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THE
SIGNS OF THE TIMES

A COURSE
OF LENTEN SERMONS

BY
REV. H. NAGELSCMITT

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Archbishop of New York

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THE SIGNS OF THE TIMES

I. RELIGION IS INDISPENSABLE TO MAN

When it is evening you say: "It will be fair weather, for the sky is red." And in the evening: "To-day there will be a storm, for the sky is red and lowering." You know then how to discern the face of the sky, and can you not know the signs of the times?—Matt. xvi, 2-4.

You will wonder, no doubt, at my choosing for my Lenten sermons a text that has apparently no bearing at all upon this holy season, when the Church desires us to be recollected, making it a time of meditation, prayer, penance and amendment of life. A preacher is accordingly bound to conform to the wish of the Church, and to supply his people with the means of making a good use of this acceptable time, this day of salvation (II. Cor. vi, 2). I have no intention of neglecting this duty, but I shall, I think, fulfil it best by pointing out to you the Signs of the Times, and suggesting how they may be interpreted, so that you may not incur the reproach: "You know how to discern the face of the sky, but you do not know the signs of the times."

I invite you therefore now, at this holy season, to consider these signs, so that we may be able to answer the cry uttered by the prophet: "Watchman, what of the night?" Would that we could truthfully reply: "I behold the dawn of a bright and joyful day." Alas, we ought rather to say with the prophet: "The morning cometh, also the night."

Wherever we look we find enemies, we find signs foreboding tempests and storms, famine, and war with all its horrors. Yet still worse than all these perils are the doctrines and principles of the socialists—doctrines which threaten to undermine all human society and the Church herself, and to bring about the overthrow of all existing relations between men and nations. These people deny the very existence of God, and reject all Christian teaching on matters of faith and morals. They wish to abolish all authority in State, Church and family; they have no respect for the marriage bond, nor for the rights of property; they will not ac-

knowledge that it is the duty of parents to bring up their own children, and they assert the absolute equality of all men with regard to their mutual relations, rights and obligations. Many even go so far as to renounce all law, both human and Divine, and to declare God, or rather faith in God, to be the source of all evils in human society, and so they assign to man, as his sole duty on earth, the task of seeking in every way to satisfy his own desires and passions. Those employed in diffusing these false and revolutionary doctrines and principles are incessantly active, and carry on their propaganda at public and private meetings, as well as in books, periodicals and newspapers, so that at every turn we are reminded of our Saviour's warning to beware of false prophets.

This is the reason why I wish to lay before you, in this course of sermons, the doctrines and principles current at the present day, in order to put you on your guard and to supply you with the means of refuting them; at the same time I hope to show you where to find guidance in the troubles that beset us, so that you may not lose hold of the anchor which alone can prove your salvation. With one hand we must ward off the enemies' attacks, and with the other build up the walls of the heavenly city.

I intend to begin my sermon to-day by considering a man who denies that religion is indispensable, and thinks it enough to lead an honest life in the world. I have undertaken a difficult task in proposing to discuss these subjects, a task that can not be accomplished without God's assistance and your good will; I can rely upon the latter, and trust that by your prayers you will help me to obtain the former. Let us therefore implore the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of truth and strength, to aid us, and enable us to begin, continue and end the work for the edification, encouragement and sanctification of God's faithful people.

I. At the present day, and especially among the upper classes there are many who maintain religion to be something superfluous, and say that it is enough for a man to lead an honest life. For this reason they cease to attend public worship, or attend it only for the sake of appearances and as a matter of form, whilst they look down with contemptuous amusement on such of their fellow creatures as still possess and profess some religion. They regard themselves as wise and enlightened, and others as ignorant and be-

hind the times, and whilst they are very anxious to have a good reputation as men of honor, they cast doubts upon the honesty, uprightness and virtue of their neighbors. These are the people who by word and example have sown among the lower classes the seed of unbelief and indifference to religion, thus encouraging the socialists, who now boast of having conquered the religious feelings of their hearts and of having discarded the Church, that gloomy relic of mediævalism!

But is it possible to conquer all religious feeling, and to dispense with religion? By religion I mean the sense of our possessing a finite nature dependent upon an infinite Being; I mean the recognition of God, and the worship of Him that results from such recognition; I mean the light from above that illumines our understanding and reveals to us God and the relation in which we stand to Him; finally I mean the bond uniting the creature with the Creator, man with God and earth with heaven. Innate in every human being is a sense of dependence upon some higher power, and this sense influences every mind not corrupted by evil doctrines. A child lifts its little hands in prayer to God, of whom it knows nothing, but whom it already fears. Go where you will, even to the backwoods of savage countries, whither Christianity has not yet penetrated, and everywhere you will find that men believe in a Supreme Being, who governs them and controls their destiny; everywhere some kind of worship, though it may be barbarous and very imperfect, is paid to this Being. No race exists either in the Old or in the New World devoid of all religion, and can we suppose it not to be indispensable, when every simple, uncorrupt individual nature, as well as all the nations of the earth, possesses an innate sense of religion? Men, beasts and plants require the light of the sun, if they are to live, grow and thrive, and in the same way we require religion, the light from above, to enlighten our minds and ennoble the feelings of our hearts. The knowledge and worship of God are as indispensable to the spiritual life of our souls as are food and drink to our physical life. "This," says our Saviour, "is eternal life, that they may know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent" (John xvii, 3). "The bread of God is that which cometh down from heaven and giveth life to the world. . . . I am the bread of life" (John vi, 33, 35). "He that shall drink of the water that I will give him, shall not thirst for ever" (John iv, 13). The greatest and most learned men in every

age have always recognized and insisted upon the necessity of religion. Who are those who nowadays maintain that they can do without it, and can be contented and happy when they have neither faith in nor love of God, and do no fear and reverence Him? They are ignorant, mad and unconscientious people, or else foolish windbags, unworthy to be mentioned in the same breath with the really great men to whom I have referred. But why, it may be asked, need we assert so emphatically that religion is absolutely indispensable to mankind? It is not merely for the reason already stated, but also because, without religion, it is impossible for men to be truly wise, good or happy.

II. 1. They can not be truly wise, for none deserve to be called wise who know nothing of God, in spite of His revealing His existence, His omnipotence, His wisdom and His goodness in all the wonders of the universe. How can a man be truly wise, who fails to see what God has done and still does, day by day, for the welfare of the human race? How can he be wise, who is ignorant of the relation in which he stands to the one great God, and of the way in which he ought to act towards Him, and of what he may rightly hope or fear to receive from Him? A man may be learned in worldly matters and in scientific knowledge, but unless he understands the things of God, he is not truly wise. Just as God is highly exalted above men, and the heavens above the earth, so does the knowledge of things Divine and heavenly far surpass that of earthly and human affairs. The wisdom of this world is enmity against God because it aims at limiting His glory, and it is harmful to men because it originates in pride and ends in wickedness and shame. God is constrained, for the sake of His own majesty and glory, to overthrow this wisdom, and in His holy anger He has sworn to destroy it: "Wisdom shall perish from their wise men, and the understanding of their prudent men shall be hid" (Is. xxix, 14). "Where is the wise?" asks the Apostle, "where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of this world? Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?" (I. Cor. i, 20). God effected this, first, by means of revelations given to the patriarchs and prophets, and afterwards through His only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ, "who of God is made unto us wisdom, and justice, and sanctification, and redemption" (*Ibid.* v, 30). He alone is truly wise who knows God, and Jesus Christ, whom He hath sent. "The testimony of the Lord is faithful," says the Psalmist, "giving wisdom to little ones, . . .

the judgments of the Lord are more to be desired than gold and many precious stones, and sweeter than honey and the honeycomb" (Ps. xviii, 9-11). Wisdom such as this is bestowed upon those only who are guileless as children, since it is the reward of humble piety.

A man who possesses the wisdom derived from religion may not perhaps make a great display, as do those versed in the knowledge of this world, but he knows how to lead a good, God-fearing life. He may not be able to calculate the course of the stars, but he knows who spread out the heavens like a tent, and created sun, moon, and stars. He may not have read the records of history or the works of learned men, but he realizes that here below all is vanity and that whatever takes place in the world is subject to God's guidance. In short, those trained in the school of religion may not be wise in the sense of discussing every imaginable topic, nor do they possess a knowledge of a great many unprofitable, if not harmful things, but they are wise because they understand the most important thing of all, viz., how to please God and act rightly. Solomon was the wisest of men, and yet he acknowledges that it was the teaching of religion that made him wiser than his elders and more learned than his teachers.

2. Without religion a man can not be truly *good* and honest, for whoever cuts himself off from God, and severs the bond of union between himself and his Creator, is abandoning himself to his own perverse inclinations and to the dictates of a will ever prone to evil. By ceasing to think of the God who rewards the good and punishes the wicked, he throws off all restraint capable of curbing his disorderly desires and passions, and thus becomes liable to commit even the greatest crimes. Of course our conscience tells us what is right and what is wrong, but men devoid of religion are Godless, and consequently soon become deaf to the voice of conscience, which ceases to make itself heard as soon as it ceases to be regarded as the voice of God. Godless men, heedless of conscience, are little better than the beasts; in fact they are still lower than the brutes, inasmuch as they do more harm and are more prone to every form of wickedness, and at the same time less amenable to law and discipline.

It is useless to maintain that reason bids man act morally, for reason is often deceived when it no longer has a hold upon God, and then it accepts falsehood as truth and declares what is evil to be good. How often is it blinded by self-love and self-interest!

Nothing hinders a man with no religion from overreaching, deceiving, robbing, slandering, persecuting and crushing his neighbor. Reason is often pressed into the service of disorderly cravings, for the flesh is ever apt to rebel against the spirit, and to impel man, against his better judgment, to gratify the lusts of the flesh. "I know," says St. Paul, "that there dwelleth not in me, that is to say, in my flesh, that which is good. For to will is present with me, but to accomplish that which is good, I find not. For the good which I will, I do not; but the evil which I will not, that I do" (Rom. vii, 18, 19). Religion alone tells us authoritatively what we ought to do and what not to do; it supplies us with the best means of living good and upright lives; it awakens within us true love of God by representing Him to us as merciful and holy, hating iniquity and loving righteousness; it deters us from evil by the threat of terrible punishments which God in His justice will inflict upon wrongdoers, and it stimulates us to do good, by promising us a reward that is indescribably great and imperishable. If men are deprived of religion they will act as they please, each will give free rein to his passions and use his strength to crush the weak, his cunning to outwit the simple, his eloquence to mislead the credulous and his power to stir up fear and bloodshed in every direction. St. Paul gives us an account of the condition of men without religion before our Saviour's coming. He says that they were filled with all iniquity, malice, fornication, avarice, wickedness; they were full of envy, murder, contention, deceit and malignity; they were whisperers, detractors, hateful to God, contumelious, proud, haughty, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, foolish, dissolute, without affection, without fidelity and without mercy (Rom. i, 29-31). Yes, indeed, if ever God's enemies should succeed in making all men socialists, human society would ultimately be nothing but an ungovernable rabble of savages.

It is impossible, in the short time at my disposal, to give you historical proofs of the manner in which up to the present day all this has repeated itself in the case of men, whenever they have fallen away from God and lost the restraint of religion. It is all recorded in history, where you can read it for yourselves, and I will merely quote a very remarkable utterance made by one who perhaps hated and injured Christianity more than any of those who preceded or succeeded him—I mean Voltaire, the famous philosopher of the 18th century. He said: "Unbelief is the vice of fools,

and a mistake that can have originated only in the darkness of prisons. It is not merely opposed to morality and the welfare of mankind—for, where no God is recognized there is no obstacle to secret vice. An unbeliever's heart is capable of all baseness and of the vices of the most abandoned among men."

Experience will have taught you all more or less the truth of these words. Are those who go about ridiculing religion and the Church, and openly boasting that they believe in nothing, are those, as a rule, good, honest, gentle, chaste and amiable people? As far as my knowledge of the world and of men goes, I must deny them to be such, and I think you will agree with me. With whom do you prefer to have business dealings? Whom do you trust in everyday life? A godless man or one with some sense of religion? Are you not afraid lest a Godless man should cheat you, simply because he has no religion and consequently no conscience? I have no desire to accuse anyone, but it is a fact that those who believe in nothing and do not care for the Church, are as a rule people capable of and even prone to every kind of injustice, sin and vice. They may proclaim their honesty and respectability, but those who know them will not believe them; and even if they are really worthy people, their goodness generally consists merely in avoidance of flagrant vice and of transactions which would bring them under the censure of the law.

It is because men devoid of religion can not be good and upright, that no civil society or state has ever been able to exist long without religion, for peace, order, personal safety, regard for the rights of ownership and for honor, and respect for the law can not exist without it, and they are the very foundations of society and the state. The pagans of old, recognizing this fact, declared faith in their gods to be the foundation of their government; and at the close of the 18th century the moving spirits of the French Revolution learned by experience that religion was indispensable to the settled order of the State. No sooner had they forbidden the French nation to believe in God and immortality, no sooner had they destroyed the churches, overthrown the altars and killed the priests, than the terrible results of their action filled them with alarm, and they were forced hastily to withdraw their prohibition and to allow the people to believe in God and immortality and to restore the churches and altars. The present French Republic is on the way to unbelief; it has banished religious instruction from

the elementary schools, under the pretext of thus securing more time for subjects of greater importance, it has secularized education, driven out the religious orders and severed all connection with Rome, and all this has produced a terrible increase in the number of juvenile criminals. According to official statistics in one year almost 29,000 children under 16 years of age were convicted of serious offences, and 443 children committed suicide. If such is the case with the green wood, what will become of the dry? And what will be our fate when our people have lost all religion?

3. Finally, men devoid of religion can not be *happy*. It is not necessary for me to say much in proof of this statement; I need only appeal to your experience and ask whether you have ever felt any happiness to compare with that which you feel when, with hearts cleansed from sin, you approach the table of the Lord and receive the Bread of angels. The happiness afforded by religion differs from that afforded by the pleasures, wealth and enjoyments of the world as widely as heaven differs from earth. St. Paul, in writing to the Corinthians, says: "Our glory is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity of heart and sincerity of God, and not in carnal wisdom, but in the grace of God, we have conversed in this world, and more abundantly towards you" (II. Cor. i, 12).

Let me ask you another question: What gives you strength and courage in trouble and adversity? What comforts you in sorrow and supports you in misfortune? What enables you to bear poverty and trials with patience and composure? What makes you suppress your feelings of anger and vindictiveness when you are persecuted, insulted and slandered, and renders you calm and peaceable? What supplies you with fortitude in time of danger and temptation and in your struggles to resist sin? It is not your reason, not your passions, not your fellow men—it is nothing but religion, which teaches us that happiness and adversity both come from God, and that He who formed the light and created darkness is also He who makes peace and allows evil, and that there is no misfortune but with the Lord's permission. Religion tells us that God punishes us for our good, for "that which is at present momentary and light of our tribulation, worketh for us above measure exceedingly an eternal weight of glory" (II. Cor. iv, 17).

Can anything but religion give us strength, comfort and hope at the last fearful conflict between life and death, when we have

to leave everything, our dear ones, our possessions, our business and honors, when our intellect fails, the world with its deceptions and vain joys passes away, and the grave is ready to receive us? What can be our aid when we have to appear before the tribunal of our just but inexorable Judge? Religion robs death of its sting, the grave of its terrors, and hell of its victory, since it strengthens the inward man when the outward man perishes. It teaches us that after this fleeting life is over there will be another life that will last for ever, when God will wipe away all tears from our eyes, gratify all our desires and be Himself our reward exceeding great. It tells the anxious, though penitent sinner: "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord" (Apoc. xiv, 13).

It is a remarkable fact that almost all those who fancied themselves able to live happily without religion in the days of health and prosperity, evince very different sentiments when sickness lays its hand upon them. Then they are glad to see a priest and to receive the consolations of that religion which they used to ridicule. I myself have often visited sick persons who had previously regarded all religion as superfluous, and I know the truth of my assertion.

Enough has, I think, been said to prove to you that men need religion, and can not be truly wise, good or happy without it. How grievously, therefore, do those people sin who at the present day go about declaring religion to be unnecessary, and trying to destroy all reverence for what is holy and Divine! They are robbing mankind of their most precious possession, of their safest guide amidst the bewildering deceptions of the world, of their sole consolation in the sorrows and suffering of this life and of their sweetest hope for the world to come. They are depriving virtue of its sole support, severing the bond between earth and heaven, giving men over to their disorderly lusts and desires and thus plunging their fellow creatures into ruin and bringing down upon themselves the curses of their contemporaries and posterity.

Beware of letting yourselves be led astray by these false prophets, these wolves in sheep's clothing; they are enemies of God and aim at the destruction of your souls. Hold fast to the faith of your forefathers, and be careful, each according to his power, to cling to the doctrines of the Church, to respect her principles and teaching, to obey her commandments, and avail yourselves of her aids and consolations. In these gloomy, ominous times nothing but re-

ligion can bring salvation, comfort and hope to the human race. It is the only anchor capable of keeping us safe amidst the waves that rage around us, and of preserving us from ruin. I trust most earnestly that you are still all true to your religion; cling to it, cherish it as the most precious treasure of your souls, and let it influence your whole life and all your thoughts and actions. If you do this, thrones may totter, the social order may be shaken to its very foundations and great disasters may come upon us, but you will always have a firm anchorage and will derive thence comfort, courage, help and hope whilst the ungodly fear and despair. Then will our Lord's promise be fulfilled: "Every one that heareth these My words, and doth them, shall be likened to a wise man that built his house upon a rock. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and they beat upon that house, and it fell not, for it was founded upon a rock" (Matt. vii, 24, 25). Amen.

II. REASON AND REVELATION

Beware lest any man cheat you by philosophy and vain deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the elements of the world, and not according to Christ, for in Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead corporally—Col. ii, 8, 9.

The Christian community at Colossa had been founded by Epaphras, one of St. Paul's disciples, but false teachers soon arose, who attempted to mislead the Christians. Like the socialists of the present day, they maintained that no one ought in his religious opinions or in his life to be influenced by the Divine revelation of Christianity, but by the dictates of human reason or by philosophy. St. Paul was at this time undergoing his first imprisonment in Rome, and, on hearing the state of affairs at Colossa, he determined to write to the Colossians, to warn them most emphatically against these false doctrines. I have taken as my text one of the many beautiful and vigorous passages contained in this epistle: "Beware lest any man cheat you by philosophy and vain deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the elements of the world, and not according to Christ; for in Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead corporally." That is to say: Beware of human wisdom that is not concerned with revealed truth, for human wisdom is vain, with no firm basis, and revelation comprises in itself all truth. Human wisdom is deceptive, resulting in error and falsehood more often than in truth, depending upon the judgments of men liable to error, and still at the stage where they need to be instructed like children in the fundamental teaching of religion, whereas this is no longer seemly, now that the world has come to maturity and has been enlightened by Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

The words addressed by the Apostle to the Colossians are equally applicable to you. There are amongst men many who declare that there is no need for a Divine revelation, since the reason of each individual tells him what to believe and what to reject, what to do and what to avoid. They openly say that the doctrines taught by Christ were suited only to the childhood of the human race, and now, when men have attained to self-consciousness and have reached a higher stage of civilization and education, these doctrines ought to be superseded by the light of reason; religion is a matter for the individual in his private life, and churches and public wor-

ship are altogether superfluous. It may seem to you strange and incomprehensible that after 1900 years of Christianity there should still be people who refuse to admit its authority, and yet such is the case. You have only to look at one of the works written by modern unbelievers or to come in contact with these men in everyday life, and you will soon find that statements, such as I have mentioned, are made quite openly. They are put forward even from the pulpit in many churches professing to be Christian, though not Catholic, and this, too, is one of the signs of the times, to which I must draw your attention. To-day I wish to discuss (1) the weakness and untrustworthiness of human reason, and (2) the benefits of Christian revelation. Let us begin by invoking the assistance of the Holy Spirit of God.

1. Human reason is a precious gift bestowed on us by God, and we can not be thankful enough for it. By its aid men have accomplished many great, glorious and admirable works; the most useful inventions, the most exquisite works of art, the treasures of science and learning and the innumerable things that contribute so much to the comfort, welfare and prosperity of mankind are all the result of human reason. It can reach up and calculate the magnitude, course and distance of the stars in heaven, and it can also descend into the depths and investigate the hidden secrets of the earth. It can control the waters of the ocean and subjugate the forces of lightning, steam and wind. It searches out the cause and action of things, and makes all creation serviceable to men.

Yet, however great may be the achievements of human reason, we must beware of idolizing it and of shutting our eyes to its limitations. There are indeed many things which it is capable of investigating and establishing, but there are still more which it is powerless to examine or test. As soon as reason passes from what is earthly and finite to what is eternal and Divine, its strength fails, its insight is obscured, its judgment is shaken, and it becomes involved in a web of difficulties that it can not solve. Man is finite and unable to know fully the Infinite God, who dwells in unapproachable splendor. The vast, inexplicable, all-embracing Being, who first created, and still preserves and governs the world, is invisible to our eyes, intangible to our hands; none of our senses can perceive Him. We see His works, but He who designed them remains hidden from us. That there is a God is made known by our reason, felt by our heart, acknowledged by our conscience and pro-

claimed by all the wonders of the universe. "Ask now the beasts, and they shall teach thee, and the birds of the air, and they shall tell thee; speak to the earth, and it shall answer thee, and the fishes of the sea shall tell. Who is ignorant that the hand of the Lord hath made all these things?" (Job xii, 7-9). "That which is known of God is manifest in them, for God hath manifested it unto them," says St. Paul, "for the invisible things of Him, from the creation of the world, are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, His eternal power also and Divinity, so that they are inexcusable" (Rom. i, 19, 20). "Only the fool hath said in his heart: 'There is no God.'"

If, however, we go further and try to find out what God is, where He dwells, why He created us and in what relation we stand towards Him, reason either is silent or suggests only hypotheses. King Cræsus once asked the famous philosopher, Thales, what the Deity was. Thales begged for a day in which to consider the matter. At the end of that time Cræsus repeated his question, and Thales asked for a further delay of two days. When these were over, and the same question was again propounded to him, he begged for four days, then for eight, then for sixteen, and so on. At last the king grew impatient and wanted to know why he thus delayed giving an answer, so Thales replied: "Marvel not, O great king, that I am so long in answering your question. It is too vast for my feeble intellect. The more I ask myself what God is, the more do I perceive my own inability to give an adequate answer. Fresh difficulties continually present themselves, and the further I carry my investigations, the greater becomes my lack of comprehension."

We have here an explicit acknowledgment, made by one of the greatest philosophers of antiquity, that human reason is too weak and powerless to probe the depths of the Godhead. Thales' words are in complete harmony with those of the prophet Isaias: "Verily thou art a hidden God, the God of Israel," and with St. Paul's exclamation: "How incomprehensible are His judgments and how unsearchable His ways! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? Or who hath been His counsellor?" (Rom. xi, 33, 34).

You need only read the history of the human race to be convinced that the reason of man is weak, blind, untrustworthy and apt to make innumerable mistakes. Have not men at various times believed the most absurd and foolish things? The pagans worshipped

not only sun, moon and stars, but also dead persons notorious for their outrageous vices, and Divine honors have been paid to brute beasts, and lifeless stones and images. The early Germans regarded the oak as a sacred tree and thought the rustling of its branches betokened the presence of some Deity. Men often fashioned for themselves gods of wood or stone, and in their honor temples were built and altars set up, upon which not only animals, but even human beings were offered in sacrifice. Mothers often slew their children, hoping thus to appease the anger of some offended god. O, what terrible mistakes have been made by the intellect of man!

Not only individuals or isolated nations have blundered, but all the nations of antiquity went astray, with the exception of the Jews, and this state of error was not a passing phase, lasting a few years only, but it continued during 4,000 years, until the coming of Jesus Christ. Even the most highly civilized races, whose intellect had been very perfectly developed, fell into the most deplorable mistakes. As long as the world lasts the writings of the Greeks and Romans will be considered models of style, and it is a difficult matter for the most brilliant scholars at the present day even to approach them; they need not hope to surpass them. If, therefore, the human intellect was ever capable of evolving a rational religion, it must have been amongst these people. And yet their religion was a mass of folly and inconsistency, when it was not actually vicious. In proof of this statement, I need only remind you of the hundreds of gods whom they worshipped, whilst at the same time they ascribed the most shameful actions to these gods, or performed such actions in their honor.

There were, of course, amongst these pagans some wise men with greater insight, who perceived the absurdity of idolatry and abhorred the vices prevalent in their time, but they too often made mistakes, did not agree with one another, and were always in a state of uncertainty. The most enlightened among them realized their own ignorance, and those who were honest confessed that it was impossible for men to arrive at certainty and truth, unless God Himself spoke and instructed them.

But some one may say that he is willing to grant Divinely given instruction to have been necessary for the ancients, who were still at a low stage of civilization, yet, at the present time, when everyone is enlightened and educated, such instruction can no longer be needed. In reply, let me ask whether the enlightened scholars of

the present day can be compared with the Greeks and Romans. Is the human reason now less liable to error than it was 4,000 years ago? Is there less folly and senseless behavior now than there was of old? No one can read the history of our own times without seeing that even men of vigorous intellect often fall a prey to lamentable errors. The writings of modern philosophers show them to be involved in a bewildering confusion of opinions, and each one accuses the other of being mistaken, each is eager to demolish the other's theory, and no one is able to discover in his own intellect any firm foundation or certainty.

How could it be otherwise? Ever since Adam's fall there has been inherent in the human race a kind of corruption that paralyzes the faculties of our souls. Our understanding is clouded by sensuality, and borne down and thwarted by our passions and worldly interests, whenever it attempts to soar aloft, and to rise to the light of truth.

If our own reason fails us, whither can we turn for a certain trustworthy answer to all the questions suggested by our thirst for truth? Who can solve our difficulties and give peace to our hearts? Who can teach us to know God in His essence and perfections? Who can tell us whence evil originates, and how shall we be preserved from despondency and despair, when it weighs us down with its burden? Who can instruct us as to the reason of our creation and our final end? Is man, like the beasts, destined to toil and labor during his brief span of life simply in order to supply his bodily needs, and then, when at last he rests in the grave, is everything at an end for him? Have all his interests, joys, sorrows, memories and hopes perished with him? Who can assure us of the forgiveness of sins, when, like Cain, burdened with guilt, we wander in despair? Who can lift for us the dark veil separating this world from the next? We long for answers to these and many other questions; we want certainty, and if our own reason fails to supply it, how should that of other mortals give us what we desire? What man is infallible and free from the influence of his passions? No matter whither we turn, we must be afraid of falling into the hands of one who is either deceived or a deceiver. Those who trust the wise men of this world are themselves blind, at the mercy of blind guides; and we know that when one blind man leads another, both will probably fall into the pit. Where, then, can we find help? Where shall we discover an infallible teacher, able to dispel the

darkness of our minds, to solve our difficulties, to support our weakness, and to answer those questions, which, as long as they remain unanswered, leave us no peace or happiness?

2. Bless the Lord, O ye people, and praise His mercy without end; He hath sent forth His spirit and renewed the face of the earth! He could not behold with indifference the countless errors of mankind, and none but God Himself was able to teach us aright what we ought to know about God and our relation to Him, since "the things which are of God no man knoweth, but the Spirit of God; no one knoweth the Father but the Son, and he to whom it shall please the Son to reveal Him." Consider how God first loved us, and gave us His only-begotten Son. The Word that in the beginning was with God, and that was God, was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory. He was the light of men, the light shining in the darkness, the true light, which enlightened every man that cometh into this world; and to as many as received Him, He gave power to be made the sons of God (John i). The darkness of ignorance was thenceforth removed, for the light, the Sun of Righteousness, had dispelled it; Jesus Christ, the Son of God, blessed for evermore, appeared upon earth, and all obscurity vanished when the Divine Master came down from heaven, speaking the truth and being Himself the way, the truth and the life. For three years He went up and down Judæa, teaching in the towns and villages, in the fields and on the sea, in synagogues and houses, wherever there were people willing to listen to Him. He sent His Apostles forth into all the world to preach the Gospel, the good tidings of the Kingdom of God, and He gave them at Pentecost the Holy Ghost to teach them the truth and to comfort, counsel and sanctify them, promising that He should remain with them and their successors to the end of the world. Christ founded the infallible Church, which, being guided, governed and protected by Him and the Holy Ghost, was to keep His doctrine pure and unalloyed for ever and make it known to men, as well as administer the Holy Sacraments, the channels of grace. This Church is, as St. Paul says, "the pillar and ground of the truth" (I. Tim. iii, 15).

We can dispense with Moses and the prophets; we need not have recourse to philosophers and ask them to deliberate, to lay down hypotheses and deduce conclusions. We understand now the nature of God, for His voice has gone forth to the ends of the earth, and from His own lips we have learned all truth. It has been revealed

to us that our soul is not liable to death, that our hopes do not perish when we die, that a better home than the grave awaits us. We are quite certain as to our destiny, and as to the ways and means of attaining it. We have no doubt regarding our fate, the value of our joys and the significance of our troubles. We now know more of God than our reason could tell us; we know Him as our Father, ready to guide, console and reward us; we know that Jesus Christ, His only-begotten Son, became Man, in order to redeem us and bring us to eternal happiness; we know whither to betake ourselves when our conscience is burdened with sin, and where to obtain pardon; we know that the Holy Ghost enlightens, comforts, strengthens and sanctifies us. A Christian possesses assurance and knowledge on the points where the wisdom of our ancestors so often went astray, and a Catholic child can tell us more about God and the destiny of man than the greatest of the Greek philosophers could have done.

Is it not true that "He that is mighty hath done great things to us?" and may we not apply to ourselves the words addressed by our Saviour to His disciples: "Blessed are your eyes, because they see, and your ears, because they hear. For amen, I say to you, many prophets and just men have desired to see the things that you see, and have not seen them; and to hear the things that you hear, and have not heard them" (Matt. xiii, 16).

All these blessings are secured to us in the greatest abundance by Christianity, which you all profess, and which affords you so much happiness that it is impossible for you to understand what evil spirit can have taken possession of those who reject it, trample it under foot and venture to substitute for it their own reason as the sole teacher of truth and lawgiver. Christianity has for nearly 1900 years been extolled by countless millions as the light of the world, and regarded as the only anchor in time of tempest; it has stood firm, and proved its truth and Divine origin, in spite of all the attacks of scholars and the most cruel persecutions on the part of the world; and yet now men dare to assail her. I will tell you what impels them to do so. It is not that they are convinced that the doctrines of Christianity are untenable, for they have often no convictions of any kind, but it is pride that prevents them from obeying Christ, and it is sensuality, intolerant of the yoke that His Commandments would lay upon them.

(a) Because the greatness and glory of Jesus Christ are offensive

to their pride, they heap insults and scorn upon Him who for 1900 years has been the object of reverent worship of mankind, whose Cross they have embraced with love and veneration as their sole token of salvation and whose Name overshadows all human fame. As long as He is great, they are nothing; as long as He is the Teacher of the world, they, with all their boasted wisdom, are but pupils; as long as He rules the world they are His subjects, and this they refuse to be. They will not accept anything that they are required to believe, and so, setting up their own reason as supreme, they fall down and worship it. A man dominated by pride has no God but self, and hence the socialists maintain religion to be the private concern of the individual; hence, too, men boast nowadays of despising religion, and the denial and rejection of Christianity is considered the mark of an enlightened intellect. Any foolish, ignorant speaker can now win a cheap reputation by railing against what he calls the obscurantism and spiritual constraint and tyranny of the papacy. There is a certain pleasure in being known as a free-thinker, and many a person, who would otherwise never become in any way conspicuous, can not resist the temptation to win fame in this manner.

(b) Self-indulgence and sensuality also cause men to rebel against the yoke of Christ. "Men," says St. Augustine, "love truths that attract, but they hate the truth that amends." Christianity is the truth that aims at amending mankind. People want to have and enjoy all that their unbridled fancy suggests, but Christianity interposes her veto, and condemns luxury, drunkenness, envy, avarice, fraud, guile and malice, in short it abominates all evil inclinations, habits and passions, all sins and vices, and praises those only who are pure in heart. The socialists and others like them can not endure this, for they wish to be left free to act and think as they choose. Hence they shut their eyes, lest they should see the light, and stop their ears, lest they should hear the precepts, warnings and threats of Christianity. When the voice of conscience is utterly stifled by their sins and enormities, they speak of Christianity as a superstition, of conscience as a delusion, of virtue as folly, of obedience as slavery, and then by means of their reason, corrupted as it is by their self-love and passions, they devise for themselves a religion that sanctions all their wildest extravagances and sets no limits upon their evil desires.

"The sensual man," says St. Paul, "perceiveth not these things that are of the Spirit of God, for it is foolishness to him, and he can not understand it" (I. Cor. ii, 4). Two ne'er-do-wells were once talking about religion, and after they had both told several abominable stories regarding it, one said to the other: That's enough; after all what is the good of our stupid doubts? We should have more faith if we were not such rascals. A very true remark, worthy of careful consideration! No one recognizes the truth of Christianity who is unwilling to act according to its laws; and nothing strengthens our faith so much as living in conformity with it. This is why Christ said to the Jews: "My doctrine is not mine, but His that sent Me; if any man will do the will of Him (the Father), he shall know the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of Myself" (John vii, 16, 17).

After what has been said, need I give you any further warning against those who put human intellect in the place of Divinely revealed religion? You are aware that there are men corrupted in mind, who are destitute of the truth; to them may be applied our Lord's words: "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites; because you shut the kingdom of heaven against men, for you yourselves do not enter in, and those that are going in, you suffer not to enter" (Matt. xxiii, 13). If such people had honestly examined themselves and discovered their own weakness and misery, they would never have been puffed up with pride and imagined that intellect alone was sufficient and required no assistance from God in order to understand what is Divine.

If, however, we too are to realize what the royal prophet meant when he said: "In Thy light, O God, we shall see light" (Ps. xxxv, 10); if we are to recognize the truth, we must henceforth not rely merely on our own intellect or take counsel of men like ourselves, but we must be enlightened by the Divine light that shines in the Church of Jesus Christ, and submit our intellect in obedience to Him, for "God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble" (James iv, 6). In all humility let us hear and follow Him who is the way, the truth and the light, since those that follow Him, walk not in darkness, but shall have the light of life (John viii, 12). Then we shall be safe from error and deception, for we shall know the truth, and the truth shall make us free (John viii, 32); for the Gospel is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth (Rom. i, 16).

III. STABILITY AND PROGRESS

Walk worthy of God, in all things pleasing; being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God.—Col. i, 10.

There are many people who are quite ready to admit that religion is indispensable, who even declare it to be of the utmost importance to man, and who are willing to accept the Christian revelation, at least in as far as it contains exalted moral teaching, but they maintain that Christianity and the Church ought to move with the times and adapt themselves to the spirit of the age. They say that everything is in a constant state of evolution and progress, and that consequently our religious principles need to be refined and perfected; that what is accepted by a child, is unsuitable for a full-grown man, and so on. It is of course true that in no age has so much been done as in the present to add to the comfort, charm and refinement of life and to develop trade and industry; great and beneficial discoveries are continually being made, and never before have men penetrated so deeply into the secrets of nature; never have the arts and sciences reached a higher pitch of perfection; never has education been more universal or civil liberty more complete. It is not therefore at first sight unreasonable to demand that religion should keep pace with this general progress. There are many who share this opinion, and they tell us frankly what they want. They say that the Church ought to conform to the feelings of the age, and abandon doctrines that are not universally acceptable, such as those of the ecclesiastical hierarchy, the One infallible Church, the Sacrament of Penance, and the real presence of Christ in the Holy Eucharist. Moreover, she ought not to insist so much upon morality, and would do well to give up ordering men to be chaste, humble, obedient and just, since each individual ought to be free to act as he thinks best or in accordance with the customs of the age. This is one of the many demands made by the children of this world, and, in making it, they believe themselves to be demanding only what is just. What should we, as Christians, think on the subject? Is it the duty of the Church to advance like everything else, and adapt herself to the spirit of the times? This is the question that I intend to discuss to-day. The answer may be given at once—it is simply “No; (1) the

Church can not and must not participate in the general advance, but (2) it is our duty to increase in our knowledge of Christian truth and in the practice of Christian virtues."

1. Before proving the truth of my assertion that the Church can not advance with the times, I must, in order to avert misunderstandings, point out that we have here to distinguish between essentials and non-essentials. As non-essentials we may regard variations in the outward forms of worship, in prayers, hymns, external customs and arrangements, and in Church discipline as a whole. These things can of course be modified and ordered in accordance with the circumstances of time, place and individuals; for what once tended to edification may now have a contrary effect, and what once was unnecessary may now be of great importance. The external discipline of the Church has therefore always been liable to modification. For instance, the last day of the week used to be observed as the Lord's day, but now we observe the first day; formerly Holy Communion was celebrated in connection with so-called love feasts, at which the poor were entertained by the rich, but in course of time these feasts were abolished. These things are non-essentials, and as such are subject to change and modification, not of course effected arbitrarily at the caprice of individuals, but by the governing authorities in the Church.

It is quite otherwise with doctrines regarding faith and morals, which are essential and unalterable. The Church's teaching on faith and morals consists of truths that had their origin in God, who is truth itself, and who can neither err nor be deceived, and not in the brain of any frail human being, prone to error and deception. The opinions and devices of men are subject to change and amendment, but what comes from God, is, like God Himself, perfect and unchanging. An edifice, reared to-day by one man, may to-morrow be overthrown by another, but the building that God erects is founded upon a rock, and is able to defy all the storms and changes of time.

The Church derives her teaching from the everlasting source, and it is the teaching of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who was sent to preach the Gospel to the poor, and to make known the perfect law of God. He said: "My doctrine is not Mine, but His that sent Me; if any man will do the will of Him (the Father), he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of Myself" (John vii, 16, 17). Our Lord and His Apostles

proclaimed this doctrine, not as a matter of opinion, but as Divine truth. "I give you to understand," says St. Paul, "that the Gospel which was preached by me is not according to man, for neither did I receive it of man, nor did I learn it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ" (Gal. i, 11, 12). If, then, the Church's teaching on faith and morals is derived from God Himself, this Divine revelation can not possibly admit of any improvement. God is truth, and can not wish to deceive mankind, and the truth made known by Him is as unchanging as He is Himself. Supposing that the Catholic teaching or faith and morals were subject to change, would not God have given us a mere imperfect fragment, and have plunged us into an ocean of doubts and difficulties? And should we not in that case have to acknowledge that Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, "yesterday and to-day and the same for ever," and also the Holy Ghost had taught us in an imperfect and fallible manner? Even to think of such a thing as possible is blasphemy.

God has at all times desired men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth. It was for this reason that He sent His only-begotten Son into the world, and for the same reason that Christ after His ascension sent the Holy Ghost to teach truth and establish an infallible Church, with which He and the Holy Ghost were to abide until the end of the world, to teach her all truth and to guard her from all error and corruption. This Church is empowered to preserve and proclaim the living word of God, and she is bound to hand it on in all its purity, integrity and truth, just as she received it from above; it is her mission faithfully to make known on earth what she has received from heaven, and therefore she labors incessantly to sow the Divine word of truth on the earth, which is God's field; this is the seed that she distributes with loving zeal to all generations of men.

Is it conceivable that any mere man could improve the utterances of God, and reduce religion to a matter of private judgment? Before a man could do this he would have to share God's counsels, and see what is hidden in God; he would have to fathom the depths of the Godhead, and possess an intellect more vast and penetrating than that of God Himself, for otherwise he could never improve what proceeds from God. It is only possible to improve a thing if we are cleverer than the person who made it. Now look, I beg you, at the people who say that religion ought to be adapted to the spirit of the age, and progress with it. Can you imagine them to

be capable of improving and perfecting the works of God? Are they not all weak, powerless, shortsighted and prone to error and deception, like all other human beings? How could proud, sensual, fickle and deluded mortals be in a position to alter arbitrarily the truths of faith and adapt them to the spirit of the age? A man's religion is the dearest and most sacred of his possessions, and can it be at the mercy of the prevalent love of change and innovation? No, the Church can never adapt herself to the spirit of the age, for what is that spirit? It is a spirit of pride and falsehood, a spirit that denies and contradicts the truths revealed by God, a spirit of disobedience, license and frivolity; it is, in short, the spirit of the devil, the prince of this world and the enemy of God and holy Church. How could religion adapt itself to such a spirit as this? No, it is impossible, for religion is, like God, eternal and unchanging, and, as our Lord said, "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away;" "it is easier for heaven and earth to pass, than one tittle of the law to fail." St. Paul, too, says: "God is faithful, for our preaching which was to you was not *'It is'* and *'It is not.'*" The Apostle means that he did not today proclaim as true what to-morrow he would have to deny, for such a proceeding could only give rise to fresh anxieties, since every one would fear that what had been asserted, might be retracted. St. Paul even goes so far as to curse any who dare to tamper with the truths of Christianity. "Though we, or an angel from heaven, preach a Gospel to you besides that which we have preached to you, let him be anathema" (Gal. i, 8).

It seems as if men who have cut themselves off from Catholicism and fashioned for themselves a religion in accordance with the spirit of the age were destined never to prosper. Every religious sect that has abandoned the Catholic Church has lapsed into error and split up. What one man accepts as true, another rejects as false; what one believes, another condemns, until finally there is nothing left of the truths of Christianity. If the founders of the various sects could be restored to life, they would be astonished to see how little of their doctrine is still retained by those professing to be their followers. It is a lot common to all human institutions to be liable to continual change and alteration, whereas what is Divine is eternal and unchanging, like God Himself.

This truth was boldly proclaimed by Pope Gregory XVI., when the Emperor Nicholas of Russia came to Rome and demanded that

he should sanction what had been done in Russia against the Catholics. The valiant old man replied: "In your country laws made by men can be altered, precisely because they were made by men, but the Divine laws of the Church are unalterable."

The teaching of the Church on matters of faith and morals can not be altered like a garment, to suit the prevailing fashion. Men can neither add to nor take away from the truth of our faith, and even the Pope, the visible head of the Church, is powerless to effect any modification. What the Apostles taught is taught at the present day and will be taught to the end of the world, and we have the strongest possible proof of the truth and Divine origin of our religion in the fact that the Church has withstood so many attacks and still stands firm, although storms rage on all sides, and everything else seems tottering to ruins.

We may say fearlessly and with full confidence that, when the passion for change and progress has destroyed all permanence, the Catholic Church will still be strong and vigorous; it will be to her that anxious souls will have recourse amidst the disasters threatening them, and she will be the sole fountain of truth and salvation, whither they will hasten to quench their thirst.

Do not be misled, therefore, by the specious arguments used by the so-called progressives and especially by the socialists. They wish to deceive you and to throw dust in your eyes, so that you may not detect their evil designs. What they really aim at is to ruin all existing order, to turn everything upside down, and then, profiting by the downfall of others, to raise themselves to supremacy. This will be possible, however, only if men lose all hold upon religion, which is so great a stumbling block to their designs that they are doing their utmost to bring it into contempt or disrepute. With this end in view they clamor for the modification or rejection of the Church's teaching on faith and morals, and for a religion suited to the age, so that finally there may be nothing left except what each man can accept or reject at will. But, as I have shown, there is and can be no progress possible in the teaching of the Catholic Church on faith and morals, because it proceeds from God, the everlasting Truth, and is therefore, like Him, perfect and unchanging.

The Church does not, however, fail to appreciate progress in art and science, but tries to avail herself of it, and in this sense it is possible to say that she moves with the times. **She makes use**

of the achievements of art and science in defending and promulgating the truths of faith, in public worship and in every case where she sees that they can benefit the faithful. But she does not and can not surrender the ancient truth; she may, in accordance with the needs of society and individuals, clothe it in a new and more beautiful garment, to which art and science contribute their part, and she thus obeys the rule laid down by our Saviour for the preachers of the Gospel, who were to bring forth out of their treasure new things and old, and become all things to all men, in order to bring light and salvation to all.

You see, then, that the teaching of the Church on faith and morals can not make progress, but it behooves us to go forward and increase in the knowledge of the truths of Christianity and in the practice of virtue.

2. (a) It is our duty to increase in knowledge of the truths of Christianity. In my first sermon I showed you that no art or science could be compared in importance with the knowledge of Divine and heavenly things, and you can easily understand that a man can not strive after anything more worthy, more necessary and more profitable than after a more perfect knowledge of the truth. Truth is the greatest and noblest possession that we enjoy in this life. Solomon valued it far above wealth, and deemed it worthy of all his endeavors. "I wished," he writes, "and understanding was given me, and I called upon God, and the spirit of wisdom came upon me. And I preferred her before kingdoms and thrones, and esteemed riches nothing in comparison of her. Neither did I compare unto her any precious stone, for all gold and comparison of her is as a little sand, and silver in respect to her shall be counted as clay. I loved her above health and beauty and chose to have her instead of light, for her light can not be put out" (Wisd. vii, 7-10).

You see how highly Solomon valued the truth, and how earnestly he strove to attain to it, setting us all an example that we should follow. As children you were trained in the truths of Christianity, but knowledge acquired in childhood is inevitably imperfect, and you have probably forgotten a good deal of what you then learned. You have good reason to exert yourselves and to make up for lost time by supplying deficiencies in your knowledge and increasing it. Our Saviour and the Apostles all insisted that this was needful. In almost every one of the epistles the faithful are urged to grow

in the knowledge of Christ and of His doctrine, to search the Scriptures and try to understand them, so as to be able to give to every man a reason for their faith and hope. Are you exempt from this obligation? You advance day by day in your business or trade; as soon as any fresh discovery, bearing upon it, is made, you are eager to learn all about it. If, then, you are so anxious to advance in worldly matters, ought you not to show equal zeal in increasing in the knowledge of Divine truth? "What shall it profit a man," exclaimed our Saviour, "if he gain the whole world, and suffer the loss of his soul?" (Mark viii, 36).

Many people at the present day are trying to falsify and misrepresent the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and therefore we are more than ever bound to possess a thorough knowledge of the truths of Christianity, and every one who cares for religion and the salvation of his soul ought to aim at increasing this knowledge. Whoever does not thus advance is slipping back into indifference or unbelief. There is no lack of evidence proving this to be the case. We know that many make shipwreck of their faith, and become indifferent to it if not absolute infidels, ridiculing and despising religion; many, too, join the ranks of the socialists simply because they were satisfied with the meagre amount of religious knowledge that they learned as children, and not only failed to preserve it, but made no attempt to renew and increase it. Being insufficiently instructed in the truths of faith, they could not defend it, and were unable to solve difficulties when they arose, or to refute the arguments of unbelievers and to repel their attacks, and thus finally, for want of knowledge, many have fallen victims to unbelief or indifference.

It is most important for you to strive to increase your knowledge of the doctrines of Christianity, that you may be able to resist in the evil day . . . taking the shield of faith, wherewith you may be able to extinguish all the fiery darts of the most wicked one, . . . and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God" (Eph. vi). No one nowadays has any excuse for remaining ignorant. The word of God is preached every Sunday, everyone can read and there is no lack of good books.

It behooves you, as Christians, to avail yourselves of your opportunities, to listen to sermons and instructions, doing your best to impress what you hear upon your memory. You ought to read good books, if you have time, and you all have time on Sundays and

holidays, letting prayer accompany your reading, and asking God to give you understanding and wisdom. "If any of you want wisdom," says St. James, "let him ask of God, who giveth to all men abundantly and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him" (James i, 5).

(b) Faith requires us to advance also in the practice of virtue. St. Paul, in writing to the Thessalonians, says: "We pray and beseech you, brethren, in the Lord Jesus, that as you have received of us, how you ought to walk, and to please God, so also you would walk, that you may abound the more. . . . For this is the will of God, your sanctification" (I. Thess. iv, 1, 3). We have here indeed unlimited scope for advancement! It is our duty continually to become more perfect and more holy, in order that we may grow more like God, our great Example. This is the great aim of our existence, and no form of progress in the whole world can be more rich in blessings and rewards than progress in what is good. "He that hath looked into the perfect law of liberty, and hath continued therein, not becoming a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed" (James i, 25). But on the other hand, he who does not advance in keeping the Commandments, in virtue and in perfection, must inevitably fall back into sin and destruction. "No man putting his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God." "Be ye therefore perfect, as also your heavenly Father is perfect." "If thou wilt enter into life, keep the Commandments."

How few there are who advance in goodness! Many think that everything in the world is wrong, and are willing to criticize and improve everything except themselves. They always look at others, never at themselves, and expect happiness and salvation from without and not from within; they talk of reforms and improvements, but they never reform or improve themselves. For this reason they are on bad terms with themselves, with their own conscience and with God Himself, and transfer their inward discontent to the world around them, with which they never seem to cease to find fault. Let us be on our guard against becoming people of this sort. If we want to improve others, let us begin by improving ourselves. If we desire others to make progress, let us lead the way by keeping the Commandments and increasing in virtue and perfection; let us "follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see God" (Heb. xii, 14).

I have shown you wherein true progress consists. Let the chil-

dren of this world persist in their quest of vain and fleeting things, and if they try to ensnare you by their specious arguments and seek to make you follow their example and adapt your religious principles to their views, say, like St. Peter: "Lord, we will never forsake Thee," we will hold fast to Thine eternal, unchanging truth, "to whom should we go? Thou hast the words of everlasting life."

Like Mary Magdalen sit at our Lord's feet, listening to His words, and, like our Lady, keeping them in your hearts, that they may be your guide, and that you may conform with ever greater perfection to His doctrine. The true sort of progress, which will make a man happy at the last, is to gain a thorough knowledge of one's religion, to make it a guide amidst the darkness of the world, to advance daily on the path of virtue, to win fresh victories daily over the world, the flesh and the devil, and to be able to say with St. Paul: "Now I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." If you make it your aim to live thus, increasing in righteousness of life, I have no fear of your falling into the hands of the socialists, and you will be able to fulfil the law of charity, by instructing and warning others, so as to prevent their joining this party and so making shipwreck of their faith and of their temporal and eternal happiness.

Well for you, if you resolve during Lent that this shall be your aim! Well for you, if you grow in the knowledge of the truth, as you will do, if you avail yourselves of the opportunities offered you so abundantly in the Lenten sermons! Well for you, if you advance in self-denial and mortification, in prayer and penance, in virtue and holiness! You will be more and more convinced that the Catholic Church has no need to fear the light and to advance with the times, because she is already in full possession of the truth, and, if you search for them, you will daily discover fresh beauties in her. In the acceptance and practice of her doctrines you will find peace that the world can neither give nor destroy, and you will at last attain to that happiness which is promised to all who believe in and love our Lord. Amen.

IV. THE POSITION AND PROSPECTS OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH AT THE PRESENT DAY

"And other sheep I have, that are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice, and there shall be one fold and one shepherd" (John x, 16).

I wish to address to-day on the subject (1) of the present position, and (2) of the prospects of the Church. Let us begin by invoking the aid of the Holy Ghost.

1. In my last sermon I showed you how the Catholic Church adheres with inviolable fidelity to her Divinely taught doctrines regarding faith and morals, not allowing them to suffer the smallest modification. In this way she is the sole teacher of truth, the sole source of salvation, and the firmest anchorage of hope, and she will continue to be such, even if everything else crumbles into ruin. This loyal adherence to the deposit of truth that she preserves is the most certain token of her Divine origin, but at the same time it gives rise to many attacks on the part of those outside the Church, and even on that of her own children, so that her position is rendered very perilous.

(a) *Heresy* is the first antagonist assailing the Church on account of her loyalty; and heresy assumes so many forms that it is impossible to enumerate them. However widely these forms may differ from one another, and however bitterly they may be opposed, they all agree in hatred of the Catholic Church. Most teachers of heresy at the present day refuse to acknowledge any God, any truth and any religion that is not the outcome of their own intellect, and whatever stands as an obstacle in the way of their arrogance, incurs their hatred and hostility. As they cannot actually attack Jesus Christ, who sits at the right hand of God, His heavenly Father, they do their utmost to undermine all faith in His Divinity and in the redemption that He accomplished, and they reject His promises, His teaching and His Sacraments. Above all do they direct their fury against the Church that He founded, because she preserves and proclaims the faith, and administers the means of salvation. I need hardly remind you of the efforts that are being made to injure, and if possible to annihilate, the Church. No method is too foul for the various heretical teachers to employ in order to

attain their base and godless aims. Sometimes they represent the Church as an obsolete institution, that has lost all efficiency with lapse of time; sometimes they accuse her of shrouding men in darkness and of tyrannizing over conscience; and they never weary of trying to injure her by means of lies, calumnies, ridicule and all sorts of diabolical devices. Go where one will, everywhere one encounters these lying slanders and suspicions of the Church; they meet us in the streets and highways, in books and newspapers, and it is hardly possible to join in any conversation or to take up a paper without having cause to remember our Saviour's warning to beware of false prophets. But this is not all. These enemies of the Church are not content with attacking the Church herself, but they assail her members individually, and try in every way to make them turn against her, or at least become indifferent to her teaching. They assign to her children inferior positions in civil life and undermine their reputation and fortune, whilst those who are lukewarm or apostates are loaded with favors and honors. In order to ensure the success of their plans, our enemies ally themselves with men of every class, high and low, rich and poor, learned and simple, and often with the secular government.

Sometimes, however, they do not appear as ravening wolves, nor do they assail us openly, but they put on sheep's clothing and look like innocent lambs, and then they are still more dangerous to the Church and her children. They know how to disguise their false doctrines under a semblance of Christian charity, and pretend to have at heart nothing but the welfare of mankind and the good of the whole human race. Hence they profess to believe in Jesus Christ and to desire to uproot unbelief; they say that they have no wish to limit the work of Christ, but only to purify it from human principles and additions; they maintain that it is their intention to reform, but not to destroy, the Church. They make these and many similar assertions, hoping thus to lure the unsuspecting into their snares and bring about their ruin. You must all know by experience that my account is not exaggerated, and you will agree with me in thinking that all this constitutes a grave danger to the Church at the present time. The socialists are now among the worst and most dangerous enemies that she has to encounter. Their first article of faith is: "There is no God;" the second is: "There is no future life," and the third makes pleasure the supreme law. Hence all their efforts are directed primarily at robbing men of faith in

God and Christ and in all that the Catholic Church requires us to believe. When faith is gone, the ten Commandments must also cease to be the rule governing the thoughts and actions of men, and in their place is propounded to us as the one supreme law: "Enjoy all sensual pleasures to their fullest extent, since everything ends at death."

If the leaders, who have been initiated into the secrets of socialism, were to state this rule, and others derived from it, in plain and unmistakable terms to those whom they wish to win over to their party, all who still have in their hearts even a spark of Christian feeling would turn away from them in horror. So they begin by destroying the faith of Christians and by making them indifferent to religion; they speak of all kinds of advantages and enjoyments to be derived from socialism, and unhappily they find among ignorant and credulous people only too many who follow their leaders like a flock of sheep.

(b) In addition to the heresies assailing the Church from without, there is another no less deadly foe, that carries on his evil work within her very bosom. This is the spirit of worldliness, which ever since the time of St. John has been like a venomous serpent, trying to undo the work of God. This spirit is one of pride, avarice, and sensuality, and many Catholics who have become infected with it grow indifferent to the doctrines, commandments and practice of our holy religion. Their hearts, contaminated with this worldly spirit, seem almost incapable of aiming at anything higher than the gratification of their own selfishness and sensual desires. They look upon life as an amusement, and think of nothing but how to derive the most enjoyment from it; they love and value nothing that does not satisfy their whims and fancies, and on the other hand, they fear and depreciate all that runs counter to these fancies.

Can we wonder that such people care very little about the Church, which incessantly impresses upon the minds of her children the fact that life is a serious matter and that death and immortality are inevitable? The Church insists upon humble faith and opposes private judgment; by her strict moral teaching she condemns lives of sinful frivolity, and puts definite restraints upon the audacity of men's minds, the insolence of their hearts and the corruption of their morals, saying sternly: "Thus far and no further." With aching heart she calls upon her unruly children and implores them,

by all that is sacred, to abandon their wicked ways and return to God; but only too often they are deaf to her entreaties, and openly go over to the camp of the enemies, with whom they unite in assailing their Mother the Church. Is not this literally true? Are there not many who have given up going to church, and who for years have not received the Sacraments? Are there not many in public life who are ashamed of their religion, and if they do not actually join in ridiculing it, at least utter no word in its defence? Are there not many whose evil, godless mode of life brings shame and dishonor upon the Church? Are there not many who have publicly renounced her and joined the ranks of her enemies?

It is true that at the present time the Church is in a precarious position; as in the past she is still misjudged, calumniated, falsely accused and persecuted. The Bride of Christ encounters opposition on all sides, and the Cross which she sets up above each of her buildings is still to the Jews a stumbling-block, to the heathen folly, and to unbelievers an object of ridicule and scorn. Her members still experience the lot foretold by our Saviour to His disciples when He said: "Behold, I send you as lambs among wolves." "You shall be hated by all nations for My Name's sake." "They will put you out of the synagogues: yea, the hour cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doth a service to God." It is no longer with fire and sword that men attack the Church; no longer do hordes of barbarians threaten to overwhelm her; no longer are schisms the only evil devastating Christianity; the standard of Antichrist has been raised and acclaimed in our day, and there is a countless host of men, calling themselves Christians, who rally round this standard in order to oppose their own mother. There are deadly weapons employed to spread abroad indifference, worldliness, unbelief and godlessness. We have indeed great reason for anxiety, and it is a disgrace when the Church is in peril for any Christian to look on with indifference, and not lift a hand to defend her. We may well fear for ourselves; for our intellect, that it may not be led astray; for our heart, that it may not be deceived; for our courage, that it may not fail; for our constancy, that it may not waver; and for our crown, that it be not lost. But for the Church we have no right to fear. In spite of all perils we must not feel alarm on her account, but cherish the fairest hopes, as I am about to show you.

2. Although, as I have said, the Church is at the present day

in a dangerous position; we need not fear for her, but we ought to look forward with hope and confidence to her increasing growth and prosperity. We are justified in so doing because hitherto she has invariably come forth triumphant from the worst persecutions and struggles, and so the most violent attacks upon her have only served to multiply her victories. The position in which she now stands is nothing new to her; she was in worse plight when pagans raged against her children with fire and sword, inflicting indescribable tortures and slaying thousands for their faith. She was in worse plight when heretics, in league with the secular power, tried by violence to rob her of her members. She was in worse plight in the 16th century, when millions fell away and rebelled against her, causing a terrible war that raged for thirty years, and brought unspeakable misery upon Europe. The Church was founded at the foot of the Cross, persecutions could not check her growth or dim her glory, and the holy age when the martyrs shed their blood and the Church groaned under the oppression of cruel tyrants, was nevertheless the period of her greatness and triumph. The blood of martyrs was the seed whence fresh converts sprang, and persecutions aroused the sluggish and indifferent from their inactivity, steeled their courage and kindled the sacred fire of zeal for and loyalty to the faith. If the Church is robbed of many of her children in one country, others are born to her elsewhere, who console her for the losses she has suffered. In spite of incessant persecutions the Church of Christ, so small at the first Pentecost that one room in Jerusalem contained all her members, now numbers about 300,000,000, spread over the whole world. How, then, is it possible to be anxious as to her future? Although, as the prophet says (Ps. ii, 2): "The kings of the earth stood up and the princess met together, against the Lord and against his Christ," He frustrates all their plans. A host of enemies may assail the Church, but she will never perish, for with her is He to whom all power is given in heaven and on earth. The devils in hell may employ all their cunning and all their weapons against her, but she will not be overthrown, because "she is built upon a rock, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against her." Christ founded her at a time when everything was against her; He caused her to grow and increase, when circumstances seemed utterly opposed to her progress; He has preserved her for nineteen centuries, and whilst empires and kingdoms have risen and fallen,

she has remained unchanged; surely He will keep her safe and protect her from the dangers now threatening her. He is bound to do so, for He said: "Behold, I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world." Heaven and earth may pass away, but His Word will not pass away.

The coming of the happy time when, in accordance with our Saviour's promise, there shall be one fold and one shepherd, is continually drawing nearer, so many are the converts to Catholicism in all countries. And who are these converts? Are they people devoid of faith, intelligence, fear of God and virtue, as are most of those, who in the last few years have left the Church? No, they are the best and noblest of the nation, men who, after spending years in study, have arrived at the conviction that the Catholic Church is the true Church of Christ. And why have they forsaken the Church to which they belonged? Many who leave the Catholic Church do so in order to be free from restraints upon their passions, or to draw attention to themselves and gain credit for being men of intellect. Is this the case with converts to the Church? Or do they expect to derive any prestige from joining her? No, indeed; they are well aware that the laws of the Catholic Church are far stricter than those of any other religious body, and they know that their conversion will bring upon them hatred, ridicule and contempt, and, if they have hitherto been ministers or teachers, they have to sacrifice their position and income. Nevertheless they come into the Church, renouncing all that the world can offer them, impelled of course primarily by God's grace, but also by their love of truth, the force of their conviction and desire to save their souls. They prefer to lose wealth and honor rather than to imperil their salvation; they choose to be objects of contempt and ridicule to men rather than to be abandoned by God; they think it better to reduce themselves and their families to poverty, than to live in luxury and suffer the loss of their souls.

When men such as I have described, occupying prominent positions, are received into the Catholic Church, she feels such intense joy that it consoles her in her sorrow over the apostasy and indifference of others, and justifies her hope that their example may induce many more to follow them.

During the last few years a new and vigorous spirit has pervaded the Church, heralding the coming of a second spring. The attacks upon the Church have certainly caused some unworthy sheep to

quit the fold, but they have also aroused many who were indifferent, and recalled to their allegiance many who were wayward. Many waverers have been confirmed in their faith and many lifeless members have been quickened to that fresh life, which makes itself felt in the Church and gives rise to fair hopes for the future. Moreover, many associations have recently been formed, having as their aim the religious education of children, the promotion of religion among girls and boys, men and women, the publication and circulation of good books, the support of missions, the erection of churches and the maintenance of priests and teachers in districts where Catholics are few, and without priest, church or school. The existence of such associations augurs well for the future.

Another circumstance that may well make us hopeful for the Church and very thankful to God, is that the Holy Ghost has given the Church, in the person of Benedict XV, a sovereign pontiff uniting in himself many most excellent qualities, and capable of coping with all the demands made upon him. Let us offer our homage to him, the supreme ruler and head of the Church! May God destroy his enemies and crown with success his noble efforts for the welfare of the nations and of holy Church! May He hear the prayer that rises daily from the hearts of millions of Catholics all over the world, imploring God to grant happiness to the Pope and growth and prosperity to the Church!

There is then good reason even at the present time for being hopeful, and our hopes will not be shattered, if only we stand firm with unwavering faith, and in loyal obedience to God and His Church, and if we persevere in earnest, fervent prayer.

Let us with heart and voice echo the following beautiful words, uttered by a great man (Ventura) in his enthusiasm for the faith: "O holy Roman Church, Mother of Churches and of all the faithful, and chosen by God to unite all His children in the same faith and the same charity; we will ever maintain thy unity from the very depths of our souls. If ever I forget thee, O holy Roman Church, may I forget myself, may my tongue wither and cleave to my mouth, if I think not first of thee, exult not in thee, and regard it not as my chief glory to be thy child. Hail, holy Church, great mother of us all! At our entrance into the world thou welcomest us, thou upholdest us in this vale of tears, where we are exiles from our true home, and thou keepest us in safety. May none of us ever be so unhappy as to forsake or scorn thee, espe-

cially at this time when many of our brethren, once cut off by heresy from thee and us, are stretching out their hands to the see of Peter, and coming to thee, who wast of old their mother, and who, despite their errors, hast not ceased to call them back. O tender mother, open thine arms and receive thy wayward children, returning from the paths of error to cast themselves at thy feet, may thy prayers, thy power and thy strength hasten the ardently desired moment, when for all Christians there shall be but one fold and one Shepherd!"

May that happy day soon dawn which shall bring back faith, peace and religious and political unity to all the world. We can hasten its coming, by the steadfastness of our faith, by our spirit of union and obedience, by the fervor of our prayers and the purity of our lives, so that at last we may see the fulfilment of our Saviour's promise: "Other sheep I have, that are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice, and there shall be one fold and one Shepherd" (John x, 16). Amen.

V. LIBERTY

"If you continue in My word, you shall be My disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free" (John viii, 31, 32).

Liberty, equality and fraternity! These words rang from one end of the world to the other at the time of the French Revolution, and had a magical effect in kindling enthusiasm in the minds of men, and we still hear them employed by those who, professing to be friends of the masses, strive to win the people over to their ways of thought.

I do not know why so much fuss is made about these ideas, as if they had never been heard of before. Christianity has been preaching these three things for 1900 years. The ideas of liberty, equality and fraternity owe their introduction into the world to Christianity, and having thriven under her protection, they have been the cause of countless blessings to the human race. This is a fact, but it is also true that in course of time these ideas have been lamentably distorted and misused by those who pretend to wish to promote the happiness of the people. I desire to put you on your guard against a wrong use of these precious gifts bestowed by Christianity, and to supply you with a true comprehension of them, whilst at the same time I hope to show you what blessings result from putting them to their proper use.

You must not expect me to discuss these matters from the political point of view; the pulpit is a place, not for political speeches, but for the exposition of Divine truth, and I propose to deal with my subject only from this standpoint. To-day I mean to speak of *liberty*, and to show you (1) in what it consists and (2) where it is to be found. Let us begin by invoking the aid of the Holy Ghost.

1. Reason and free will are the most precious possessions that we enjoy in this life, and nothing else distinguishes us so completely from the brutes as our having these gifts, which are tokens of our Divine origin, and enable us to enter into communion with God and gradually to grow more like Him, the most perfect of all beings. A beast must follow the prompting of its instinct, but man does only what he wills to do; by means of his reason he can determine to do or not to do an action, and no power on earth can

violate his will. He may be tortured or even killed, but he cannot be forced to do anything that he wills not to do. In the first three centuries of the Christian era the pagans had recourse to every imaginable means of compelling the Christians to do sacrifice to false gods and deny their faith, but it was all in vain; they preferred to die rather than give up their liberty. In the same way you too may be oppressed and persecuted, or even imprisoned, but you cannot be compelled to tell lies, to steal, or to deny your faith.

Many people believe that true liberty consists in freedom to act as they like, and that they are as free to choose evil as to refrain from it and to choose good. A child supposes himself to be free, when he is out of his parents's sight, and doing what he fancies. A young man supposes himself to be free, if he can follow his impulses without any let or hindrance. A socialist supposes himself to be free, if he can cast aside the laws of Church and State whenever it pleases him to do so, discard all morality and order, and gratify his sensual desires undisturbed. But is this real liberty? No; it is license, want of discipline and the enslavement of the spirit to the flesh. God gave us reason to guide us in our actions and to control and direct the lower impulses that we possess in common with the beasts. But if we allow ourselves to be directed and controlled by our sensual instincts and the desires of the flesh instead of by reason, we have ceased to be free, and have become slaves to the flesh.

How shameful and dishonorable is this slavery! Which is more noble, the flesh or the spirit? You answer without hesitation: "The spirit, for it is the breath of God; it bears the impress of God's likeness; it is able to know and love God; it is immortal and destined for eternal life, whereas the body is nothing but dust, and must return to the dust of which it was formed." If such is the case, can anything be more shameful and lowering to human dignity than that a man should allow his immortal spirit to be enslaved and subjugated by his sinful body?

We certainly have the power to choose between good and evil, and if we decide in favor of evil, we cease to be free and become its slaves, for, as our Saviour said: "Whosoever committeth sin, is the servant of sin" (John viii, 34). We are truly free only if we decide in favor of good, freely, and not under compulsion from within or from without, but following the voice of reason. The ability to choose between good and evil is innate in us, and we re-

quire to be trained in true liberty, which is, as I have said, freedom to decide for oneself to do what is right.

You know that Adam's fall into sin brought inward corruption upon the whole human race, and that in consequence our evil desires strongly oppose reason and conscience, the voice of God speaking within us, telling us what is good and what is evil, stimulating us to do right and warning us against sin. As a result of Adam's fall our reason is weakened and obscured, our hearts are filled with selfishness, pride, sensuality and avarice, and our will is enfeebled to such a degree as to do what it rejects, and not to do what it wills. "I know," says St. Paul, "that there dwelleth not in me, that is to say, in my flesh, that which is good. For to will is present with me, but to accomplish that which is good, I find not. For the good which I will, I do not; but the evil which I will not, that I do. Now if I do that which I will not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. I find then a law, that when I have a will to do good, evil is present with me. For I am delighted with the law of God, according to the inward man, but I see another law in my members, fighting against the law of my mind, and captivating me in the law of sin that is in my members" (Rom. vii, 18-23).

This is the case with every human being, however freely he may be able to choose the good, he is hindered and thwarted by the evil concupiscence that dwelleth in him, and frequently obtains the mastery over his will and reason, so that he can no longer do what he wills, but is obliged to do what he wills not. A pagan poet says very truly: "I perceive the better course and assent to it, but I follow the worse." You need only read the history of the human race to see to what terrible errors and sins this enslavement of the will by selfishness and sensuality has led mankind. Idolatry in all its horrible forms, the innumerable vices by which men degraded themselves lower than beasts devoid of reason, the slavery and other kinds of bondage that prevailed in olden times and were an outrage upon all Christian sentiment—these are the consequences of this subjugation of the will and intellect resulting from sin. All these evils would recur if men with one accord made use of the license offered them by those who wish to ensnare them in their toils.

If you want to know how a free man can be enslaved by selfishness and sensuality, you have only to look around you. Here is one who is a slave to drunkenness; when sober he has reproached

himself times without number: he has wept tears of repentance, and sworn to his wife that he will amend, and give no more scandal to his innocent children—but his oaths are vain; he goes out sober and comes back drunk; he is weighed down by the fetters of his evil habit, and can no longer do as he desires, but is constrained to satisfy his craving and do what he wishes not to do.

Another is so much entangled in the snares of debauchery that he cannot free himself, however much he tries. He makes fresh resolutions daily, prays, and imposes on himself various mortifications; but it is all in vain; to-morrow he will break the resolutions that he makes to-day! It would be an endless task to enumerate all the forms of captivity in which men lie bound. St. Antony, being once in a dreary desert, had a wonderful vision, in which he beheld the whole world covered with traps, snares and toils. These were anger, envy, greed, avarice, lust, falsehood, deception and the countless other sins in which men entangle themselves and lose their freedom of will. "His own iniquities catch the wicked, and he is fast bound with the rope of his own sins" (Prov. iv, 22).

2. (a) How can these fetters be broken, and the darkness of our understanding be scattered, so that we once more become able to recognize the truth? How can our will be strengthened so as to shake off the bonds of pride, ambition, avarice and lust, and be free to choose what is good? Who can restore our liberty, that we have lost through sin? Only our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, can do these things; He can deliver us from doubt and error, to which sin had subjected our understanding, and He can bring us the Divine light of truth, which enlightens every man that cometh into the world. Hence He said: "I am the way, and the truth and the life" (John xiv, 6). "He that followeth Me walketh not in darkness, but shall have the light of life. You shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John viii, 12, 32).

Christ is called our Saviour and Redeemer because He released us from the bondage of sin and death, and we ask Him daily to deliver us from evil. "Because the children (of men) are partakers of flesh and blood, Christ also Himself in like manner hath been partaker of the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the empire of death, that is to say, the devil, and might deliver them who through the fear of death were all their lifetime subject to servitude" (Heb. ii, 14, 5). "But now being made free from sin, they have become servants of God" (Rom. vi, 22).

True Christian liberty exists therefore for the man in whose heart Christ has destroyed the power of darkness and the reign of sin, so that, the tyranny of his passions being broken, he is free to take up his stand on the side of truth and goodness. In other words, Christian liberty is childlike submission to the will of God as made known by Christ. This is why St. Paul says: "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty" (II. Cor. iii, 17).

The more completely you are delivered from sin and sinful desires, and the better you serve God in the spirit of love, the greater is your liberty. Those pious souls who serve the Lord in simplicity of heart, who struggle to resist temptations, who crucify their flesh together with its vices and concupiscences, who with patience and submission bear the burden and heat of the day, who loyally and conscientiously fulfil in their home life the duties of their rank and calling, these are truly free, and these enjoy the glorious liberty of the sons of God.

But our Saviour did more than make known to us God's will, to guide us in all our actions; He merited for us God's grace, to sustain us in our weakness and strengthen our will, so that we might obey the dictates of conscience and God's Commandments, and be thus delivered from the bondage of concupiscence. "It is," says St. Paul, God who worketh in you both to will and to accomplish" (Phil. ii, 13), and although the same Apostle confesses that he saw in his members another law, fighting against the law of his mind and captivating him in the law of sin (Rom. vii, 23) he was none the less convinced that by God's grace it was possible for him to shake off the bonds of sin. "I can do all things in Him who strengtheneth me" (Phil. iv, 13).

You see therefore what is the source of liberty. It is a heaven-sent gift, bestowed upon us through the Son of God, who Himself took the form of a servant in order to deliver us from the bondage of sin. As He said: "If the Son shall make you free, you shall be free indeed" (John viii, 36).

Liberty was given to the world through Jesus Christ, and it is through Christianity, or rather through the Catholic Church, that it has obtained supremacy in the world, and it is in the Church that it has found the surest guarantee for its preservation.

(b) For over nineteen hundred years the Church has toiled incessantly, by means of instructions, commands and Sacraments, to deliver men from sin and error, from disorderly desires, passions

and habits, and to establish the Kingdom of God, which is the rule of truth and liberty. During the present season of Lent, when she calls upon us to deny ourselves and mortify our flesh, she has no other end in view than to release us from the bondage of sin and the flesh, under which all mankind is groaning, and to give us the liberty of the sons of God. "Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin" (John viii, 34).*

The Church of Christ has always safeguarded external, personal and civil liberty as well as the internal or moral liberty of man. Let me quote a few instances in proof of this assertion: A father formerly possessed absolute rights of life and death over his children, and could dispose of them as he chose, giving them up to a life of shame or killing them; treating them in fact like cattle, that he could sell in the same way as a house or field. To what do children owe their liberty from this tyranny? To the Gospel, that has declared a child to belong to God, and his father to be responsible for the child's welfare and upbringing. Women at the present day cannot realize the harsh and degrading treatment suffered by their sex everywhere before our Saviour's birth, and still suffered in countries to which the light of His Gospel has not yet penetrated. Among non-Christian nations women are regarded as inferior creatures; a maiden is supposed to have no will of her own, so that she can be sold by her parents or bought by a suitor, as they think fit. A wife is merely a household drudge, to be ill-treated or turned out, according to her husband's fancy. How different is the position held by women in Christian lands! Here a maiden is looked upon as a child of our heavenly Father, as one redeemed by our Lord, as consecrated by the Holy Ghost, and as an inheritor of eternal life, and ever since the most glorious of all virgins conceived and gave birth to the Saviour of the world, virginity has been highly esteemed, and a virgin is regarded as an ornament to the Church of God, and shares in all the grace and truth of the Gospel. As a result of Christianity the wife now occupies a place of honor beside her husband; they are two in one

* By proclaiming the truths of faith and inviting us to frequent the Sacraments, the Church is in no respect interfering with our liberty. She says: "You must believe this if you wish to be saved; but it rests with you to be saved or to perish; you can choose which you like." It depends, therefore, altogether upon a man's own will whether he obeys or rejects the call of grace; he is perfectly free to accept or to deny the truth. Faith is in any case a gift of God, but man's free will has to cooperate in it, for the simple reason that no one receives a gift which he is unwilling to accept.

flesh, and their union is a type of the relation existing between Christ and His Church.

The socialists, however, set no value upon virginity, and reject marriage and family life. To them a woman is nothing but a prostitute, and when she has borne and suckled a child and taught it to eat and drink, they require her to hand it over to the State for education. Among people holding such opinions there can be no thought of love and duty between parents and children, for these things simply do not exist. Could any doctrines tend more to drag men down below the level of beasts?

Christianity has done much to alleviate, improve and sanctify the lot of the working classes. In the ancient world men were divided into masters and slaves. The slaves were the chattels of their masters, their property, to be dealt with as they chose, as slaves could have no liberty, no rights and no possessions. They were not looked upon as beings of the same kind as their masters, but as creatures of a lower order, destined by nature, like the domestic animals, for the service and use of their owners. A master could sell his slaves as he pleased, or ill-treat them according to the prompting of his bad temper, striking them as he would strike a dog or an ass; he might even blind or kill them, and no one had any right to find fault with him, far less to punish him. To give you some idea of the terrible lot of these unhappy people, it is perhaps enough to tell you that slaves used to be sacrificed to the gods, fattened and thrown into ponds to feed the fish, and forced even to attack and slay one another for their master's amusement. One master often owned several thousand slaves, and one great Roman lady frequently required the services of two hundred female slaves. What did Christ do for these wretched creatures? He destroyed slavery altogether, by proclaiming that all men were equal, that all alike were children of God, who has no respect of persons. But He did more than this, for He laid down the law of brotherly love, to which there are no exceptions, and finally He died on the Cross for all men, including slaves, and opened the gates of eternal happiness to slaves as well as to their masters.

Has not civil liberty always been upheld and defended by the Church? and has it not often been assailed and destroyed by secular princes, who have aimed at increasing their own power and reputation, and, in order to accomplish this, have oppressed their subjects? For centuries the Catholic Church alone, with all the re-

sources at her disposal, opposed the tyranny of princes and the oppression of the poor, and did her best to support the liberty of nations. It was under the influence of the Church that the constitutions securing most freedom came into being. England boasts of being the freest country in the world. From what period does her freedom date? From the age of the vaunted Reformation? No, certainly not; it dates from the time when every Englishman used to *hear holy Mass daily*.

You see, therefore, that the Catholic Church has always led the way in safeguarding civil liberty. She has never, however, encouraged rebellion and revolution, but she has invariably condemned them and admonished the nations to make for freedom by legal and constitutional methods. She has always insisted upon obedience to authority, and has taught that without law, discipline and order liberty cannot thrive or even exist. "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's"—this is the teaching of the Divine Founder of holy Church, and St. Paul says: "Let every soul be subject to higher powers, for there is no power but from God, and those that are, are ordained of God. Therefore he that resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God; and they that resist, purchase to themselves damnation" (Rom. **xiii**, 1, 2). It is impossible to dispense with civil authority, as the socialists desire, for authority and laws are needed to check the vagaries of men's minds and hearts, and to prevent free will from degenerating into license, violence, tyranny and outrages upon the person, property and honor of others. Although the socialists declare man to be free and subject to no authority, yet their leaders regard themselves as having a right to control their followers, and tolerate no arguments or expression of contrary opinions, so that bitter quarrels happen at their meetings. They refuse to acknowledge any authority in State, Church, community or family, and yet they usurp it themselves. They say to the powers that be: "Give place to us;" but, as matters stand, we are far better off under the existing government than we should be under that which the socialists wish to introduce.

(c) We have seen that Christianity gave liberty to the world, and it cannot thrive or even continue to exist apart from Christianity, which is its surest guarantee, for where Christianity does not prevail, men are dominated by their passions and are under the bondage of sin. What must we not therefore expect from those

who talk much about liberty, but discard all the principles of Christianity? We know by sad experience that what they desire is not liberty for all men, but only for themselves and their comrades; they wish to be free, in order to rule over others more absolutely; they do not want liberty for truth and goodness, but liberty to spread abroad their false and pernicious doctrines; they want to be free, unfettered and unrestrained, in the gratification of all their passions. If another claims the right to have his own opinions and convictions, and reproaches them with their injustice, cunning and double dealing, they are infuriated against him, and employ all possible means of silencing him.

Beware, therefore, of these false prophets, and do not assent to their arguments, which are un-Christian and consequently evil and destructive; such men are aiming at enslaving you, not at setting you free. We too wish to enjoy liberty of conscience, of faith and of speech; we too desire to have liberty in civil life, but we want no license, no wanton violence and no rebellion; we have no wish to see one man tyrannize over another and reduce him to slavery; we insist upon freedom for all, for we desire the liberty of the children of God, for "where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty."

We have now seen in what true Christian liberty consists, to whom we owe it and how we should use it. Let me conclude with St. Peter's words: "So is the will of God, that by doing well you may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men; as free, and not as making liberty a cloak for malice, but as the servants of God" (I. Peter ii, 15, 16). If we remember that we are all God's servants and children, we shall not encroach upon our neighbor's rights and liberty; for the sake of God and conscience we shall respect authority, and peace and order will reign in our midst.

Above all let us strive to cast off the fetters of pride, avarice, envy, selfishness and lust. As long as we are bound by them, we are not free men, but slaves of sin; for whosoever commits sin, is the servant of sin. How many of us are still in bondage! Let us arise, and obey the call of the prophet who exclaims: "Shake thyself from the dust, arise, sit up; loose the bonds from off thy neck, O captive daughter of Sion!" (Is. lii, 2). O captive soul, shake off the dust of earth which obscures thy beauty; arise and loose the bonds of sin, death and Satan by the threefold force of contrition, confession and satisfaction, for what is loosed on earth, shall be loosed also in heaven. Hasten, before the snares of death

and the terrible bonds of hell, from which there is no escape, entangle thee. Easter is at hand, the holy season when our Lord and Saviour invites us all to cleanse ourselves from sin, and to come and keep the Pasch with Him. Come, therefore, all ye who are weighed down with sin and misery, groaning under the load of your disorderly inclinations, passions and habits, the Lord will set you free. He calls you, saying: "Come to Me, all you that labor and are burdened, and I will refresh you."

But when you are released from sin and made children of God, be careful to walk thenceforth as free men, guided by the Spirit of God, and not dominated by impure passions; be no longer slaves of sin, but servants of God. "Brethren," says St. Paul, "you have been called unto liberty; only make not liberty an occasion to the flesh, but by charity of the spirit serve one another" (Gal. v, 13). To serve the flesh is slavery, to serve Christ is to rule. "O, let us," exclaims St. Bernard, "remain bound by God's holy Commandments! The bonds of love constrained Him to come down to earth and submit to suffering; we on the other hand, who desire to be raised from earth to heaven, must first submit to the bonds of suffering, patience and obedience, that we may be one with Him, as He and the Father are one." Let us remain free from sin and sinful desires, let us be ever guided by the Spirit of the Lord, and subject only to His Commandments, and then we shall be **free** indeed, and at last for us, too, the golden gates of heavenly liberty will be opened, and we shall enter in and enjoy perfect freedom forever and ever. Amen.

VI. EQUALITY

"The rich and the poor have met one another; the Lord is the maker of them both" (Prov. xxii, 2).

Of the many non-Christian doctrines that, like parasitic plants, shoot up again from time to time, there is perhaps none that attracts so much attention, and that is so likely to undermine the whole social order as the statement, put forward by the socialists, that all men are equal, and therefore all class distinctions must be abolished and property distributed equally among all human beings. The advocates of these views go from country to country, seeking to confuse men's minds and to win adherents, and they succeed, partly because their doctrines appeal to the pride, greed, and natural indolence of mankind, especially of the working classes and the poor, and partly because they give a very specious and attractive expression to their opinions. It cannot be denied that from the purely human standpoint they seem to have much right on their side, and so, wishing to be regarded as benefactors to the people, they are wise when they make the most of the facts that appear to support their theories. No words ring more sweetly in the ears of men, or appeal more directly to their hearts, than "liberty and equality," and although many so-called friends of the people are far from wishing to obliterate all class distinctions and to distribute their goods to the poor, they know that the masses delight in hearing of such things and will applaud them loudly if they discuss how all men can be made equal, but they have no intention of suffering any loss themselves in the process. These false principles are promulgated therefore by men of two kinds—by those who really are convinced that universal equality ought to be brought about, and also by those who preach this doctrine only in order to win popularity, or rather to secure influence and authority over the people.

Under these circumstances there is much reason to fear lest Christians, too, should be led astray by false prophets, who lay their snares and insinuate themselves everywhere. Hence I wish to show you to-day what we, as Christians, are bound to think of the doctrines that all men are equal, and that all distinctions of rank and property ought to be abolished. Let us, however, first invoke the assistance of the Holy Ghost.

If we look about us, we cannot fail to perceive the great inequality that exists among men with regard to their rank, possessions, talents, capabilities and happiness. One is of noble, another of lowly birth; one has many intellectual talents, another has few; one is poor, another rich; one has to labor daily in the sweat of his brow, another spends his time in idleness; one has to provide for wife and children, another is unmarried, and has few needs; one is a master and another a servant; one is healthy and another diseased; one is happy and another miserable. Do you suppose that it is in our power to remove this inequality, or that we ought to remove it, if we could? No, we neither can nor ought to remove it. Men are so constituted that they cannot be independent of one another; they are obliged to depend upon one another's help, and none can say to his fellows: "I require you not." Life would be an unending series of miseries, if none of us helped his neighbors. How wretched would be the lot of the sick, if they received no skilful treatment from the physician, and no tender care from their friends! How unhappy would the weak be if they derived no support from the strong! What confusion would prevail in human society, and what dangers would threaten our persons, property and reputation, if there were no authority able to control the follies of undisciplined hearts and minds, and to govern the passions of men! Do you imagine that, supposing one man possessed as much money as another, he would be satisfied? The desires of the human heart are insatiable; never has it enough, and though it may possess abundant wealth, its craving for more continues. Assuming that all the money in the world were distributed equally to all men, what would happen when one had wasted his share? Would he not insist upon a re-distribution as often as his own supply was exhausted? And would not this give rise to the greatest confusion and disorder in society, and ultimately effect its ruin?

As long as we are imperfect creatures, liable to sin and error, perfect equality, at which the socialists aim, can never be secured, and there must be inequality in rank and property. This inequality is in accordance with God's will, is recognized and protected by His express commands, and therefore man has no right to remove it. The spirits in heaven are arranged by God in different classes, and it is the same with men, and just as there are many mansions in the kingdom of heaven, so are there many ranks on earth. "The rich and the poor have met one another, and the Lord

is the maker of them both." These words of Holy Scripture mean that rich and poor, masters and servants, rulers and ruled, learned and ignorant, wise and simple, must all live together; God has created them all, and prescribed and sanctified their differences in rank and property. St. Paul writes: "There are diversities of graces, but the same Spirit; and there are diversities of ministers, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of operations, but the same God, who worketh all in all. And the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man unto profit. To one indeed by the Spirit is given the word of wisdom, and to another the word of knowledge, according to the same Spirit. To another faith, in the same Spirit; to another the grace of healing in one Spirit. . . . But all these things one and the same Spirit worketh, dividing to every-one according as He will" (I. Cor. xii, 4-11).

You see, then, how God in His unsearchable wisdom distributes His gifts and favors to mankind. To one He gives much, to another little; one He orders to rule and another to serve; to one He imparts many intellectual talents and abilities, and to another very few, but to all He gives what they require in order to work out their salvation. As, therefore, differences in rank and property are ordained by God, how can it be right for us to rebel and to seek violently to overthrow this order? To do so would be to outrage God's rights, for He alone is Lord, able to do and to bestow what He will; it would be to assail His majesty and to offer Him an insult, which He must speedily punish.

Who can argue with God or complain of having received at His hands gifts of body and mind in less abundance than another? Our temporal and eternal happiness does not depend upon these gifts—if it were dependent upon them, then perhaps those to whom less is given might with some justice complain; but you know the value of earthly possessions, and are well aware that they are accidental, non-essential, deceptive and transitory. Only the possessions of the soul are essential, valuable and permanent. Hence St. John writes: "Love not the world, nor the things which are in the world. If any man love the world, the charity of the Father is not in him; for all that is in the world is the concupiscence of the flesh, and the concupiscence of the eyes, and the pride of life, which is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away and the concupiscence thereof; but he that doth the will of God, abideth for ever" (I. John ii, 15-17).

However great may be the inequality between men in respect of their rank, property, abilities and happiness, there is one point on which they are all on one level, viz.: that they are all human beings, and, if they profess Christianity, there is another point of equality, viz.: that they are Christians. All of us, rich and poor, high and low, great and small, are alike in possessing a human body and an immortal soul; we are all made in God's likeness; all are His children, destined for eternal life. All have to bear, in different degrees, the same weaknesses, sufferings and annoyances; we all must some day die and be buried. Neither riches, nor power, nor honor can protect us from death.

But we weak, mortal creatures all resemble one another in more respects than in being children of God, made in His likeness; there is a far higher equality, consisting in the fact that we are all Christians, the brethren and disciples of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and redeemed by Him; we are temples of the Holy Ghost and heirs of heaven.

Men may belong to various ranks and classes according to their wealth, reputation and talents, but they are all equal as regards what is of supreme importance, viz.: their dignity as children of God, redeemed of Christ, temples of the Holy Ghost, participators in all the graces and truths of the Gospel and heirs of eternal life. The point of view of Christianity is not the same as that of the world, and he is not regarded as great who has money and wealth and high position, so that he can satisfy all the cravings of his nature, but he who is adorned with many virtues, that make him resemble God, the all-perfect. In the fact that we are Christians and children of God, we all, rich and poor, high and low, enjoy the same dignity, and we all possess similar rights, on which no one is entitled to encroach. The poorest and most miserable of men, the very sight of whom arouses feelings of disgust and horror in one more happily situated, has a right, equally with a rich man, of aspiring to the highest and most glorious possessions. He has a right to lift his thoughts and send up his prayers to the throne of the Most High, feeling sure that God in all His majesty and glory, amidst the praises of His elect, will nevertheless look mercifully upon him and hear his requests. The poor man is justified in saying to himself: "Although the Lord of heaven and earth has to govern the universe, this does not prevent Him from remembering me, and from caring for me, my children and family, my salvation, my

sustenance and for even the smallest thing that concerns me, even the hairs of my head. Such a man is justified in calling God by the most tender and familiar names, such as one gives otherwise only to one's intimate friends; he may speak of Him as his Master, his Friend and his Father, and of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, as his Brother. This poor man is entitled to kneel with princes at the Lord's table, and to receive His sacred Body, the Bread of Angels. He has a right to all the comfort and refreshment offered so abundantly by the Church of Christ, and to say to himself: "It was for my sake that the Son of God became Man, to teach us and to suffer a death of agony on the Cross. It was for my sake that He instituted the holy Sacraments, founded His infallible Church, and sent down the Holy Ghost to teach us all truth and to counsel, comfort and sanctify us." When death comes, the poor man has a right to the last consolations of religion. He may live in a gloomy shed, and have no other bed than a little straw; he may be suffering from some disgusting, infectious disease and be abandoned by all his friends, but God's servant will not forsake him, and will bring him the Lord's Body as Viaticum and strengthen him with all the rites of the Church before he enters upon his last agony, the last struggle between life and death. Finally, at the moment of his departure hence, he has a right to knock at the gate of heaven, and ask permission, and it may well be that they open to him more readily than to the rich and arrogant man, who goes about in fashionable attire and has never troubled so much as to look at the beggar. At least we read in Holy Scripture that "it is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. xix, 24). To show you what will be the end of those who deny God's existence—and we must class the socialists amongst them—let me quote to you what Chateaubriand, a famous Catholic writer of France, says of a physician, who had been an atheist, and spent his life in a career of vice. As he grew old, and could no longer seek amusements, he declared that he was far from regretting the time wasted in excesses, for he was going to die, and hoped to greet death as his last friend. "However," says Chateaubriand, "I witnessed the pitiful tears that he shed when dying; it was impossible for him to conceal his despondency. Only the unbeliever is really unhappy when he quits this earth; to him earthly existence ends in the terrible fact of annihilation; if he had never been born, he would not

have to face the awful fate of ceasing to exist. The life of such an atheist is like a flash of lightning, only serving to reveal to him the abyss awaiting him. O God of mercy and compassion, Thou hast placed us in this world, not that we may suffer aimlessly, nor that we may enjoy a meagre portion of happiness. The disenchantment that is inevitable at death proves our destiny to be of a loftier nature."

Do you understand this, you who work in our mines, factories and shops, you who labor in the fields, you who are servants, poor perhaps as regards earthly possessions, intellectual endowments and reputation; do you appreciate your privileges, dignity and rights? Can kings and princes lay claim to anything higher or more glorious? Do their luxuries, their fine houses, their extravagant feasts, or their proud titles really give them any advantage over you, who may not indeed enjoy their pleasures in this life, but can proudly boast of the dignity and rights which I have tried, though in a very imperfect way, to describe to you? The great ones of earth as a rule care nothing for these rights, and treat you as if you were beings of a lower sort, altogether inferior to themselves, but in so doing they prove their own pettiness, and their inability to judge things at their true value. Each of you, no matter how poor, wretched and degraded, can with justice claim from every man recognition of and respect for his dignity and rights; he can demand to be treated by all as a brother partaking in the benefits of Christ's redemption. "In order that we may all be of one accord," says St. John Chrysostom, "we have all received the same nature, we all have a body and a soul, we inhabit the same earth, and we are fed with the same fruits that the earth brings forth."

If you, who are wealthy and exalted, despise, oppress, ill-treat, defraud and trample down those whom Providence has set in a lower position, you are not only despising yourselves and renouncing your dignity, but you are insulting God, the Creator of these people, Christ, their Redeemer, and the Holy Ghost, their Sanctifier. By looking down upon others and humbling them, you hope to win honor and glory among your fellows, but you are showing that you have no conception of the real meaning of honor and glory. A man's true glory does not consist in being a gentleman, rich, aristocratic and respected, but rather in having been created in the likeness of God, in being a child of God, a brother of Jesus Christ and an heir to the kingdom of heaven; it is his true honor to recog-

nize, respect and uphold this dignity in those about him. We read in Holy Scripture that "The fear of God is the glory of the rich, and of the honorable, and of the poor. . . . The great man, and the judge and the mighty is in honor, and there is none greater than he that feareth God" (Eccl. x, 25, 27). St. Augustine writes: "Do not fancy that you are not bound to love your neighbor because he is poor and you are rich. It is true that you have no need of him, because you have wealth, but he, though poor, wretched and needy, is a man as you are; he is like you. It rested with God to make him rich and exalt him above you, and perhaps he would have deserved it better. What greater service did you render to God, that you should possess riches, which your neighbor possesses not? Could not God have placed you in the position which he occupies? Therefore you should see yourself in him whom you despise. He is your brother, a part of yourself, and as such he deserves your love."

You see, then, that, looked at in the light of Christianity, differences of rank and property are not very important, though they certainly exist by God's ordinance. They are something non-essential and accidental, on which we should not lay too much stress, since men are all equal in what is essential, viz.: in their imperishable dignity and glorious destiny. Moreover, Christianity sanctifies differences of rank and property, and makes them a source of merit and of eternal salvation.

In the ancient world, before Christianity existed, the outward inequality prevailing among men was the reason why some should enslave, oppress and ill-treat others, and thus it caused a great aggravation and intensification of the inevitable sorrows of life. Although this inequality was not removed by Christianity, it was nevertheless not only rendered bearable, but turned into a source of merit.

Christianity teaches that the outward inequality of men, and their mutual dependence upon one another, are intended by God to be means of carrying out His designs with regard to the human race. Inequality is a consequence of sin, but it may now become a means of salvation. God has given to every human being a temporal existence, that he may employ it in meriting eternal life; and in the same way He prescribes to each individual the path that he must follow in order to perform his allotted task. Every one of us ought to use the position assigned him and the temporal gifts bestowed upon

him, as means and sources of his own salvation; one should thus avail himself of his poverty, another of his wealth, one of his exalted and another of his lower rank, but all should tend to sanctification.

The Gospel teaches us that God gives wealth to the rich that they may spend it in the service of the poor, not that they may regard it as their own property, of which they are free to dispose as they please, to gratify their pride, ambition and lust. God destines the wealthy to be the instruments of His mercy and stewards of temporal goods for the benefit of their neighbors; hence He does not merely remind them to give alms of their superfluity, but He lays it down, as an absolute law, that they are to help the poor. Speaking through Moses, He said: "I command thee to open thy hand to thy needy and poor brother, that liveth in the land" (Deut. xv, 11). The Holy Ghost makes almsgiving a duty, and bids us give what we owe to the poor, signifying that it is not left to our discretion whether to give alms or not, but it is an absolute obligation to do so. In order to make us more ready to be charitable, we are reminded in Holy Scripture how God daily opens His Hand and fills all living things with blessings; and our Divine Saviour bids us to imitate Him, when He says: "Be ye merciful, as your Father in heaven is merciful." It was through charity and mercy that Jesus Christ came down from heaven, became Man and went about doing good. "He that giveth to the poor shall not want; he that despiseth his entreaty shall suffer indigence" (Prov. xxviii, 27). This is the teaching of Holy Scripture, which assures us that "by mercy and truth iniquity is redeemed" (Prov. xvi, 6); and promises to the merciful that they shall find mercy at the judgment seat of God.

Christianity tells the poor that they are God's children, the brethren of Christ, temples of the Holy Ghost, and destined, equally with the rich, for eternal happiness, since God has no respect of persons. They are urged to work out their salvation in patience, humility and obedience, looking constantly at Christ, the Son of God, who left the glory that He enjoyed with the Father, and became poor, in order to make us rich. He was born of a poor maiden in a wretched stable, and had not where to lay His head; He who hung on the Cross for our sakes, abandoned by all, calls upon the poor to take up their cross and bear it after Him, and He tells them: "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

The Gospel bids masters, employers and those in authority not

to forget that they too have a Father in heaven, to whom they will have to answer for the use made of their power and influence, and whose representatives they should be on earth, by their justice, mercy and goodness; it reminds them that as Christians they are the brethren of those under them, and ought to respect and love each of their subordinates as a brother and an equal.

Christianity admonishes servants and workpeople to be patient, obedient, and contented with their lot, following the example of Christ, who came, not to be served, but to serve, and said: "I have given you an example, that as I have done to you, so you do also" (John xiii, 15).

You see, therefore, that although the world contains rich and poor, high and low, strong and weak, they are all brethren in Christ, and the greatest is the servant of the least; every rank is sanctified and should be a source and means of merit and of eternal salvation. Do not despond if God has not lavished earthly possessions upon you, nor placed you in a lofty position, nor bestowed outward honors upon you; submit with all humility to His ordinances. A pot cannot blame a potter for not having fashioned it otherwise, and we too cannot murmur against God for having created us as we are, and for not arranging things in another way. He would only say: "Have I not power to act as I will?" Bear ever in mind that riches, high rank and exalted position are not the greatest advantages in life, nor are poverty, lowly birth and obscurity the greatest evils. Instead of being deceived by the specious appearance of transitory things, and instead of complaining like angry children of your inferior position and poverty, you should each of you strive to sanctify yourselves in your own station, and to discharge the duties assigned to you for the honor of God, your own good and the welfare of your fellow men. Remember St. Paul's words: "As the Lord hath distributed to every one, as God hath called every one, so let him walk" (I. Cor. vii, 17). "With fear and trembling work out your salvation" (Phil. ii, 12).

In order to sum up shortly and give you a clear impression of what I have been saying, let me have recourse to an allegory. The human race resembles a body with many parts, all of which are equally useful, but they are not all equally honorable. The eye ranks higher than the mouth, the mouth than the ear, the ear than the hand, and so on. Now it is the same with mankind—they are all equally good, because they were created by God as His children,

but they are not all equally rich or equally honorable. In the body each member has its own place and the eye cannot complain of being an eye, nor the ear of being an ear. In the same way a position is assigned to every human being; one is a master, another a servant; one is a father, another a son, and no one has any right to grumble. In the body each member has its own function; the eye has to see, the mouth to speak, the ear to hear. In the same way every human being has his own peculiar duties, indicated by his rank and calling. In the body one member supports another, and when one suffers, all suffer with it; when one is at ease, all the rest share its comfort. The same ought to be the case with men; one ought to support another, and help him to the best of his abilities, sharing his joys and sorrows. "Rejoice," says St. Paul, "with them that rejoice, weep with them that weep" (Rom. xiii, 15).

Henceforth let none of you look down upon his neighbors nor encroach upon their rights. The laborers, the workers in mines and factories, toiling to provide for themselves and their families and giving their strength and health to increase their employers' capital, even the beggars in ragged clothing and with careworn faces, going from door to door in quest of food, all are God's children, all are your brethren, loved by God and destined for as glorious a future as yourselves. Do not follow the example of many wealthy and respectable people, who talk a great deal about the dignity and rights of men, whilst actually trampling them under foot; or who, when a poor man asks bread for his starving children, or employment for himself, question him at once as to his religious views, and should these not coincide with their own, refuse him all assistance. Others pamper their cats and dogs with delicacies, and refuse even the crumbs that fall from their table to their poorer fellow creatures; others again avail themselves of their intellectual superiority to outwit and ridicule the simple, and employ their strength in oppressing the weak.

Treat your workpeople and the poor as your brethren in Christ, show them mercy and love, and their complaints of harsh and unjust dealings on the part of employers will gradually die away. These complaints are the cause of much discontent and bad feeling and drive many to adopt the doctrines of socialism. If you despise your fellow-creatures, you are despising not only your own flesh and blood, but also Him who created them, and God will not suffer you to escape punishment. "Go to now, ye rich men," writes St. James,

“weep and howl in your miseries, which shall come upon you. Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth-eaten; your gold and silver is cankered, and the rust of them shall be for a testimony against you, and shall eat your flesh like fire. You have stored up to yourselves wrath against the last days. Behold the hire of the laborers, who have reaped down your fields, which by fraud has been kept back by you, crieth; and the cry of them hath entered into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth. You have feasted upon earth, and in riotousness you have nourished your hearts in the day of slaughter. You have condemned and put to death the just one, and he resisted you not” (James v, 1-6).

In the book of Ecclesiasticus we read: “The Lord will not be slack, but will judge for the just, and will do judgment; and the Almighty will not have patience with them, that he may crush their back; and he will repay vengeance to the gentiles, till he have taken away the multitude of the proud and broken the sceptres of the unjust; till He have rendered to men according to their deeds. . . . till He have judged the cause of His people, and He shall delight the just with His mercy” (Eccl. xxxv, 22-25).

If then you are masters, treat your workpeople with Christian charity and justice, not forgetting that they are your brethren in Christ. If you are subordinates, accept your lot with patience, and walk worthily of your high calling. If you are rich and respected, remember that your position requires you to be generous, accessible and abounding in good works. Practise these virtues and let your hearts be ever ready to sympathize with the miserable, and your ears be open to their cry for help. Especially at the present time, when destitution stares so many in the face, “let your abundance supply their want,” as St. Paul says, “that there may be an equality” (II. Cor. viii, 14). Never say that you are tired of giving, and will furnish no further help. Ought your charity to diminish when need increases? Do not complain that business is bad, and that it behooves every one to keep what he has. Of course the times are bad; poverty, distress and want prevail in every direction, and many are out of work. But who knows whether God will not have mercy on those whom He has stricken; and whether the sword, that He has brandished over our heads, may not be restored to its scabbard, when He perceives our charity and sees that we have mercy on others? “Son, defraud not the poor of alms, and turn not away thy eyes from the poor; despise not the hungry soul, and provoke

not the poor in his want; afflict not the heart of the needy, and defer not to give to him that is in distress. . . . And thou shalt be as the obedient son of the Most High, and He will have mercy on thee more than a mother" (Eccl. iv, 1-4, 11).

You who are poor, and forced to toil for your daily bread, endure your poverty and labor for the sake of God and our Lord Jesus Christ, and do not lose your courage and confidence. You are God's children, brothers of Christ, who was Himself poor, and so knows what it means to suffer want; you are temples of the Holy Ghost, in short, you enjoy the same dignity, privileges and rights as the exalted on earth. God, your heavenly Father, will never forsake you. He who feeds the birds of the air and clothes the flowers of the field, will give you food as you need it; He will open His hand and bestow abundant blessings upon you and your families. "The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a contrite heart, and He will save the humble of spirit. Many are the afflictions of the just, but out of them all will the Lord deliver them" (Ps. xxxiii, 19, 20).

I acknowledge that it is galling to a man to have to occupy an inferior position, whilst he is aware of his own dignity; it is galling to owe his support to one who is only a man like himself; it is galling to have to carry out instructions given by one no better than himself. But, after all, the present order will soon pass away, and, if we have borne our cross patiently here on earth, and worked out our salvation with fear and trembling, we shall reach the place where there are no such conditions, and where whatever greatness each human soul possesses will shine forth in perfect splendor. Let us look forward to this time, and strive to do our best here, so that we all, rich or poor, high and low, masters and servants, may gain admission to our heavenly home. Let us look forward to the time when earthly things will have passed away, and when our good works alone will be seen to have any true value. Then, when each man's reputation depends upon his goodness, when his greatness depends upon his humility, his possessions on his hope, and his happiness on his charity and mercy—when all human respect, all differences of rank, and all subordination of one to another are at an end; we shall all with one accord rejoice in the contemplation of God in His infinity, and together with the choirs of Angels and the countless multitude of the elect, we shall praise and adore Him for ever. Amen.

VII. FRATERNITY, OR BROTHERLY LOVE

GOOD FRIDAY SERMON

"A new commandment I give unto you, that you love one another, as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this shall all men know that you are My disciples, if you have love one for another" (John xiii, 34, 35).

Good Friday, the day when our Saviour hung wounded and dying on the Cross, is the day in all the year when we ought particularly to remember this new Commandment. Look at the Cross! On it, between two malefactors, hangs One who is all love, more holy, more innocent than any other who ever lived on earth. He, the Son of the Most High, for love of us left the glory that He enjoyed with the Father, before the world was made, in order to redeem His people and make them happy for ever. He loaded them with benefits, He embraced and blessed their children, He healed their sick, He raised their dead to life, and desired in His unspeakable love to gather all around Him, even as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings—and, in return for all this, the men of His own nation nailed Him to the shameful wood of the Cross. See how His head is bent, to give us the kiss of peace; His arms are outstretched to embrace us; His side is opened to show us the way to His heart; His hands and feet are pierced with nails and fastened to the Cross to assure us of the fidelity and permanence of His love; His sacred Blood streams from countless wounds in order to wash away the guilt of our sins, and He dies that we may live. How infinitely great is His love! Was it not right that, when He, the most faithful of all lovers, the chief of benefactors, died, the sun should veil its face, and the very Angels weep for sorrow? Was it not right that when He, who was innocence itself, was overwhelmed with shame and suffering, the earth should be moved in its innermost depths? Was it not right that the graves should open and allow the dead to proclaim the love which men in their ingratitude refused to recognize? Even the murderer on the cross cried out: "Lord, remember me, when Thou comest to Thy Kingdom," and the pagan centurion in horror exclaimed: "Truly, this man was the Son of God." How is it possible for our hearts to remain cold and unmoved? My intellect is too mean and my speech too

feeble for me to say what I fain would say on the subject of Christ's love, but He, as He hangs dying upon the Cross, teaches more emphatically than any words could do, "Love one another, as I have loved you." Surely you will not refuse to listen to this, His dying utterance; surely, you will reply with all the earnestness of which you are capable: "Yes, Lord, we will love one another, as Thou hast loved us. In return for Thy love we can offer nothing but love."

This new Commandment given by our Saviour is to be the subject of our meditation to-day. I desire, after invoking the aid of the Holy Ghost, to speak of our Lord as (1) the source and (2) the example of love.

1. We hear a great deal nowadays about brotherly love; it is extolled to the clouds and described in the most exquisite and enthusiastic terms. In the sixteenth century the Reformers represented *faith alone* as the chief ground of all salvation, and condemned active charity as actually wrong; but now the reverse doctrine is inculcated, and faith, we are told, is of quite subordinate importance, whilst charity is essential. Men say it is a matter of indifference whether or no we believe in Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and Redeemer of the world; and maintain it to be impossible for mankind to be united in a common faith, hence all must adopt as their bond of union the law of charity, to which everything worth keeping in religion inevitably tends. Of course this law of charity was the first great Commandment laid down by Jesus Christ; it is His bequest to us, and the fulfilment of the whole law, and in this sense those outside the Church have adopted the principle of charity as their entire creed. But this principle, though easily recognized and enunciated, is not thereby put into practice. A reign of love cannot suddenly be established in this world. No one intending to build a house begins with the gables, but with the foundations, and if we want to gather fruit, we must first have a tree to bear it. This remark applies also to charity, which is, as it were, the gable, necessitating the previous existence of the foundations, and the fruit, that can never be produced without a tree. Now the foundation and root of charity is the Christian faith.

This faith teaches that God is the Father of all men, that we are His children, and that no one can love Him, who does not also love his neighbor. St. John writes: "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" (I. John iv, 20, 21).

Faith teaches that Jesus Christ redeemed us all with His most precious Blood, so that we might be His brethren and members of that sacred body, of which He is the Head, and for this reason we all ought to love one another. "You are the body of Christ," says St. Paul, "and members of members," *i. e.*, members of it. "He that saith he abideth in Christ, ought himself to walk, even as He walked" (I. John ii, 6). "This is His Commandment that we should . . . love one another" (I. John iii, 23).

Faith teaches that the Holy Ghost sanctifies the heart of every Christian and renders it a temple of God, that we are destined for everlasting happiness, and that one day we shall all be with God, but all this depends upon our love of one another. "We know," says St. John, "that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not, abideth in death. Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in himself" (I. John iii, 14, 15). Could there possibly be any higher and more constraining motives for love than these truths? But true brotherly love cannot exist and thrive without faith in Jesus Christ, in whom all men are united. The pagans of old possessed intelligence enough to appreciate the importance of love; they had hearts capable of being moved by the sufferings of others, but they did not know the law of brotherly love, proclaimed by Christianity and admitting of no exceptions. Their love was fickle, self-interested and untrustworthy, like that of children. They oppressed, despised and enslaved the poor and weak, and there are very few instances of their practising the virtues of meekness, gentleness, mercy and others which contribute so much to the charm and happiness of social intercourse. Even the Jews had a law: "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself;" but so many additions had been made to it by the Pharisees, that it was completely altered and deprived of all force and efficacy. That was why our Saviour said: "A *new* Commandment."

If the Jews, who had received from heaven the Commandment of charity, were unable to obey it in all its fulness, it is still less likely that other non-Christians can do so. Faith is the foundation and root of charity; so how is it possible for the socialists, who

do not believe in God, or in His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ, our example in brotherly love, to practise this virtue, and allow it to influence all their thoughts and actions as it should for the benefit of their neighbors? Charity is not merely a matter of sentiment, it concerns chiefly our will and behavior. By nature we are weak and prone to evil; we desire to do right, but fail to accomplish it. If we follow the impulse of our own hearts, and resolve to display by our acts the love that we feel for our brethren, we are often hindered by self-love and worldly considerations. For instance, suppose that you suffer some wrong; your own heart perhaps suggests that it is your duty to forgive, but your pride calls for revenge. What is the result? Do you offer your hand to the person who has injured you, and seek to be reconciled with him? Or do you requite evil for evil, and avoid him, plotting vengeance in your heart? Or suppose that your brother is in great distress, and needs help at once; he comes to you, asking your assistance. Do you give it? Do you help him to the utmost of your power, or do you send him away, pleading that every man ought to look after his own interests, and therefore you cannot assist him. We must confess that we are naturally selfish, revengeful and slow to make sacrifices. Where shall we find a support in our weakness? What will strengthen our will and make us comply with the demands of charity, and overcome the obstacles suggested by our self-love, ambition, self-indulgence and avarice? Our intellect cannot help us, for it is weakened and clouded by sin; our hearts are under the sway of our evil passions, and we find help nowhere, save in the faith of Jesus Christ and in the efficacy of His merits. "I am the Vine," He says, "you are the branches; he that abideth in Me, and I in him, the same beareth much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing" (John xv, 5). "Of His fulness we all have received, and grace for grace" (John i, 16). He shows forth His strength in the feeble, and enables us to will and to accomplish every good work through the Holy Ghost, which, He assures us, all shall receive who believe in Him" (John vii, 39). Now the fruit of the Spirit is, according to St. Paul, "charity, joy, peace, patience, benignity, goodness, longanimity, mildness, faith, modesty, continency, chastity" (Gal. v, 22, 23), and we receive this spirit of charity by means of prayer and the Sacraments, for our Father in heaven gives the good Spirit to them that ask Him" (Luke xi, 13).

This being the case, how could true brotherly love exist, thrive

and bring forth its beautiful fruits among people like the socialists, who never pray, and who have no faith in Christ and the power of His grace? A tree cannot produce either blossom or fruit without nourishment from the soil and sunlight; and in the same way charity cannot live and bring forth fruit without the Divine stimulus and constant influence of grace, which is the fertilizing dew of heaven. The true faith directs and quickens charity; apart from it we may shed tears of sympathy at the sight of another's misery, we may give alms or support some good work in consequence either of a transitory emotion or of a desire for admiration, we may revel in pleasing sentiments, we may observe the outward courtesies of social life, we may even talk eloquently about brotherly love, but all this is merely the outcome of our natural feelings, which subside as quickly as they are roused, and not unfrequently change to coldness, indifference, harshness, anger and hatred, when our self-love, avarice and self-indulgence are awakened. True, universal, unselfish charity, that shrinks from no sacrifice, can thrive only in the sunshine of grace and on the soil of the true faith. "This is the victory which overcometh the world, our faith" (I. John v, 4). Here, if anywhere, are our Saviour's words peculiarly applicable: "By their fruits you shall know them. Do men gather grapes of thorns or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit, and the evil tree bringeth forth evil fruit" (Matt. vii, 16, 17).

It is easy enough to discover the fruit which the Catholic Church, rooted in the true faith of Jesus Christ, has brought forth. Think of the Apostles' love of the brethren! "We are reviled," says St. Paul, "and we bless; we are persecuted, and we suffer it; we are blasphemed, and we entreat" (I. Cor. iv, 12, 13); and elsewhere he writes: "We are in danger every hour; I die daily" (I. Cor. xv, 31). How intensely did the early Christians love one another! We read in the Acts of the Apostles (iv, 32) that they had but one heart and one soul, *i. e.*, that all were animated by the same spirit and the same faith, moreover "neither did any one say that aught of the things which he possessed was his own, but all things were common unto them." They looked upon their own property as something to which the brethren had an equal right, and distributed to the poor according to their need, so that the rich felt no pride and the poor no shame, all being full of charity. Their love for one another was so remarkable as not only to arouse astonishment

on the part of their pagan neighbors, but also to make many converts. Tertullian tells us that the heathen used to say: "Behold how the Christians love one another, and each is as ready to die for his brother as if they were all begotten by the same father and born of the same mother; they are not separated by language, nor by nationality, nor by the customs of their own countries, nor by diversity of birthplace." The sight of this unselfish love existing among Christians had such an effect upon Pachomius, a pagan soldier in Constantine's army, that he was converted, and embraced the austere life of a hermit.

Not Christians alone, but also heathens bear witness to the care lavished by the early followers of Christ upon the sick and poor in their midst, and regard them in this respect as models for imitation. Julian the Apostate, who persecuted the Christians most cruelly, writes: "See how the Christians help their poor, and how they love one another! It is precisely this feature that has chiefly led to the growth of their superstition (such is the designation given by the apostate emperor to Christianity). Let us, too, build hospitals, for it would be a disgrace to us not to care as much for our poor as do the Jews and Galileans." Even the bitterest enemies of the Catholic Church acknowledge that she has everywhere erected hospitals for the sick and refuges for the poor, for widows and orphans, and that queens and noble ladies have renounced all worldly honors in order to become angels of consolation in these abodes of suffering. The same charity has founded many orders and peopled many religious houses established for the welfare of the human race; it has carried men over the sea and into pathless deserts, in order to rescue captives from the hands of the infidels, and to bring to those sitting in darkness and in the shadow of death the light of the Gospel and the glad tidings of salvation. This glowing flame of charity has never been extinguished in the Catholic Church; it burns now as brightly as ever, and in token of its persistence I may remind you of the work of foreign missions, that is increasing day by day, of the hospitals that are continually being built, and entrusted to the famous congregations of nursing sisters; I may point to the various religious associations established for the mutual advantage, both spiritual and temporal, of their members; I may mention the money lavished without stint upon the poor, the oppressed and the suffering. Where will those who are led astray by the socialists find help in time of old age, sickness and

poverty? They will find none to assist them except paid officials, who have no sympathy with their sorrows and pains, and treat those under their charge with disdainful harshness.

But let us pass on to other topics. I should not have mentioned these subjects to-day, the anniversary of our Lord's death, had not the task which I had undertaken rendered it necessary. You know that Christianity is called the religion of love, primarily because Jesus Christ, its Divine Founder, made the law of love His chief commandment, and the distinguishing mark of His disciples. "By this shall all men know that you are my disciples, if you have love one for another" (John xiii, 35). How could anyone devoid of charity be a follower of Him, who for love of us gave up the glory that He enjoyed with the Father, and took upon Himself flesh and blood, "that He might become a merciful and faithful high-priest before God, that He might be a propitiation for the sins of the people" (Heb. ii, 17). What man, having no charity or mercy in his heart, could profess to accept the teaching of Him who had compassion on the multitude "because they were distressed and lying like sheep that have no shepherd" (Matt. ix, 36); who shed tears at the grave of His friend Lazarus, and at the sight of Jerusalem, the unhappy city, that refused to recognize the things that were to her peace, and who spent His whole life in going about and doing good? No one without love could be a true disciple of Him who bled and died upon the Cross for us, His enemies, the children of wrath. His last words were words of love and intercession for His murderers: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." Therefore instead of exhorting you further to practise charity, I will only ask you to look up at the Cross, and learn from Him who hangs there, what kind of love we should have for our brethren, since without it we cannot be His disciples, nor can we claim a share in the fruits of His atonement. He says: "Love one another, as I have loved you." We have therefore to love one another in the way in which He loved us. Now His love was *universal*, *self-sacrificing* and *disinterested*; so our love ought to possess these three attributes.

2. (a). Our love ought to be *universal*, embracing every human being without exception, because Jesus Christ is the Saviour and Redeemer of all mankind, and died for all upon the Cross. "He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world" (I. John ii, 2). Hence He could rightly

say: "I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all things to myself" (John xii, 32). We need but look at the Gospels, to see how, during His life on earth, He regarded all men with equal love. He did good not only to the children of Israel, but also to pagans who came to Him in their troubles, beseeching His help. He loved sinners as well as the righteous, and did not refuse to sit at table with them. He treated rich and poor, high and low all alike, excluding no one from His love. "When He was reviled, He did not revile; when He suffered, He threatened not;" on the contrary He prayed on the Cross for those who had injured Him, condemned Him to death and crucified Him, and He even pleaded for them in the touching words: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

If you desire to be His disciples, you must act as He did. All human beings, whether rich or poor, high or low, fellow countrymen or foreigners, friends or enemies, are God's children and your brethren in Christ. How can it be right for you to bestow your charity on one and refuse it to another? Is it just or Christian to love those only who profess the same faith and hold the same opinions as yourselves, and to show no charity to those who think otherwise and belong to another religion? Ought you to despise and scorn such people? No indeed; they may look down upon you, and refuse you a share in social and political life, but you must not requite evil with evil. Our Saviour's teaching is: "Love your enemies, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that persecute and calumniate you; that you may be the children of your Father who is in heaven, who maketh His sun to rise upon the good and bad, and raineth upon the just and the unjust" (Matt. v, 44, 45). The law of charity knows no exceptions; it seeks to be all things to all men for Christ's sake.

(b) Our love must be *self-sacrificing*, and, as St. John says, we must "not love in words, nor in tongue, but in deed and in truth" (I. John iii, 18). Our Saviour's love was of this kind, and, as you know, His whole life, from His birth in the stable at Bethlehem to His death upon the Cross, was an unbroken series of acts of self-sacrifice, performed for love of us. If you wish to be His disciples, go and do likewise; shrink from no exertion, no trouble, no sacrifice and no self-denial, when you have an opportunity of doing a charity to your brother. Do not listen to the suggestions of pride and passion, when you are slandered and insulted. Overcome your

feelings of aversion, anger, hatred and revenge, and offer your hand to your brother in token of reconciliation. "If you love them that love you, what reward shall you have? Do not even the publicans this?" said our Lord. To talk eloquently about brotherly love, to indulge in pleasing sentiments and to shed tears of sympathy over the sufferings of others are all beautiful things, but they are not the love required of us by our Saviour, nor the charity that He practised Himself. Christian charity should be active, energetic and self-sacrificing; as St. Paul says, it "beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things" (I. Cor. xiii, 7); it is always ready to help at any cost; it is unwearied, no matter how many claims are made upon it, and reveals its full strength when it is most severely tried. It is not discouraged when it is misunderstood, oppressed and ill-treated, but shines forth then in all its heavenly purity. If means are lacking to assist the needy, charity can always have recourse to prayer, and often can offer consolation and advice.

(c) Finally, our love must be *disinterested*. Our Lord's love was absolutely disinterested; "I seek not My own glory," are His own words, and there is not a single passage in the Gospel from which we can infer that He gained anything by healing the blind, deaf and lame, the paralyzed or the lepers. We are never told that He helped others in order to be thanked, or to become famous, or to win popularity; on the contrary, He silenced every loud expression of applause and gratitude, and when those whom He had cured refused to hold their peace and desired to make Him king, He fled into the wilderness. He wished all glory to be ascribed to His Father, not to Himself, and therefore on the last evening of His life He could say: "I have glorified Thee on the earth; I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do" (John xvii, 4).

If you will be His disciples, go and do likewise. In all things give the glory to God and make it your sole aim to please Him; let love of God be the soul, the motive power and the object of every thought and action. If you keep nothing but your own advantage in view, and aim at winning the applause and praise of men; if you extol brotherly love, in order to be commended for so doing; if you are friendly towards your neighbors and contribute liberally to all charitable works merely for the sake of vainglory—then you do not resemble Jesus Christ, your Divine Example, but rather the Pharisees, of whom Holy Scripture tells us that they did all these

things. "Take heed," says our Saviour, "that you do not your justice before men, to be seen by them; otherwise you shall not have a reward of your Father who is in heaven" (Matt. vi, 1). Our Lord's Apostles thought at first too much of their own advantage, and this made them impatient and desirous of earthly honors. Hence they said: "Behold, we have left all things and have followed Thee; what, therefore, shall we have?" (Matt. xix, 27), and they disputed among themselves which of them should be the greatest (Mark ix, 33). But after they had received the Holy Ghost, and had been filled with love of God, they displayed the deepest humility, and not a trace of pride, and instead of asking who should be greatest, St. Paul writes: "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or persecution, or the sword? . . . But in all these things we shall overcome because of Him that hath loved us" (Rom. viii, 35, 37).

Let us, therefore, love one another, as our Saviour hath loved us; let us have a love that is universal, self-sacrificing and disinterested, for then we shall be His true disciples, entitled to share the glory promised to those who persevere to the end in love and in keeping the Commandments. Let us often call to mind the love with which Christ loved us even unto death. Let us hold converse with Him daily, drawing pure love from Him, the sole source of love; let us daily strive to become more like Him and test our love by His standard!

A community, all the members of which followed their Lord and Master in the practise of universal, self-sacrificing and disinterested charity, would indeed be pleasing to God and the heavenly hosts. No one would seek his own advantage, but rather that of his neighbor; no one would love in word only, but in deed and in truth. There would be no place for pride, envy, avarice or ambition, since each would bear the other's burden, and so fulfil the law of Christ. None would be offended, slandered or wronged, and should one injure another, he would at once be forgiven. Each would sympathize heartily with the joys and sorrows of his neighbor, and give active expression to his good will. The employer would regard his workmen with brotherly love, not imposing too heavy burdens upon them, but giving each sufficient wages to support himself and his family. Workmen, laborers and servants would trust their masters, and be faithful and conscientious in the discharge of their duty. A

poor man would not ask for alms in vain, nor would a sufferer weep and find none to console him; no sick man would toss untended on his bed of pain, no wounded man would lie by the wayside without the help of a good Samaritan, ready to aid him. Then peace, harmony and happiness would prevail, and all would look forward to the day when the just Judge should say: "Come, ye blessed of My Father, possess the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry, and you gave Me to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave Me to drink; I was a stranger, and you took Me in; naked, and you covered Me; sick, and you visited Me; I was in prison, and you came to Me. . . . Amen, I say to you, as long as you did it to one of these, My least brethren, you did it to Me" (Matt. xxv, 34-40).

O, crucified Love, without Thee we can do nothing, but with Thine aid we can do all things. O, teach us and help us to love one another, even as Thou hast loved us. Amen.

