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The Continuation.

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THE CONTINUATION OF THE HOLY GOSPEL



THE HOUR OF FAITH

RT. REV. MSGR. JOHN J. REILLY



THE CONTINUATION OF THE HOLY GOSPEL

The Continuation Of The Holy Gospel

A series of Sunday morning talks given in 1946 on "The Hour of Faith", a coast-to-coast religious broadcast produced by the National Council of Catholic Men in cooperation with the American Broadcasting Company.

BY

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THAT DANGEROUS OUR FATHER

Talk given on November 3, 1946

On very rare occasions in His life on earth did our Blessed Lord foresake His customary serenity of manner, and what is passing strange is that the significance of these rare outbreaks seems lost on many whose lives in other ways show the influence of Our Lord. While never for a moment condoning evil, it is interesting to note that Christ was never violent when He came in contact with the sins that most of us make efforts to avoid.

In the presence of the dying thief, whose sin had been injustice. Our Lord was at His best as He promptly offered pardon, quickly forgiving him and promising an immediate reward for penitence. Whenever face to face with sins that represented the weakness of the flesh, while not condoning them, again we always see the forgiving side of Christ. But just as soon as hardness of the heart, or unforgiveness, or lack of love was mentioned, Our Blessed Lord was vehement in His denunciation and spoke of torture, the judgment, the council, and hellfire.

Christ seemed to see what others never saw, and isn't it the truth right now we do not always see the wrong some people do, some people whose hearts are hard, for hardening of the heart is always subtle, so subtle some have never learned their hearts are hard. They are saints in everything but this. Unfortunately this is the one thing incompatible with sanctity. It is the last discovery some holy people ever make. It is the last feature of their character they ever try to liquidate. They are most respectable but unforgiving.

What a difference there would be in the international scene if the Gospel were given more consideration, and by forgiveness we do not mean appeasement. The peace is being thwarted because so many hearts are hard, and nations have not learned to forgive others from their hearts. We, ourselves, may not be leaders in the international field, but we should not be mystified by failure, and at least the atmosphere that we create should

not be contaminated by the wrong Our Blessed Lord condemned so vehemently.

Forgiving others from our hearts, for wrongs actual or imaginary, is not a sign of weakness in our make-up. On the contrary, forgiveness is a sign of strength. In the first place we forgive because we yield to a stronger personality. We are yielding to the will of Christ and this can never be a sign of weakness-rather it is a sign we are in complete control of all our faculties, and we say "yes" for a higher reason when all the instincts in us tell us to say, "I'll nurse my grudge in private."

We should forgive all others from our hearts, not alone because Our Blessed Lord has recommended this, but because of the truth of two propositions. Each has his own pathway to God and others have a pathway too. I can find no one with whom I am in complete accord, therefore I can find no way to God other than through my own being. Each one of you has a grace which you alone augment -each one of you has a destiny with God. Others help you only indirectly. No one has what God has given me, no one has my gifts, no one has my graces. In a certain sense I am alone with respect to God, and for this my prayers, my thanksgiving, must be my very own.

At the same time I must remind myself that I am making a definite contribution to my God: something He can get from no one else but me. There may be times when in all truthfulness we ask ourselves what in the world does God want from me that He can get from nobody else? Well, He wants what I alone can give, and no one but myself can make this contribution. Remember we are people of importance in the eyes of God, however unimportant we are in the eyes of men.

Now just as soon as we have convinced ourselves of this attractive truth—that I am unique and that I am a person of importance in the eyes of Godthe simple truth will force us to admit that the same is true of others. In the eyes of God, and in His grand design, our beloved America is important, else why would He have blessed us so? But the smallest nation of the world today, even though a satellite through no fault of its own, is important also in the eyes of God. Others are important, others are unique. Just as my hereditary tendencies, my upbringing, my mixture of vices and virtues, my ambitions, my hopes, my past, my present and my future, are all peculiar to myself, so others have their tendencies, their temperaments and their tempers. These others are looking at the world through their own eyes as we do. Is it any wonder they see things in a different light? The wonder is we have so much in common.

We admire the variety these autumnal days bring forth in nature. We do not love the colors less because they are so different. Do you think God's hands were tied when He gave life to human beings, and gives them now variety in their autumnal years? There should be an honest difference of opinion and there should be a clash of judgments. This is all God's plan. and if God in His wisdom brought this about how can this variety be a basis for narrowness of heart? We should not be too surprised that people differ from us, for God has said He called each one of us from all eternity: that He has even numbered the hairs on our head. Each one of us is a separate stone in the vast edifice God is

erecting to His own glory out of the sons of men.

Nations too in the eyes of God make up a family - nations should not pull one another down. As each one of us has our path to God, and as each one has the right to pursue his way, it can hardly be denied that others have this too. They too have rights and privileges, and since we are so different we should truly be amazed when we do find some who faithfully resemble us. Regardless of the estimate. true or false, we have of self, we should admit this world would be a dreary place if everybody in the world was just like me.

We must be tolerant if we are to avoid the condemnation measured out to the unjust debtor of the Gospel. When we discover unforgiving attitude an others it appears quite childish. and yet there is a tendency even on the part of those, otherwise above reproach, to employ two sets of rules, the one for self and the other for someone else. The sooner these have been abandoned or they have become the same, the sooner we approach the Christian ideal. God. I suppose, is disappointed the way the nations fail to do this, but surely we can spare Him

further disappointment by personally striving for this ideal. We all do this professionally with our lips. We are forever asking to be forgiven our trespasses as we forgive those who have trespassed against us, but we should be making some attempt to do this with our hearts, for God may take us at our word and thus the "Our Father" can become a dangerous prayer.

If the way that we forgive the trespassing of others is to be the standard by which we shall be forgiven, we had better make that standard high, for there is a hook-up between the treatment

we show others and the treatment we are asking for ourselves. There may be no connection between the treatment you show others and the treatment they show you, but theirs is not the final word. Theirs is not the final treatment and vou would not be what you are, you would not be a lover of Our Lord, if the temporary satisfied you, if a make-shift were enough. It is not what men may think, it is not what men may do right now. It is what our Heavenly Father may think, and say, and do for all eternity, and we know what this will be if we forgive not all men from our hearts.

NOVEMBER LEAVES

Talk given on November 10, 1946

It is with all the tender feeling any mother would have for her children that the Church bids us at this time of the year to be mindful of our dead. The very season has a tendency to make us reminisce, for November leaves remind us of the dead and that leaves are not the only things which die. Our thoughts go back in memory these days to those who in the flesh and blood once walked along with us. God gave us all a memory that we might have roses in December, but the memory of men is very short-lived. and man has need every now and then of his memory being stimulated. The mind must be turned from the present to contemplate the past, lest obligations that are surely ours be unfulfilled. It is a strange thing that the mind of man that has the gift of looking backward with memory, and the gift of looking forward with faith, has to be torn from gazing , at the present. The proof that most men stare at the present. and exclude all else, is that so many live just for today. They measure all things by the pres-

ent. They never play the searchlight of experience or the searchlight of eternity on what they do today. They never learn from past mistakes. With faith they never eye the future, and this accounts for the sighs instead of the smiles, the drawn looks instead of the dancing eyes, the wrinkled brow instead of the merry laughter.

Religion urges us to exercise all our powers. Keep your eye on the things of the present she advises, but keep your head upturned toward the stars and what eternity may have in store for you. In November she asks us especially to exercise the faculty of memory, not in any morbid way, but, rather, to awaken within ourselves the and figures and shapes the faces of those who have passed awav.

The doctrine of the Church is clearcut as to what happens after death. There are only three ways anything created can be destroyed, and the immortal soul has been created by God. A created object can be destroyed by the one who created it. It

can be destroyed by its opposite, as heat will destroy cold, or it can be destroyed when that in which it resides is destroyed, as your eyesight is destroyed when your eye has been removed. Now God would not destroy a soul, for destruction is a waste and God never wastes a thing. What would be the purpose of destroying a soul that really loved Him?

The immortal soul cannot be destroyed by any opposite for the immortal soul has no opposite. The immortal soul cannot be destroyed by the destruction of its residence, for the immortal soul has no residence—the human body is not the residence—the human body is kept alive by the soul's presence.

It is not so much a question here today as whether souls exist after death, but rather what about their plight. The soul must make satisfaction and in this matter we are not the judge. We love our mothers and our dear ones but this does not make us their judges. Their judge is God, a Judge less biased, but much more merciful, a Judge Whose perfection demands that He be just and exercise the virtue of justice,

God being not merely just, God being justice itself.

Give a thought these November days to the passing of some loved one. The tears we shed at the grave come very easily but there are no tears quite so empty. You hate the very sod that hides your loved one from your sight, but the earth has never done what you perhaps have done - grown separated from the memory of the one you loved. The grass comes out each year, an emerald green, to tell the world of a loving personality beneath, but as the years go by is there anything that happens in your life that signifies your loved one gets a thought? The blades of grass in our cemeteries salute your dead each year, and you, who once thought the grass so cruel for hiding them, are more forgetful than the stone that crowns the family-plot.

November gives us all a chance to make up for our forgetfulness. The funerals of loved ones often stimulate our memories. We think then of the flowers we failed to send in life, of the praise we never offered. The past comes up and slaps us in the face. The dearest one whom God has given us has gone

and we forgot to tell her that we loved her.

Purgatory gives all us second chance. It gives us all an opportunity to break down the barriers of death, to convert unspoken words into prayunburned incense sacrifice, unoffered flowers into alms, acts undone into gestures of remembrance. These souls so dear to us have fallen on the battlefields of life. They have no strength to bind their wounds, to heal their scars, and yet by our daily actions we can mint the gold that will purchase for them their redemption.

The wreaths you placed upon their graves, your head bowed down in grief, your tight-lipped silence at the time, all these are hollow things unless this silence is exchanged for frequent prayers, the bowed head for the bended knee, the wreaths exchanged for sacrifice and remembrance. Headstones tell the world your mother died, but headstones have no hearts. It is only a loving heart that helps a loved one after death.

The dead need us! We, ourselves, need them. Ours will one day be the lot of these, and it is wise to put death in our plan of life. We should not try to live

as if a stone will never mark the spot where we are lying. A stone will one day tell the world that we, too, one day were born and later died. We need the dead to remind us that leaves and men are not the only things which die. That virtue, love and loftiness can die, and these before the body yields to death. It is that living death that enters life when we walk in ways removed from God Who is eternal Life. We need the dead to remind us of the hopes they held for us. Is there anyone who is waiting for you out beyond all this? Is there anyone who has his eye upon you? Is there anyone who placed his hopes in you? Think of these souls today and pray for them, and tomorrow, well tomorrow try to be again all that the ones who ever loved you hoped that you would always be.

November leaves and the Church's calendar remind us of the dead. The graveyards of the world have never been so filled with death, violent and unexpected. In a spirit of remembrance be mindful of your dead and mindful of those countless dead slain for us on the battlefield of war. It is our Christian and patriotic duty to remember

our heroic dead whose blood, like that of the early Martyrs has become a seed of Christianity. For these and all the nameless dead of the last war Christ shed His precious blood. These too should feel the influence of your rosaries. It should not be above the strength of any one of you, these melancholy days to drop down on your knees in chapel, church or home and ask God's tender mercy on the dead.

Gone forever is the feel of their warm handclasp. Lost from our view is the benediction of their glad smile, but they remain, these dead, under the vigilant eve of their Creator. They may need us now more than they ever did. To Christ and His Blessed Mother should go our thoughts for them these days, for Jesus and Mary love them too. Recommend your dead to Their mercy and Their love. Pray that they may have eternal rest and peace. Grant to these, O Lord, Thy peace. They are not dead, they sleep. "May their souls and all the souls of the faithful departed, through the mercy of God, rest in peace."

DEAR SCARRED HANDS

Talk given on November 17, 1946

That was a very human gesture on the part of Our Blessed Lord when, according to the Holy Scripture, He took the Ruler's daughter by the hand and the maiden was restored to life—that is, if anything about a miracle can be called human. They were laughing at Our Lord before the miracle was worked: they were laughing Him to scorn. From a human point of view the stage might not seem to have been fitting. Our Blessed Lord might have saved His power for a bigger stage when men were scornful too. might have saved His power for the Cross when men asked Him to come down. It was not scorn that brought about the raising of the Ruler's daughter; somehow or other tears have more effect on Christ than smiles or scorn. The Ruler had appealed to Christ, he had appealed to Christ to demonstrate the power in His hands. He looked up through his tears to Christ, and Christ restored his daughter. It is very often through our tears that the Dear Scarred Hands of Christ go into action.

At any rate a miracle was worked through tears. Tears had triumphed over scorn, and all seemed visibly impressed. Yet in this thrilling moment of another miracle of Christ we must not blind ourselves to the human touch employed. It was a big day in the Ruler's household-the dead had been restored to life. It was a big day in that neighborhood. Scripture tells us it made news in all that country, but there is more here than the working of a miracle. The miracle was incidental. The great truth is that Christ was showing interest and concern in the ordinary lives of ordinary people and this should make us hopeful that our own problems may be a matter of concern to Christ. This is the aspect of the Gospel story that should strike us all. Indeed, a very special aspect of the Gospel is the emphasis it lavs on the attempts of Christ to be intimate with me.

Christ led the way in being intimate with men. We know how He gazed upon the hills of Galilee and loved them. We know how He looked upon Jeru-

salem and wept as He thought of Jerusalem's destruction. We know now He walked with men and watched the children playing in the street, the ploughman scattering seed. We know how He entered homes on Sabbath days and cured those who had been up to then incurable. Christ was always trying hard to get close to men, that men in turn might be very close to Christ.

Christ came down on earth for our well-being. He came to quiet our uneasiness. He came to bring us peace and pardon. "The Master is here and calls thee" (John 11:28). This was the message Martha brought to Mary. That same Master still calls out with affectionate and pressing tenderness to bring us into intimate union with Him. Our Blessed Lord made the first attempt, and that attempt still goes on. For as long as His blood flows through the Mass and Sacraments in channels of Grace all over the world. Christ still stands at the door and knocks.

The great danger that besets us all is that we live lives remote from Christ. The human heart is always being pulled around. It is pulled by the spirit, it is pulled by the flesh, it is pulled by Our Lord, it is pulled by the world. We are intimate or we are remote, and yet upon our intimacy depends our sanctity, and so our happiness. Intimacy with Christ makes the hard things easy, just as other intimacy does, or it fills us with a spirit to do them anyway.

Intimacy with Christ will enus to comprehend the length and breadth and height of every situation. What may be mysterious to others becomes most clear to us and so we are more patient, we are more understanding, we are more able to overcome or bypass the problems of our daily lives. The first thing we acquire when intimate with Christ is that facility of seeing all things through His eyes, and what a change would this bring in our lives and in the lives of nations too. Intimacy with Christ gives us the faculty of always seeing Christ in others, and if this would only be our common practice the world would see a greater turn for good than any war or conference for peace could bring about.

Intimacy with Christ will give your eyes that eternal look, for nothing superficial tricks you. You have a spiritual armor against which no secret weapon has been found to be successful. By association with the ordinary we, ourselves, become ordinary. The opposite is also true. By association with the extraordinary we, ourselves, become so and Christ was not an ordinary Person. By association with the most attractive Personality who ever lived we make our lives attractive in the eves of Him Who really counts. We make ourselves attractive in the eyes of God.

Our Blessed Lord then led the way by being intimate with men. He entered into their daily problems; this He did that men in turn might be more intimate with Him. While He lived He had no trouble being intimate with men, but He always feared that time would separate men from Him. Christ had no desire to live behind an iron curtain that might hide Him from the eyes of men.

Two thousand years have dimmed men's minds in regard to Christ. To some it is as if Christ never lived, and it is these we can thank for the present chaos in the world. There is not a single thing in all their outlook reminiscent of Our

Lord. Not a single shred of what He taught can be discovered in what they think or say. They considered it a triumph when they battered cities with their bombs-Christ could not control Himself, but wept as He thought of Jerusalem in ashes. These men have set out systematically to degrade the human race. Christ spent all His nights and days and all His wonderworking powers trying to uplift the human heart. Christ sanctified the home and all the homey things like marriage. These others would destroy the home and fireside.

In our high regard for Christ we may slip into the error of minimizing Christ's humanity and so His nearness. Nearness to a thing intensifies our sensitiveness and so our love. Nearness to a thing will keep our love from getting cold. We may have fulfilled Christ's fear that time would separate us from Him. We may have undone the work He did when He took pains to remain with us by His Presence on the Altar.

Everybody seems to think that the black-outs and air-raid drills throughout the war were good. They kept us conscious of the war, they helped us psychologically, they reminded us of the sacrifice of others. They brought the war right to our door. God became a man so that He too might be brought to our door. We need to stress Christ's human side, His attempt at intimacy, His interest in our daily problems. He wishes to be intimate with all the humdrum details of our daily lives—the Dear Scarred Hands of Christ are forever on our shoulder.

From time to time make an act of Faith in Christ's Divinity, but never let a wall arise between yourself and Christ's humanity. He worked miracles in

Palestine to relieve human suffering. Palestine and where you are may be very far apart, but Christ and you should never be so separated. They say that: "Men can bit by bit create a wall between themselves and Christ, nor can they see across that wall it is so tall," and each one wishes that he had for such a wall some magic thing to say that would remove it. Instead of the wall, let us build a bridge of faith between ourselves and Christ, a bridge of love and of understanding, 'til we have formed so many lovely ties with Christ there never can be room for any wall to rise.

THANKS BE TO GOD

Talk given on November 24, 1946

During Thanksgiving week Americans gather in their churches, synagogues and homes, to render thanks to God for all His blessings. Traditionally, Thanksgiving has been which thanks feast on were rendered God for the field's fertility. Our Blessed Lord loved to think of the sower and the seed: the wheat and the cockle; growth and fertility, to illustrate the work closest to His heart-the establishment of His Kingdom here on earth and the salvation of immortal souls.

Our Lord was always stressing the idea of growth and anyone at all familiar with the plan of Christ quickly recognizes growth as an essential characteristic of everything with which He was to be connected. There was to be a growth in the institution He set up on earthfrom a small insignificant begining it was to take on proportions that would dazzle the dreamers of the modern world. There was to be a growth in the lives of those who made up His Kingdom here on earth, for all were to strive for sanctity, and that is all sanctity is, growth and increase of the soul until it approaches the Divine pattern of Christ.

This idea of growth and fertility, conveyed often by the parables of Our Lord, should not be too foreign to our own perhaps more sophisticated minds, for by it Christ was explaining the nature of His Kingdom and the secret of the spiritual life. So if thanksgiving reminds us of anything it reminds us of the blessings of fertility.

Fertility and growth, so often stressed by Christ, indicate that there can be nothing static in our lives or in the religion which augments our lives. We are ever moving forward, or we are moving backwards. We are never at a standstill. In many phases of our national life we find this same growth and fertility. In the last war our armed forces expanded to a size of which we never dreamed. We fought a global war for the first time in our history and where we did not fight, that tag, "Made in the U.S.A.," testified

to the truth that our industrial output had grown tremendously.

The only deepening shadow that arises is the doubt as to whether there has been growth and fertility in the spiritual contribution we are making to the world. If America does not contribute as much spiritually as she has done materially, if there is no interchange of spiritual ideas, then it is fairly safe to assume that America has done what she did before, just added fuel to a conflagration that might break out in another spot some other time.

There should be a growth of fertility in the religious life of this country to keep pace with our material expansion, if America is to contribute something more than an Expeditionary Force every now and then to stabilize the world. America may not look too good in the light of history if all that history shows is that we never lost a war.

With all that God has given her, America should be able to make a contribution to the destruction of moral evil as well as of the forces Hitler sent against her. America did not do too well in the last war until she took stock of her resources, gave the green light to fertility and production and put them all to work.

For the spiritual regeneration of the world America can do much. She must take stock of her spiritual resources and begin to ration if not freeze some concepts she has had about fertility and growth. If there is one thing of which we should be convinced by the experience of the last war, it is that we are not limitless; we are not strangers to barrenness and lack of growth. There seemed to be no limit to the bombers we could send aloft. We found a limit to the men to fly the bombers.

"Blessed is the nation." the Psalmist says, "whose God is the Lord" (Psalms 32:12). If being blessed is any sign that a nation's God is the Lord, of no nation could this be more truly said than of our own great land. To other nations it must seem that we are blessed. In our time we have seen our nation draw upon her rich resources and employ them in such a manner that it left the whole world gasping at the sight. To other nations it must appear that we are blessed. but whether to other nations it is obvious that the Lord is our God one would have to take a

Gallup Poll of hearts to determine

We have been blessed materially by God and we have been given spiritual opportunity, but whether we have taken advantage of it remains to be seen. We have been blessed materially by God, but material gifts do not keep us out of war. In fact material gifts arouse envy and envy brings on war. The outlook for us all would be more bright if, being blessed as we have been by God, in addition God were in the hearts of those whom He had blessed. We are not great through any superiority of our own. God-given are the gifts of America. Godgiven, too, are our responsibilities to Him. God has given and God can take away, for the hands of God are never really tied.

The whole trend of civilization these days is toward barrenness and selfishness. There is a barrenness about our thinking. Some men flee the conception of a thought, just as much as they will flee the conception of human life. This outlook on fertility and growth is not confined to America alone. Other countries have experienced this before us, and so became de-

cadent sooner, but we are supposed to be rescuing these countries from their bad ideas as well as from their sad plight. There are those who say the liberated countries should be subjected to American education, but we can never justly take upon ourselves the role of educator so long as we, ourselves, are vassals to the wrong ideas.

There may be some excuse for other countries being barren of the thought of God and what He wills, but America has so long had the benefit of God's abundance, we should quite naturally be the Apostles of abundance in all things—abundance of human life, abundance of good will, abundance of the love of God.

We have been called the arsenal of democracy and that appealed to us. How that will sound one hundred years from now nobody knows. How this will sound on judgment day nobody knows. It may be nothing for which we can be proud. America should have more than this to its credit, for an arsenal has for its purpose the destruction of life and this threatens the idea of fertility and growth. If America could be considered a dynamo of spiritual living, or

the arch-foe of sterility in all its forms, she would look a whole lot better from the reviewing stand of God.

Sad must be the heart of God when America to whom He has given so much ignores His program of fertility. Thrice disappointed must He be when from the hearts of religious-minded men and women there is reflected a sterile and a barren look.

We shall be thanking God officially this week for the fertility and growth of God's good earth. Universalize your gratitude to include all things material and spiritual; spiritualize your gratitude with a prayer—thanks be to God for everything.

Consistency demands that if we thank God we should not thwart God, that His word may bring forth rich fruits in our lives, that there be a growth in goodness too. Growth and fertility are associated with life. Our supernatural lives should be growing too. Barrenness and sterility are the handmaids of death.

Life will come to those who are in love with life. Death is the portion of those who are in love with death. Life, fertility and growth are a triumph over death, sterility and barrenness. If these are what you seek, then having sought with gratitude to God, these, some day you will truly find.

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