is true also that there were many whose object was largely patriotic. Perhaps in most cases there were mixed motives. But whatever their motives, their minds were small. They were unwilling to face Christ frankly. He must be destroyed by subterfuge if not by open attack (There is a striking parallel in many places in Europe today where the Church is being attacked indirectly, by the arrest and unfair trial of certain of its leaders on highly technical charges or for the violation of laws which are obviously unjust.)

Thus it was that certain men came to Christ and asked Him: "Is it lawful to give tribute to Caesar

or not?" Now the whole point of the question lies in the word "tribute". There is a real distinction between a tax and a tribute. A tax is a charge levied by the State in return for services rendered by the State, as for example the gasoline tax which the State exacts to help in meeting the costs of the roads which it builds. On the other hand, a tribute is a levy whose basic function is not to meet the cost of administration but rather to compel the admission of sovereignty. Hence, at the time of Our Lord, the Roman Citizen paid taxes but no tribute since he was technically a sovereign even if in practice the Empire had destroyed the old Republic. On the other hand, the Jew not only had to pay taxes for the services which he received from Rome, but he had to pay tribute also as an acknowledgement of his subjection to Rome. It was not the amount of the tribute to which the Jew objected, for it was not exorbitant, but the fact of having to pay it. He who paid tribute was considered the subject of the recipient of the tribute. That is why there are no *tributes* to be paid in the United States where the citizen is sovereign.

The question of the payment of tribute, therefore, reduced itself to this. Can a Jew recognize the authority of Rome? Of course, there is no question here whether it were better for the Jew to be his own master or a subject of the Roman rule, but simply whether a Jew who recognized the overriding claims of God could and should recognize and acknowledge any jurisdiction other than that of God. It is, of course, literally true that to a large extent the technical sovereignty of God over strictly secular Jewish affairs had fallen into the hands of an

ambitious political group. It is also true that there had arisen a political patriotism which was now seeking to destroy Christ. But the question which was asked of Christ was in itself a fair one even if the questioners were seeking an unfair advantage, and it was precisely because Our Blessed Lord realized that the problem was a real one that He answered their question.

Christ's answer was not an evasion. It went right to the heart of the matter. Christ knew men, as well as mankind, and with His divine insight He saw motives and thus He answered men's souls as well as their speech, to their amazement and chagrin. First, He demanded the coin of the tribute and asked whose image and inscription were thereon. They told Him "Caesar's". Now it was precisely this image and inscription of Caesar which gave the coin its real worth. Because of it, the coin had currency throughout the land, just as today in our own land it is the impression of the symbols of the Republic which gives to our coinage the run of the country. In other words "Caesar" was the bond of the social organism, the sum total of individuals constituting the governmental entity.

The whole point of Christ's reply: "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's and to God the things that are God's" is that it recognizes a two-fold man, man the individual and man the member of society. If we may reverently paraphrase the answer of Christ, it would read: "You must fulfill all those obligations which rightly fall upon you as a member of society while at the same time recognizing and fulfilling all those obligations which arise

from your individual existence as the creation of God.”

Now the whole modern difficulty arises from the failure to recognize that man is an individual as well as a member of the body politic. In other words, he is a man first and then a citizen. The modern State is so obsessed with the corporate man that it cannot see the individual. It is the reverse of the old proverb. Many cannot see the trees for the woods. Hence the friction which seems to arise between the Church and the State. The Church insists that apart from the citizen there is also the man, and though she is both willing and eager to insist that the man fulfill his obligations as a citizen, she is equally insistent that the citizen be at liberty to fulfill his obligations as a man.

Now, since the primary characteristic of the individual man is that he is the creation of God and daily dependent on Him for his very being, it follows from the words of Christ that, running parallel with his subordination to the State as a social being, is a subordination to God the Creator which he owes as an individual. It also follows that there is no inherent clash between the two sets of subordination, provided each maintains its respective limits. That such clashes do occur, however, we know. Nearly always this is due to human encroachment upon the field which God has reserved to Himself, namely the domain of morals which are the concern of man the individual and not the social being. It is true that, unfortunately, there have been times wherein the State has been justified in resisting demands put forth nominally in the name of religion but actually for the advantage of individuals abusing a legiti-

mate spiritual authority, but this is much the rarer of the two.

In this series of sermons we shall endeavor to outline the claims which God makes upon the individual man. We shall not ask what tribute he must render to Caesar. We are content here to acknowledge that he must do so. The good citizen gladly performs his civic duty. Frequently he knows this better than his duty to God or performs it more willingly. We shall subsequently endeavor to outline the way he shall "render to God the things that are God's."

THE TRIBUTE OF THE WILL—FAITH

Address delivered on May 3, 1936

One of the strangest anomalies of our day is that it is marked by two thoroughly contradictory attitudes which are strangely combined. We admire the so-called strong individualist in business but beat the tom-toms of public sentiment when the same type of man is praised as a dictator. On the other hand, we encourage the growth of collective effort in business which in the long run must be fatal to the old type of stern and able industrialist. Politically we continue the policy of aimless drifting which can only open the door to the dictator with a policy. In other words, in matters economic, which pertain directly to ourselves, our emotional esteem for successful power is kept in check by a will of our own which regards our own interest. Politically we are often indifferent, almost will-less, and this because we cannot see how politics really affect our intimate lives.

Now, modern religious indifferentism is very similar to this political lack of will. It is too easy to think of a preacher and a political stump speaker as on a par. The appeal is to the emotions and our emotions are jaded. Religion is just a pleasant sensation and we are tired of sensations. We demand to know, and knowing, seek to will.

It is precisely here that the Catholic Church has something vital for the modern man. The most striking feature of many modern conversions to the Church is that these converts have recognized in the Faith something which calls for the whole man.

The Church not only requires a firm submission of the intellect but, what is more vital today, demands that our knowledge be also willed to the service of God.

The will, together with the intellect, is the faculty which most clearly links us to God and in which we are most truly "in the image and likeness of God." It is God *willing* Who is most truly God. It is man *willing* who is most truly man. Man is rightly defined as an animal with a reasonable will. Modern philosophy has recognized this, especially in the field of psychology. The irreligious psychologists are divided roughly into two camps. The first group is laboring to prove that the will of man, real as it is, is not free, but is determined by things external to it. They would have a will that is a slave to things material. The other group would have a will absolutely sovereign, subject to no law and no restraint. The first group says "You *will* this because you *must*". The second group says "There is no *must* in your life except the *must* your own will imposes upon other people."

Both these theories are fatal to any moral sense. The first denies any power of responsibility. If one must re-act to external stimuli one can have no responsibility, and without responsibility there is neither moral right nor wrong. The second group denies that there is anyone or anything to which one can be responsible. Hence the only standard of judgment for any action is that of expediency. The moral breakdown of our generation is due almost entirely to the fact that one or other of these theses is maintained in many of our secular colleges and universities.

The Church, on the other hand, with her teachings of a psychology at once old and new, insists on a twofold truth. As against the determinist psychology she insists that while in many cases the action of our will is conditioned by external stimuli, there remains a residue, and an extensive one, wherein the will is absolutely free and is completely master of its own choice. Against the ruthless Nietzschean school she insists that there is an over-riding power Who is at once the Cause of the will and the One to Whom the will is responsible. Hence the Church treats the will as a thing of responsible dignity free to act but yet required to act in conformity with the over-riding will of God.

The first and major act of the will is this recognition of God as One with the power and right to demand conformity. This is to "render to God the things that are God's". The will comes from God and so must be rendered back to Him, but in the rendering it must be stamped with our own personality. The service which the will is to render is not to be slavish nor dictated by fear. It must proceed freely from a rational creature. That which characterizes the Catholic will towards God is that it is motivated by a recognition not only of the power of God but also of the dignity of man, for such a will perceives clearly that its conformity to God can serve only to make its volition more decided and its object more worthy.

The will operates in two distinct fields, namely in that of belief and that of morals. In the domain of belief it is the will that elicits the act of Faith. The belief of Catholics is based ultimately on Revelation. Hence there comes a time in the exploration

of Catholic Truth when reason alone can go no further. Many of the religious truths which Catholics accept are susceptible of direct rational proof. For example, the educated man does not have to adhere to the truth of existence of God by faith alone since he has the proofs and can thereby adhere to this truth by reason. But there are articles of Catholic teaching to which the reason cannot extend fully. Reason may go far to prove the inherent probability of a doctrine, to establish a lack of conflict within itself, but the final determination to accept the truth must be imposed upon the reason by the will. It is reason, for example, which establishes as historical facts that Christ lived, that He worked miracles, that He died and rose from the dead, that He established a Church to continue His ministry. It is reason which manifests that His claim to be God is confirmed by His Resurrection. It is by reason that we can establish the fact that Jesus Christ left a Revelation, but reason alone cannot compel adhesion to the content of that Revelation insofar as it may transcend reason. It is left for the will to step in and complete the work which reason has been compelled to leave unfinished. It is the will which compels the act of Faith whereby we accept a thing as true despite our inability either to comprehend it fully or to prove it by a syllogism.

Reason can lead a man up to the very threshold of the Church but it can never lead him across it. He must accept the fact of his limitations both of knowledge and of understanding. In other words, he must have a fundamental humility and it is right here that the difficulty arises. Humility can come only from a controlled will yet the will, precisely

because it is an instrument of power, is more apt to promote pride than humility. Hence it often happens that a man may have an intellectual conviction as to the truth of the Catholic religion and yet be unable to enter the Church. He cannot bring his will to submit. He refuses to accept the fact of a mind superior to his own. He will not consent to admit the limitations of his own nature. He thus may know all knowable things but he will not believe. He may speak of belief as unworthy of a scholar and a scientist while his whole life is made possible in reality only by his beliefs. He is willing to accept the word of other men as to the security of his investments and the purity of his food. He will entrust his life to the driver of a bus or an airplane. He will, at times, even trust his mind to the care of a college professor, but he will not trust it to God. This objection to Revelation, especially his distrust or scorn of miracles, arises, though often unconsciously, from the refusal of his will to accept a superior. He would be monarch of all he surveys. Yet the experience of these latter years is beginning to bring disillusionment to thoughtful men. Wars and depressions, strikes and poverty, are undermining his confident assertion of the omnipotence of men. He is beginning to look outside of himself for wisdom and stability. Hence the mounting stream of intellectuals entering the Church. They are becoming daily more convinced of the need of someone to whom they can subject their wills. Their growing sense of dependence demands one upon whom they may depend. This the Church supplies by demanding as a condition of entrance the submission of the will to God. However, it must be noted that

this submission of the will, as it constitutes the essence of the act of faith, can proceed only from the grace of God. The final act, following upon all the intellectual acceptance and the human subordination of the will, involves an elevation of the will. It must be supernatural in its action. This can only come from a free gift of God.

Perhaps the most striking feature of this modern willfulness is in the field of morals. The modern attempt to free the will from any type of subordination is producing lamentable results. The moment God is denied the will of every individual becomes paramount. All is chaos for all are engaged in a deadly struggle to make their own wills effective over the conflicting wills of others. There is no longer a common denominator to which all wills may be reduced and from which may be established a working arrangement whereby one will respects another. Too many modern teachers insist that not to be selfish, not to serve one's own pleasure, not to ignore ruthlessly the wishes of others should they impede our pleasures or desires, is to be weak and the fit victim of stronger souls. And why not, according to their teachings? If my will is not subordinate to any other, if I am the master of my fate and the captain of my soul, I owe it to my self-respect not to permit anyone to hinder me.

It is for this reason that there is so much moral laxity. Deny that the will must submit to restraint and there is no justification for morality, for all law by its very nature is a thing imposed and designed primarily to restrain things within proper limits. But grant that there is a God to whom our wills are subject, grant that this God has made known a

moral code, and immediately the will which recognizes the authority will recognize the code which that authority decrees. It is precisely because the modern world has lost faith that it has lost morals. If there is no God Who has revealed the truth concerning marriage, it becomes difficult to convince people that loose marital ties or extra-marital relations should be avoided.

Thoughtful men the world over are regarding with fright the decay of any fundamental morality. They are realizing that it is only in the recognition of God as Lord and Master that the world can find peace and safety. They are rightly coming to the conclusion that the ills of this generation are due to wills that refuse to submit since they know no Master. Now they know that Christ was not speaking a mere defeatist phrase when He commanded that we should "render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's and to God the things that are God's". They accept it for what it in truth was, the very principle of social existence.

For years now the command of Christ has been ignored. The watchword has been "We have no king, not even Caesar". And the work is all confusion. There remains then no hope for us except to turn back and with our whole wills "render to God the things that are God's".

GOD PAYS TRIBUTE—MOTHER'S DAY

Address delivered on May 10, 1936

Today is Mother's Day. Telegraph wires and telephones are busy and the florist and candy manufacturer sit back and count their gains. One might wonder if, in spite of all the publicity, the sound, and the fury, Mother's Day has any real significance. Yet we know that this morning many a loving son and daughter knelt at the altar and, with a prayer for a beloved mother, received into their hearts the loving Son of the Blessed Mother.

This is as it should be for it is only through that Blessed Mother that motherhood has the significance which it still enjoys today. Though many of our friends and neighbors have lost the Christian Faith they still retain many of the Christian traditions. Though many may decry our love of the Blessed Mother, they share that esteem for motherhood which is the result of the love of the Blessed Mother of God. On the other hand, the drift away from religion has brought about both a contempt and dread of the holy privilege which the greatest of woman-kind was pleased to receive from God Himself.

When God took upon Himself to deliver man, as the Te Deum sings, He humbled Himself to be born of a virgin. In that instant God paid tribute to the dignity of man and the glory of motherhood. He sounded the death-knell of human degradation. No longer was man to be mere property, nor woman the toy and chattel of man. A new dignity was born to man. Since God had thrown in His lot with ours and of His own volition become one with us, man

knew that he had a sublime rank among the creations of God. Since God became as a little babe in the womb of an humble maiden and was nursed at her chaste breast, the pains of motherhood were ennobled into a great privilege. Though she must bring forth in labor and travail yet joy would fill the heart of the proud mother. Though cares and trials were ahead yet there was the consolation that as her own child lay at her breast, so the God-man Himself, weak and helpless as a child, having as it were laid aside His power and majesty, had also lain at the breast of one like to her.

How great is the dignity of man that God should honor it and how gracious the tribute that He has paid to it. "Surely he hath borne our infirmities and carried our sorrows." There can be no tribute greater than a sharing of life and sorrow with a condescension that leaves no trace of patronage. Yet this is what our God has done with us. He was born as we are born in lowliness and weakness. He has lived among us in humility and service. His life came to an end among us in agony and dereliction and He was buried in the poverty of another man's grave. And for all this He has claimed no credit. He has regarded our life as not unworthy of the greatness of God. Truly He has greatly condescended to us but we have not thereby lost any of our dignity. Rather, He has but emphasized it. He has, indeed, stooped down to us but it is that we may be lifted up.

In our day, alas, we are losing this sense of dignity. We may boast that we have abolished all those degrading class distinctions which allegedly marred the past. But there is reason to fear that we have

destroyed the dignity of place and office without raising the dignity of the common man. We have levelled all down and raised none up. It is useless to abolish kings only to make all men slaves.

Now the heart of the dignity of man is that he transcends the animal world about him, that he differs from it not merely in degree but in kind. This the modern world is forgetting. It is so interested in things material and measurable that it has tended to ignore that there exists a spiritual nature in man which cannot be weighed humanly in any balance nor measured under any microscope. The astronomer has looked out so far into the universe that compared with its immeasurable extent man looks puny and almost insignificant. Yet there is something more than mere size. A single speck of radium is worth more than a whole mountain of shale. The electrician who has harnessed Niagara's powerful flood may smile at the tiny powers of the human body. Yet Niagara would flow uselessly by were it not for the powers of the human mind. It is all a question of values and man cannot be weighed in material scales.

We like to think of the modernity of our ideals. Reading the current literature one might think that this materialistic view of things is the peculiar characteristic of our age. It is not. These things move in cycles. We have simply swung full circle and are back again where the world was in the time of Christ. It is true that we know many more material facts than we did then but our philosophy of values does not greatly differ. The ruthlessness of big business can be duplicated in the commercial history of Phoenicia, Egypt, and the ancient Roman

Empire. The satires of Juvenal form a familiar picture to us in the view they display of the callous ridding of unprofitable labor. The average Roman was thoroughly aware of the philosophy of pleasure. He had cast away all moral restraints. He could argue as learnedly as any modern professor on the importance of giving full play to all one's instincts. Free love and divorce were common-places of pagan life two thousand years ago. The only difference between that age and ours was that, lacking the inhibitions of a contrary culture of two thousand years duration, it was a franker paganism. Our modern pagans are still partly under the spell of Christian habits.

It was in protest against all this that God became man. When He became a man a resounding blow was struck for the dignity of manhood. God Himself was witness how great a thing is man. This the Church has realized and for this she has fought. First she destroyed slavery in the Roman Empire and through a long period labored to elevate the status of the former slave. Never has she recognized in slavery a bar to human worth. Today she also will not permit that poverty or lowliness be thought reasons for contempt. She has seen the poor and lowly raised to pride of place amongst her. The poor and the lowly have been raised to rule over her and she has rejoiced thereat.

But perhaps her greatest triumph is the success of her age-long fight for man's recognition of the dignity of woman. Before the Incarnation woman-kind was in a pitiable condition. While it is true that in certain primitive civilizations mothers had a position of honor, it was never because of their sex

as such but simply because they were the mothers of the warriors of the tribe. Even under these circumstances they were a race apart. But throughout the greater part of the ancient world, as in most pagan lands, woman was of little or no dignity. She was the toy of her lord, the minister to his pleasures, the servant of his desires. Often she was completely in his power. Life and death were at his pleasure. The mistress was more honored than the wife. Greek history tells much of the influence in politics of the courtesan but the wife is almost unmentioned.

Chastity in a man was despised. While the adulterous wife was in danger of death, the chaste wife might be required to entertain in her own house the partners of her husband's excesses. So far, indeed, had the contempt for women gone among the Greeks and Romans alike, that unnatural vice was considered more honorable than the chaste relations of husband and wife.

Into this age of despised womanhood descended the Second Person of the Holy Trinity and took flesh of a pure virgin. There could be no greater protest.

God Himself publicly bore testimony that there was in woman that which demanded honor and respect. The days of her contempt and slavery were at an end. She whom God chose to honor must be esteemed of men. How true it is, as Mary herself sang: "From henceforth all generations shall call me blessed." And most of all must the women of this world call her blessed for through her they have a new office, a new rank, and a new honor.

Yet God knew that man would not easily rid himself of his false notions of power and right. It is

not easy to recognize as an equal one who has been the subject of whim and caprice. Hence Our Blessed Lord took another and decisive step. He placed man and wife on equal terms. He imposed the obligation of equal sharing of the married life. This institution of sacramental marriage is absolutely revolutionary. It demands partnership without subjection and in that very act makes love reign where once the only lord was lust.

Today we need to ponder on the action of God. We must make not only our acts but our every thought conform with His. We must make God's valuation the basis of our own philosophy of values. As far as the worth of man and the things of man are concerned this valuation is made clear by the Incarnation.

The world has other values. It speaks in terms of pleasure and profit. It knows no such thing as inherent dignity. To it a man is either a being for the enjoyment of life or a tool for the achievement of power and profit; the relation of the two sexes is again being reduced to fleeting moments of pleasure; thanks to the prevalence of divorce, lasting partnerships are food for laughter; chastity is for fools. Yet this is modern liberty.

On the contrary, it is part of the drift back to slavery. Extreme industrialism is forging the fetters of an economic slavery while the bonds of political servitude are being riveted into place by Communist and totalitarian alike. If to this we add the mental slavery which comes from ignoring the essential dignity of man as God has made him we are wholly lost. Our bonds were broken once by the power of the Incarnation. God has made us free.

indeed, with the freedom of His own sons, but our freedom can last only as long as our sonship. If we cast this away we shall feel the weight of our chains and with them the despair of knowing that there is no day of Jubilee, no emancipation for us. We shall have riveted on our own bonds and cast away the key. There will be no other Incarnation. God has acted on our own behalf. If we reject Him now He will not act again.

Mother's Day is the day of the Christian mother, the mother made possible by Christ's own Sonship. It may last as long as there are Christian mothers but if the day should ever come when the sneers and contempt now slyly poured upon that holy office shall rise into a torrent sweeping before them the holiness of motherhood gained through Christ's own mother, with that holiness will pass all honor and dignity not merely of motherhood but of womanhood itself.

It is only through the Incarnation of Jesus Christ that man, too, regained his dignity. To attack that is to attack all that is best in human nature. If God has not restored the fallen rank of man, nor daily renews it, then there is no guarantee that it shall persevere but rather warrant enough that the dark night of pagan slavery and despair are again settling down upon us when there shall be no light but only the shadows of an endless living tomb.

But Christ lives forever.

THE TRIBUTE OF THE HEART— LOVE OF GOD

Address delivered on May 17, 1936

One of the most misused words in all our language is one that is frequently on every tongue. It is the simple word "love", yet it has a very exact meaning. We often say "I love this" when we mean "I like it". Or "This is lovely" when we mean that it pleases us. This is completely to miss the true meaning of the word. Strictly speaking there is no really emotional characteristic to love. The emotion which we call love should truly be called affection. Of course, where there is love there is also affection, but the two are not the same. Affection springs from the emotions and can, therefore, easily change whereas true love is rooted in the will. The true definition of love is that it is a firm habit of *willing* good to some one. Note that the word is not wishing, that is to say, not a mere goodnatured emotion, but *willing* and that implies a firm habit of the mind and will.

This is of the greatest importance. We truly say that God loves us. But God is a pure spirit and, therefore, is not subject to the play of emotions which so often affect us. But God is Mind and God is Will. Therefore, He can love and is Love itself. It is well worth considering carefully, that the passage of Scripture which most emphasizes the love of God for us shows that love producing a definite result. God loved us. That is to say, He willed us a positive good. The Scriptures say that "God so loved the world as to give his only begotten Son."

There is in God no mere wishfulness, nothing of that dreamy emotional desire that something good might happen which the world too often calls love, but a will set towards us so that from that will we might profit. Thus it is for God to love and this is the only love that can mean anything.

This kind of love is far from that sensuality which a careless world has so called and which the truth would rather designate as lust. This so called "love" is a mere satisfaction of selfish desires. At its very best it can only bestow upon its object a fleeting pleasure. It has not and cannot have the underlying conviction that the good of another may have to be purchased by the casting away of personal pleasure or personal satisfaction. The love that God had for man led to the gibbet of the Cross, for it was in the Cross that the good of man lay. This the world forgets. It talks of fleeting love, of seizing love's golden hour, and in so doing talks arrant nonsense. Since true love seeks a good for the object loved, the greater the love the more permanent will be the good which love desires for its beloved. Thus the infinite love of God willed for us an infinite good, namely eternal life.

It is supposed to be an axiom that love begets love. Unfortunately, this is not always true. The record of ingratitude is convincing proof that there are exceptions. Still man, on the whole, has a real sense of justice. He comprehends that every act of love demands a counter act so that the scales shall hang evenly. Thus it happens with most people that mutual love slowly but definitely deepens. Each act provokes a return from the recipient and this, on its part, elicits its own response and so there de-

velops a sort of loving strife. On the other hand, should the acts of love grow less frequent and the memory more dim, love wastes away.

Thus it is with our reaction to the love of God. It, too, demands a return and that return must be commensurate with itself as far as is possible. God's love for man and man's love for God should be as inseparable as the two sides of a medal. Yet it is a sad matter of daily experience that this is not so. We have no reason to doubt the love of God for man but it is evident that the love of man for God is not in fair proportion.

But it is essential again to remember in what love consists. We say emphatically that it is no mere emotion. Equally, it is not the vague repetition of devotional prayers or acts of love. Simply loudly to proclaim one's love of God is not to possess it. To love God is to will good to God.

It may be asked how a man can will good to God. There is nothing which God can lack. There is nothing which man can actually give to God which He does not possess. How, then, can man love God? In what does our love of God really consist?

Our love of God falls into two categories, that is the love of God in Himself and the love of God in His creatures. It is true that we can will no good thing for God which He has not in Himself and it is equally certain that He possesses everything within Himself which makes for happiness. There is, however, one thing which is more or less external and is, therefore, something which we can actually bestow upon God. It is the means of displaying our love towards God Himself.

That which we should give to God is honor and respect. Hence the love of God is synonymous with a great zeal for the honor of God which is made manifest not merely by words or feelings but by acts. We must beware lest God say of us, as He once did of the Chosen people: "This people honoureth me with their lips: but their heart is far from me."

Now honor is due to God for two reasons. Firstly, because of His own excelling nature. He is Lord and Master of all, the Creator and the Sustainer of all being. He is Himself the cause of every good in the world and hence of every love that exists. His whole Being demands our honor and that at every moment of the day, since it is in such every moment that we are kept in being by Him. But most of all He must have the honor and respect that is due Him from our gratitude for spiritual life, health, and prosperity.

The whole world of created things honors God for being and for life and this honor we, too, owe as creatures of God. But we are not as the rest of created things. For us there is a dignity and an end that far transcends the rest. As Saint Thomas teaches, the dignity of man is such that it far transcends the whole of material creation. For God has created us in His own image and likeness. He has elevated us to a supernatural plane and when, by the Fall of Adam, we lost the rights that we had in that supernature, He restored us by the Sacred Passion and continues the process of restoration through the Sacraments.

The honor which the material world offers to God is its complete conformity to the purposes for which it was brought into being. So with us. The

honor due to God, that is to say the means whereby we primarily manifest our love of God, is rendered by conforming our lives to those lofty ideals which God had in mind when He created us. But there is this essential difference between our conformity and that of the rest of the created world. The very nature of created things irresistibly impels them to the fulfillment of this duty of honor. It is not so with us. We are not subject to the same compulsion, for our wills are free. This very fact, by increasing the voluntariness of the honor which we give, likewise intensifies its dignity.

The love of God, which is the tribute of the grateful heart, then, as far as God is directly concerned, is manifested and can only be manifested by a deeply rooted interior conformity of our life with that of Christ Who is at once the model and the norm of the supernatural life of man.

Yet, there is a second and more apparent way of loving God though it is of a lesser dignity. God can be honored not only in Himself but in the world around us. The great characteristic of the Christian Faith is that it teaches the existence of the Mystical Body of Christ. This is a doctrine which the ancient world, with its intense individualism, could never grasp. The pagan could not understand Saint Paul when he spoke of Christ's Body which is the Church whereof we are all members and of which Christ was the Head. The pagan could visualize the relation of the individual soul with Deity, but a sort of collective soul was beyond him. Hence, he had no charity for the poor but only philanthropy. He could not give alms in the name of God but only in the name of man. But Christ

bids us give a cup of cold water in His Name and it shall be as if done to Him. The story of the early Church is full of collective acts of charity but dominating the charity is the conviction that what was done for the brethren was done for Christ. Thus Christian charity is one, and the most evident, way of loving God. Truly does Saint John say "Let us therefore love God, because God first hath loved us. If any man say, I love God, and hateth his brother; he is a liar. For he that loveth not his brother, whom he seeth, how can he love God, whom he seeth not? And this commandment we have from God, that he, who loveth God, love also his brother."

Yet the world is so often a loveless place. So many of us neither love God in Himself by conforming our lives to that of Christ nor do we love Him in the brethren against whom we have selfishly hardened our hearts. We will not render to God the tribute of our hearts and yet our hearts are God's and must be rendered to Him as Christ commands.

Love has grown dim in our hearts because, as the Psalmist says, we have not thought about God in our hearts and they are far from Him. We have allowed the world to engross us. The memory of God's daily protection is slighted as we live to ourselves alone. The recollection of the Sacred Passion has grown dim as we have turned our thoughts to other things. Though God remembers us in every moment of our life we have thrust Him from us and He is forgotten.

This must not be. God has opened His heart of love to us but He will not suffer that He be always slighted. He will not close that Heart of His against

us but we may close it ourself. There is no faith that God can accept without love.

Saint John has summed all this up when he says: "Behold what manner of charity the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called, and should be the sons of God. . . In this we have known the charity of God, because he hath laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. He that hath the substance of this world, and shall see his brother in need, and shall shut up his bowels from him: how doth the charity of God abide in him? My little children, let us not love in word, nor in tongue, but in deed, and in truth."

THE COIN OF OUR TRIBUTE— UNSELFISH SERVICE

Address delivered on May 24, 1936

Perhaps the greatest difficulty about Christianity today is that it is not merely a philosophy but a code of morality. The fundamental test of the Christian life is obedience to the dictates of Christ. Following Luther the world learned to separate intellectual convictions from moral acts. The folly of this has been realized but the dangerous habits formed under its influence have not been wholly remedied. The world is still prepared to admire and honor Christ but it is not willing to imitate Him. Yet, as we have previously pointed out, it is this very imitation of Christ which is required if we are to render to God the things that are God's.

Now this command of God is explicit and from it there is no appeal. We are not asked or invited to render to God that which is His own, but commanded by One Whose commands can suffer no contradiction or delay. We are bound to give God His Own. But "there's the rub". To give Him His Own is to give Him everything we are and have. That which we are or have comes from Him either as the immediate Author, as in the case of our souls, or as the First Cause from Whom all being takes its origin. In a word, everything which is falls into one of two classes. It is either that Which God is or that which God owns.

In spite of this men will act as if they were the lords of creation. They strut upon the narrow boards of the stage of life as if all things had been

placed under their feet, nor was there any above their heads. To each, in his own mind, the world owes tribute, for round him it revolves. Great is man, they say, and the greatest of men am I. And even when the stern logic of facts compels an individual to submit, at least in part, to some overlord, he becomes all the more exacting with those over whom he exercises his little sway. Yet, "He that dwelleth in heaven shall laugh at them: and the Lord shall deride them."

If then it is true, as it is, that God is Lord of all and man at most the steward who must give an account of his stewardship, it is well that man should acknowledge the fact and adjust his life to the conditions which this imposes. If God is the Lord of all and we are commanded to render to Him that which is His Own, we must adapt our whole life to a position of subordination. We must take ourselves from the center of our own existence where we do not belong and place God there where He has the sole right to be. If we are not masters we must be servants. If there is a will higher than ours it is that will and not our own which must govern our every activity.

Nor is there any degradation in this. God is more generous than exacting and He has, therefore, adorned our service with His own perfect freedom. Servants we may be, slaves He will not let us be. The man of true worth and dignity has never felt that either was diminished by his acknowledging the greater dignity of another. Rather he has recognized that all orders of dignity stand and fall together. It is only when the greater dignity is respected that the lesser continues to be. Thus the wise man knows that once the world passes over the

dignity due to God, that of man is also headed for extinction. He honors God, not only because God is entitled to honor, but that his own honor may be safeguarded. In his relations with God, man acts, not as if he were the equal of God, nor yet as a slave, but as a being who participates to some degree in that dignity which God, in Whom is vested all dignity, enjoys, and as a son with an understanding Father.

This is the true way for man to act towards God. When the Creator gave to man the privilege of participation in His Own powers of willing and reasoning, man was raised above the status of a slave though he still remains subject to God. God has further manifested His respect for the free dignity of man in that He will not even compel his salvation but leaves him free choice.

All this demands that the life of man be in ordered conformity to the plan of God; but it is to be a voluntary conformity. Truly God does not compel us to conform but He does command that we do so and in the commanding makes it possible for our free compliance to win His approval and reward.

Now, the essence of conformity to God's plan of life for us is to be found by examining the life of the perfect exemplar of perfect manhood. Time and time again Our Blessed Lord, the perfect man, tells of the subordination of His human will to that of His Father. He insists repeatedly that He does not His Own will but that of the Father Who sent Him, that the words which he utters are not His own but those of the Father, that all things which pertain to Him have been decreed by the Father and to

that decree He gladly submits. Nor will anyone deny the essential manliness or the dignity of Christ. No one can accuse Him of slavish fear. None will question His firmness of will.

To render to God, then, the things that are God's, is in the last analysis frankly to admit that God is the Lord of our being and that to Him our whole being must tend. It is, we repeat, to take ourselves out of the center of our own hearts and put God there as the guiding and controlling force. Nothing less will do, for anything less is to hold back from God part of that which is His own. Briefly, it is to serve God to the complete exclusion of self. Yet, self will gain more from so doing than from insisting upon itself. Our self can only reach its complete perfection by conforming to that for which it was made and the perfection of self is the perfect service of God.

Of course, the world will not agree. The world is full of talk of self-realization. The world knows only the way to wars and confusions both without and within. Why, then, should we heed the world in its folly and turn away from God in His Wisdom? So to act would be to manifest not our independence but our wilfulness. The wise man does not readily challenge an authority greater than his own nor a power which he cannot rival. He respects both and in so doing wins respect for his own powers and dignity. Such is the wise man face to face with God.

My life, then, is to be lived subject always to the over-riding power of God. I am to seek in all things His will for me. I am to find in His revelation the guide of my life, the rule of my intellect and the standard of my conduct. I am to go out of myself

to discover the rightness of my principles and actions. I am to pass beyond the mere service of self and proceed to the nobler service of God and of the children of God.

The world prates loudly of the brotherhood of man and wonders why it does not come to pass. But the world has denied a common Father in God and thus denied the possibility of brotherhood. The world seeks for common ground between men of varying interests and ideals and wonders that it cannot be found. Yet the world has denied God in Whom alone may all minds meet and in Whose supreme interests alone can individual interests be harmonized. Peace conference may follow peace conference but there is peace only in the Cross and the world has spurned the Cross. Peace treaty after peace treaty is signed only to be broken and the world wonders why there is no faith kept by nations. Yet the world will not accept the word of God in Whom alone is perfect honor. In the industrial field are strife and contention but the world will not hear that "The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof". Capital and labor alike talk of "mine and thine" and never of God's. The world had had its way and it has brought us to confusion and the shadow of death. Can there be greater proof that the way of the world is not the true way? Why, then, will we continue to follow after it? Let us, rather, turn to the way of God.

Yet, this way of God is not an easy one. Our sins have twisted our natures. We have become proud and it is not easy to submit. We have pampered self, and self will not easily yield to the good of another. We have become addicted to pleasure

and cannot gladly submit to the hard discipline of the Holy Cross. We are like men of sensuality who are suddenly finding that our soft bodies cannot stand the strain of life and are yet unwilling to undergo the rigors of a stern training. Yet, these things must be. We have followed the wrong road too long to make it easy to retrace our steps; but the wrong road can only lead to a wrong destination and the right road must be regained and followed no matter the cost.

Yet what is this cost compared with the reward? Even were there not an eternal prize after struggle, there would still remain the not to be despised consolation, even in this life, that under the wise guidance of all-knowing God, we are truly leading that more abundant life wherein every faculty of mind and body is enjoying the fulfillment of its true nature. Thus the command of Christ to render to God those things which are His Own is in the truest sense of the word a command to be truly ourselves. The world bids us fulfill our being but only God can show us how that fulfillment can be achieved. The world would have us be self-reliant but only through God can we learn our own true strength. The cry of this world for self-realization can be answered only when self is realized in God where alone are all things real.

“Render to God the things that are God’s” is not only God’s demand that we recognize and respect Him but even more truly His pledge that by so doing we shall reach unto the stature of the sons of God—for we are no longer servants in His eyes but friends, friends and sons and thereby co-heirs with Christ of the Kingdom of God.

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