

Lessons for Lent.

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Treasure-Trove in Ashes

MOST REV. THOMAS P. GILMARTIN, D.D.

Selection from the 1928 Lenten Pastoral Letter of the Most Reverend Archbishop of Tuam, Ireland, on works of merit and satisfaction.

“Lay not up for yourselves treasures on earth where the rust and moth consume, and where thieves break through and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven where neither rust nor moth doth consume and where thieves do not break through and steal. For where thy treasure is, there is thy heart also” (Matt. vi).

THOSE words in the Gospel of the Mass for Ash Wednesday are an annual call by the Church to her children to lift their minds from earth to heaven. If a man were guaranteed a life say of one thousand years in this world with security for his possessions, he might be excused for laying up treasures which would eventually perish. But we have no guarantee even for a single day, and at longest life is short. This was a favorite subject of exhortation with Our Lord. We read in the Gospel of St. Luke (xii): “And he spoke a similitude to them saying: The land of a certain rich man brought forth plenty of fruits. And he thought within himself saying: What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits. And he said: This will I do. I will pull down my barns and will build greater and into them I will gather all things that are grown to me and my goods. And I will say to my soul: Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years, take thy rest, eat, drink, and make good cheer. But God said to him: Thou fool, this night do they require thy soul of thee: and whose shall those things be which thou hast provided? So is he that layeth up treasure for himself and is not rich towards God.”

This parable does not mean that people are not to work and provide for themselves and their dependants. Work is a law of life. St. Paul says: “If a man doth not work, neither let him eat.” The teaching of Our Lord is that

our first concern must be "to be rich towards God," and that while of course we must follow some lawful pursuit in life we must not set our hearts on the possessions, pleasures, fashions or treasures of this world! Hence, in the same chapter of St. Luke, Our Lord goes on to say: "Therefore I say to you, be not solicitous for your life, what you shall eat; nor for your body, what you shall put on. . . . Consider the lilies, how they grow: they labor not, neither do they spin. But I say to you, not even Solomon in all his glory was clothed like one of these. . . . But seek ye first the kingdom of God and his justice and all these things shall be added unto you" (Luke xii).

GRACE A CONDITION FOR MERIT

The first condition required to lay up treasures in heaven is to be in the state of sanctifying grace. Sanctifying grace is the robe with which the child of God was clothed in Baptism. This robe is more or less soiled by venial sin, but it is destroyed by mortal sin. Through the blood of Jesus Christ it is restored by a good confession. Be it noted that a confession is not good unless there is a firm and sincere purpose of amendment. Be it noted also that purpose of amendment cannot be called firm and sincere unless the penitent is fully determined to avoid the voluntary and proximate occasions of mortal sin and to make reparation for injustice.

HOLY MASS A RICH SOURCE OF MERIT

Assuming now that the state of grace, if ever lost, has been recovered by sincere repentance, let me specify some of the treasures that may be laid up for eternity. Every good work freely performed from a pure intention merits an increase of sanctifying grace and a corresponding increase of glory for all eternity in heaven. All good works, however, have not the same meritorious efficacy. The most meritorious are those involving the direct worship of God, such as sacrifice and prayer. In the New Law the supreme act of worship is the Sacrifice of the Mass. Hence, to assist devoutly at Mass or to get Mass offered is the most efficacious way to adore God, to thank God, to praise God, to atone for sin and to make God disposed to grant our petitions. Holy Communion is an integral part of the Mass, and the merit

of assisting at Mass is increased enormously by the devout reception of Holy Communion. Here then is one way of laying up treasures in heaven, namely, to assist often at the Sacrifice of the Mass and if possible to receive Holy Communion. You are bound under a grave obligation to assist at Mass on Sundays and holidays of obligation and are equally bound to receive Holy Communion at least once a year during Paschal time. But you are invited by Our Lord and by His Church to come daily. If hitherto some of you have neglected to lay up those treasures of grace and glory which will await you in Heaven, begin this Lent, as far as your circumstances in life will allow, and add to the numbers who can now be seen making their way to morning Mass not only in the towns but in every district where there is a priest living near the church.

MERIT IN PRAYER AND KIND DEEDS

Another meritorious work is prayer. Cultivate a habit of adoring God and talking to God within the sanctuary of your own heart. But with all that, there should be prayer on your knees morning and evening. The *Angelus* should be said thrice daily. The family rosary should never be omitted (except perhaps when all have said it in the church). Short, fervent, vocal prayers are better than long prayers said hurriedly and with distractions. Prayer is absolutely necessary to overcome temptations, and therefore relapsing sinners who fail to pray in times of temptation or who tempt God by going voluntarily into the proximate occasions of sin are not serious about laying up treasures in heaven. On the contrary, they are running the risk of losing all they have gained and may be laying up wrath against the day of wrath. "If you pray," St. Liguori says, "you will be saved: if you do not pray you will be lost."

After sacrifice and prayer comes works of charity to the neighbor. Sometimes works of charity come before sacrifice and prayer, in this sense that cases might arise when you would be excused from assisting at Mass or from saying your usual prayers to do an urgent work of mercy. There is nothing more clearly taught in Scripture than the obligation and the rewards of fraternal charity. It is sufficient to quote on passage from St. Matthew (xxv): "And when the Son of man shall come in his majesty, and all the

angels with him, then shall he sit upon the seat of his majesty: And all the nations shall be gathered together before him, and he shall separate them one from another, as the shepherd separateth the sheep from the goats: And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on his left. Then shall the king say to them that shall be on his right hand: Come, ye blessed of my Father, possess you 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. Then shall the just answer him, saying: Lord, when did we see thee hungry, and fed thee; thirsty, and gave thee drink? And when did we see thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and covered thee? Or when did we see thee sick or in prison, and came to thee? And the king answering, shall say to them: Amen I say to you, as long as you did it to one of these my least brethren, you did it to me. Then shall he say to them also that shall be on his left hand: Depart from me, you cursed, into everlasting fire which was prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was hungry, and you gave me not to eat: I was thirsty, and you gave me not to drink: I was a stranger, and you took me not in: naked, and you covered me not: sick and in prison, and you did not visit me. Then they shall also answer him saying: Lord, when did we see thee hungry or thirsty, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister to thee? Then he shall answer them saying: Amen I say to you, as long as you did it not to one of these least, neither did you do it to me. And these shall go into everlasting punishment, but the just into life everlasting."

IN ALL DAILY ACTIONS

Not only the works of mercy mentioned here but all your ordinary actions can be more or less meritorious on the two conditions mentioned already, i. e., that they be performed in the state of sanctifying grace and with a pure intention. Does not St. Paul say: "Whether you eat or drink or whatever else you do, do all to glory of God" (1 Cor. x, 31)? A good Christian, therefore, who walks in the commandments of God and seeks first the kingdom of

God and His justice, is piling up treasures in heaven every hour of the day.

MAKING SATISFACTION FOR SIN

But what about the debts due to God's justice for sins forgiven and for the numerous venial sins that we commit daily? Well, all the good works I have enumerated are satisfactory as well as meritorious. Not only do they merit an increase of sanctifying grace and a corresponding increase of glory in heaven but they each cancel a part of the debt of punishment due to our sins; more or less, depending on our acceptance of what in them is painful to human nature.

BY SUFFERINGS WILLINGLY BORNE

It is a commonplace that this world is a vale of misery. No person can escape pain and trouble of one kind or another. Even the exercises of religion are often a weariness. Well, all this weariness, anxiety, pain, disappointment, irritation, poverty, not to speak of other ills, if accepted in a spirit of patience and penance, will be credited against the debt of punishment due to your sins. The more pain you bear patiently in this life the less you will have to suffer in the next. "Blessed are they that mourn; for they shall be comforted." How often is the house of mourning a holier place than the house of joy! Hence the practice of fasting. As there is a natural satisfaction in eating and drinking, so there is for most people a certain amount of pain in cutting down the usual supply of food and drink. The present Lenten fast is only a shadow of the Lent observed by our forefathers. But, even so, its observance in a spirit of penance will be, for those in the state of grace, meritorious and satisfactory in a high degree. And for those in the state of mortal sin its observance will propitiate God and dispose Him to give them the grace of repentance. Those who are doubtful about the prudence or the obligation of keeping the Lenten fast should settle the question in the confessional which every good Christian ought to make as early in Lent as possible.

BY VOLUNTARY SELF-DENIAL

If any of you are declared exempt from those regulations, you may observe them in part or, at least, you may abstain from unnecessary luxuries, such as stimulants and tobacco. If you are unwilling to deny yourself in anything, you do not deserve the name of Christian, for Our Lord has said: "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself." To deserve the name good Christian you must deny yourself in many things, for has not Our Lord said: "Enter ye at the narrow gate: for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many there are who go in thereat. How narrow is the gate and strait is the way that leadeth to life: and few there are that find it" (Matt. vii, 13-14). Terrible words those! But they are terrible only for those who walk in the broad road of self-indulgence and sleep in the death of mortal sin.

"If today you hear the voice of God do not harden your heart." Begin the Lent with a good confession. Come to be signed with the blessed ashes on Ash Wednesday. Keep the fast unless exempt or dispensed. If you cannot keep the fast from food, keep a fast from all kinds of sin. Keep a fast in particular from amusements that may be an occasion of sin. Let there be no dances during the holy season of Lent. If possible come to morning Mass. If possible visit the Most Holy Sacrament every day and do the Stations of the Cross. Be sure to fix on some form of daily mortification. Let every day during Lent find you saying your prayers more attentively. Let every day during Lent find you thinking more seriously of the last things—the certainty and possible nearness of death, the issues of the judgment that immediately follow death, the unspeakable joys of heaven and the awful possibility of being consigned to "everlasting fire." While dwelling on those fundamental thoughts, keep your eyes fixed on the crucified Son of God "Who His own self bore our sins in His body upon the tree: that we being dead to sin should live to justice: by whose stripes you were healed. For you were as sheep going astray: but you are now converted to the shepherd and bishop of your souls" (1 Peter ii).

Spending the Lent in this way and regulating your life accordingly, you will be daily "laying up treasures for

yourself in heaven, where neither rust nor moth doth consume and where thieves do not break through and steal." How great those treasures are no human words can tell, for "It is written: That eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man what things God hath prepared for them that love Him" (1 Cor. ii, 9).

Faith—A Guiding Light

RT. REV. PATRICK MORRISROE, D.D.

Selection from the 1928 Lenten Pastoral Letter of the Right Reverend Bishop of Achonry, Ireland, on the nature and properties of Divine faith.

AS we turn our eyes today from the spectacle of religious chaos which fills the world about us, and rest them upon the fair vision of our unerring Church, the cry rises to our lips that the sight of the transfigured Christ drew from the ravished Apostle: "Lord, it is good for us to be here" (Matt. xvii, 4). It is, indeed, good for us to abide in security within the household where truth guards the portals and where the unquiet spirit of uncertainty is not permitted to enter. The seasons may bring their changes, generations may come and go, but the Bride of Christ, endowed with never-failing freshness, knows no shadow of alteration or vicissitude. In this she is like her Founder—"Jesus Christ, yesterday and today; and the same for ever" (Heb. xiii, 8). How much do we not owe to the kind Providence that cast our birth in this, the true Fold! What a signal grace to be placed from tenderest years under the care of a faithful guide, who will lead us safely through every peril to the home that awaits us beyond.

We can never be grateful enough for this gift of faith, because of all the diseases that afflict the mind the sharpest is the anguish of religious doubt. The universe without the sun would not be more desolate than the heart of a man who fails to find his God. "All men are vain in whom there is not the knowledge of God. . . . Unhappy are they and this hope is among the dead, who have called gods the works of the hands of men" (Wisdom, xiii, 1, 10). Outside of our communion millions are vainly groping in the dark for a

solution of those mysteries to which the least amongst us holds the key. To these human existence, with its round of pleasure and pain, sin and suffering, is a complete riddle whose meaning they cannot understand, but its purport is plain to the Catholic child that imbibes with the milk at the breasts a familiarity with things hidden from those wise in their own conceits. "I confess to thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hidden these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them to little ones" (Matt. xi, 25). A God to serve, a soul to save, a span of time in which to prepare for a happy eternity—this is the message which it hath seemed good to the Father to reveal through the imperishable gift of faith to all who receive His word. By this divine light we know whence we have come and whither we are going. Then, when our stay here is ended, the dimness of earthly sight shall be exchanged for the clear vision of all things in God. "We see now through a glass in a dark manner: but when face to face. Now I know in part; but then I shall know even as I am known" (1 Cor. xiii, 12).

NATURE OF FAITH

To have a proper sense of gratitude for the gift of faith, which is beyond all price, we must take care that nothing tarnishes its luster; we must increase it by fervent prayer; above all we must exercise it ever and always by frequent acts of Divine love. That you may be the better able to do this, and that you may be enabled also, if called upon to give a reason for your conviction, let me in this little letter touch the mere fringe of an intensive subject by reminding you briefly of the nature of our Faith, its origin, its object, and its fruits or rewards. No better definition of the virtue of Divine faith can perhaps be given than that of St. Paul, who says it is "the argument (proof) of things that appear not" (Heb. xi, 1). Revealed truths are not based on intrinsic evidence like scientific axioms. The mind gives firm assent to them, not because it clearly sees the reason but because of the authority on which they rest. When travelers tell us of the strange sights they have witnessed and the stirring deeds in which they have played a part in distant lands, we believe their tales not because there is any evidence of our senses to support them but be-

cause we accept the word of the narrator whom we regard as trustworthy. So, too, we lend a willing ear to the marvels which men of science unfold about the heavens. All this belief is human faith, and we are so constituted by nature as to be directed and influenced in important matters of life by the testimony of those around us.

ACCEPTING THE TESTIMONY OF GOD

Now God is infinitely wiser and more truthful than any man. When, therefore, He makes known to us certain truths about Himself and His relations to this world, and when we accept these truths, not because we see any evidence whatever for them but solely because God has spoken them, then this adhesion of our mind to God's word is Divine faith. Believing thus, we act far more rationally than when we give assent to what is said by a mere fallible human being. The revealed truth may, indeed, be above the grasp of the natural light of our understanding, but this is no reason for rejecting it. Our intelligence is not the highest created, for star differs from star in glory. An angel's intellect is far higher than man's, and God's is infinitely higher than either. Failure to understand a thing is no proof that it is not true. Moreover, we are all children as far as understanding of things supernatural is concerned.

Instead of being surprised, we should rather be prepared, to find spiritual truths beyond the level of our limited understanding. These things belong to a different sphere from that on which we now live. In the world to come, if we deserve it, our minds shall be raised to a condition in which they shall see clearly in God many things that are here hidden from us. No one, then, who believes in the existence of God and realizes what an infinitely perfect Being He is, can hesitate for a moment to place absolute credence in what he knows to be revealed by God.

THE CREDENTIALS OF GOD'S REVELATION

The question, however, that baffles most unbelievers, is how can one be sure that God has spoken and revealed this or that truth. An educated person, Catholic or otherwise, might satisfy himself, from careful study of the sacred

records of the New Testament, which are from the natural point of view authentic history, that Christ, by prophecy and miracle, made good His claim to be acknowledged as a Divine legate commissioned by His Father to deliver a revelation to men. "But I have a greater testimony than that of John: for the works themselves, that I do, give testimony of me that the Father sent me. And the Father Himself who hath sent me hath given testimony of me" (John v, 36). The inquirer who had got thus far would probably receive grace to make an act of faith in the divinity of Our Lord and in His teaching. This is how a learned person might arrive at a knowledge of revealed truth.

For Catholics generally there is an easier and simpler way. Their Church was founded by Christ to be the guardian of God's communications to men and to interpret the Divine message with an infallible voice. She is the Pillar and Ground of truth, and with unerring certainty tells us what we are to believe, and how we are to order our lives in accordance with the Gospel maxims. When she tells us that certain things are revealed, we give them the assent of our minds and this adhesion is the strongest possible because it rests on Divine authority. This and this alone is the motive of Divine faith.

Such, Brethren, is the Catholic system of belief. On merely natural grounds it must commend itself for its simplicity and wisdom to every right-thinking man. If "God, who at sundry times and in diverse manners spoke in times past to the fathers by the prophets, last of all in these days hath spoken to us by his Son whom he hath appointed heir of all things" (Heb. i, 1-2), if this message was of most vital importance to mankind—setting forth as it did the destiny of man, the Divine purpose in this world and the relations the creature should bear to the Creator—God's work should be imperfect and His designs frustrated, unless some means was appointed by which this weighty communication should reach all for whom it was intended, free from possibility of error, corruption, or mutilation.

THE CHURCH THE CUSTODIAN OF REVELATION

This could only be secured by the establishment of a society such as a church endowed with the gift of infallibility. With those outside our communion, faith is a mat-

ter more of the heart than the head—something that stirs the emotions and excites in the breast a blind trust in Christ with an assured confidence of salvation. How erroneous such a position is may easily be seen from passages in the Scriptures where it is clearly implied that belief is directly and formally an act of the intellect. "Preach the Gospel to every creature. He that believeth, and is baptized shall be saved: he that believeth not shall be condemned" (Mark xvi, 18). Again, "This is the will of my Father who sent me; that every one who seeth the Son and believeth in him may have life everlasting" (John vi, 40). The belief implied in these quotations is the same that St. Peter gave expression to when in the name of all the Apostles he protested that "we have believed and have known that thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God" (John vi, 70). But, though faith is an act of the understanding, the will also plays its part in bringing the mind to assent to truths which it finds it hard to accept. Then there is always present in every act of faith Divine grace which elevates it to the supernatural order.

ORIGIN OF FAITH

In calling men to the grace of faith, God fulfils Himself in many ways. His Spirit breathes where it wills. Long years of earnest labor and fervent prayer are spent by some in quest of the true religion. At last, like those who hunger and thirst after justice, they have their fill in the discovery which satisfies the yearnings of their restless spirits. Where the search is prosecuted with earnestness, it is likely to succeed. Yet, as one recalls the rocks of prejudice that have often to be removed, before the eye of the unbiased mind sees the straight path clearly, there is no need to marvel that conversions are comparatively so few.

Sometimes the gift of faith is bestowed in what seems to be a miraculous manner. Such was the call of St. Paul, who was struck down on the road to Damascus and made a vessel of election from being a persecutor of the Christians.

To those who have the happiness to belong to the true Fold the grace of faith comes with the gentleness of a whispering wind. The seed of the Divine virtue is implanted in the soul at Baptism. As the years pass the tender plant, nourished by the supernatural sap which it receives from a

Christian environment, grows into flower and fruit. Reason's dawn witnesses the first act of conscious belief in the God of the universe, and on through life the Divine virtue, strengthened by constant exercise, becomes as the tree planted beside the waters which stands firm against all the winds that blow.

Like every treasure of value faith must be guarded with jealous care. Prudent people will not leave pearls of great price where thieves may break in and steal. Nothing is more precious than this gift of God's, and we ought not to expose it to the danger of loss or destruction. Reading bad books and neglect to practise our holy religion often cause spiritual apathy which leads to shipwreck of the supernatural life of faith. As unwholesome food destroys the body, so does pernicious literature disease the mind by giving it a distaste for serious thought on the things of God. The fate of those who wilfully abandon their heritage is painted in lurid colors by St. Paul: "It is impossible," he says, "for those who were once illuminated, have tasted also the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost; have moreover tasted the good work of God, and the powers of the world to come; and are fallen away, to be renewed again into penance" (Heb. vi, 4-5).

OBJECT OF FAITH

Whatever is to be received as the word of God may be said to be the object of Divine faith. This comprises every thing revealed whether implicitly or explicitly. In her creeds and solemn definitions the Church formally proposes these truths, and the Faithful are bound to yield them assent under penalty of exclusion from her membership.

There is, however, one great central belief on which all Christianity hinges, and from which everything supernatural flows as from a mighty reservoir—it is the truth of the Divinity of our Blessed Lord. Once this is accepted, His teaching must be embraced; His laws obeyed; and His example followed. Whoever fails to lay firm hold of this vital doctrine, forfeits all right to the title of Christian, however much he may cling to the name. On the other hand, the more closely our faith centers around the Sacred Person of Jesus, the purer, and stronger, and fuller

shall it be. When we receive Our Divine Lord for what He truly is, we practically make an act of faith in the whole of Revelation. For towards Him the Old Testament tended, through the fulfilment of prophecy and the passing of the shadow into the substance: and from Him the New took its origin as from some fertile source from which the message of salvation flowed to generations to come. The coming of Christ in the Incarnation was the most momentous event in human history. As the uncreated Wisdom of the Godhead, the Second Person played a part in the creation, since by Him all things were made. In the plan of Redemption His role was to make satisfaction for sin, and men were to share in the fruits of His bitter death by faith in His Divine Personality. "God so loved the world, as to give His only begotten Son; that whosoever believeth in Him may not perish, but may have life everlasting" (John iii, 16). Again, "He that believeth in Him is not judged (that is, *condemned*). But he that doth not believe is already judged; because he believeth not in the name of the only begotten Son of God" (iii, 18). Once more the same Evangelist: "He that believeth in the Son hath life everlasting; but he that believeth not the Son, shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him" (iii, 36).

FAITH IN CHRIST ESSENTIAL

God the Father makes faith in the Divine Son—whom in His boundless love He sent to save the world—to be the first essential condition of salvation. Not, indeed, that faith alone is enough, for other things, such as works of penance, are also necessary, but that faith is the beginning and the root of all justification, as the Council of Trent expresses it. Since, then, Christ was to be received by men as the Divine Legate, Providence took care to provide Him with a patent royal of Divinity. God the Father armed Him with the credentials of His Divine mission by bestowing on Him as man the power of working miracles. Further, He sealed Him with the sign-manual of His own testimony. Three times during His public ministry a voice from heaven proclaimed Our Blessed Lord to be the beloved Son in whom the Father was well pleased. God therefore has borne witness to the Divine Personality of Christ, and than this there can be no stronger proof. As St. John says,

“If we receive the testimony of men, the testimony of God is greater.” Now “he that believeth in the Son of God hath the testimony of God in himself” (1 John v. 9-10). Each one receives this testimony of the Eternal Father, Brethren, whenever he says: “I believe the Child born in Bethlehem to be Thy Divine Son and I adore Him; I believe the Man who was crucified on Calvary to be Thy Son, and I adore Him.” Every little act of this kind is not only a profession of faith in Our Lord’s Divinity but is virtually an acceptance of all revealed truth, since in this realm Christ, as we said, is the Alpha and Omega.

FRUITS OF OUR FAITH

The heart of man craves for happiness. Each day we set out to achieve something more satisfying than we enjoyed the day that is gone. In spite, however, of every effort the grave will find us no nearer to our heart’s desire than the cradle; for, truth to tell, the food that can fill the void is not to be found in this world. The bliss that satisfies and cloys not belongs to another sphere and is reached only through faith. “He that believeth in the Son, hath everlasting life” (John iii, 36).

Faith is the seed from which springs the everlasting harvest; the lamp which radiates the light of eternal glory. It leads directly to the possession of the supreme good. In this sense we can understand the Apostle when he calls it “the substance of things to be hoped for” (Heb. xi, 1). Scripture is full of the marvels wrought by belief in our Divine Lord, but the crowning achievement is to make us adopted sons of God. “As many as received Him, he gave them power to be made the sons of God, to them that believe in His name” (John i, 12). With the sword of faith we can overcome the world and win the victory of a glorious immortality. How precious this treasure! How hard to think that, when Christ launched the bark of the Church that was to bear this pearl of great price over the stormy waters of the world until the consummation of all things, He would have failed to provide her with rudder and helmsman so that, the rocks of doubt and the quicksands of error being avoided, the destined haven might be reached in safety! To say in sober earnestness that it could be otherwise is either to belittle the Gospel message or to insult

the intelligence of a rational being. Our Church, Brethren, is the only one that follows the traveler over the whole world just as it has followed him down the ages from the early Christian dawn, and when the lopped-off branches have decayed, it will still put forth flower and fruit like Aaron's rod. Therefore, as we have received the Lord Jesus in faith with all the homage of our understanding, with all the strength of our will, and all the devotion of warm hearts, let us walk in His ways with abounding thanksgiving, being rooted, built up and confirmed in Him and through Him.

FAITH AND THOSE WITHOUT

The thoughts put before you in this Pastoral, Brethren, have been suggested by a desire to strengthen you in the love of your holy religion and make you appreciate it at its worth. Ever it seems to be the fate of truth to be gainsayed and of righteousness to be persecuted. Our Blessed Lord indeed foretold it was to be so. One may feel sure, therefore, that it is because Catholicity is true that it has so many enemies, open and secret, in the world of today. For let there be no mistake. The age of anti-Catholic prejudice is not yet past. Witness the scant courtesy shown to Catholic topics in the world's Press. Daily papers from over the water circulate in vast numbers among our people. Some of these journals are tarred with the brush of bigotry. . . . Such unfair partiality ought to be resented in the only way it can be felt. The enemy can be defeated by adopting his own devices. Our duty is to stand together in loyal devotion to our Church. She is worthy of our admiration as well as of our affection. In her marvelous unity we see the evidence of her Divine origin, while her vitality points to the sustaining finger of God. For all these things, Brethren, we desire to glorify the Son with the glory He had with the Father before the world was.

GENERAL OBSERVATIONS

If we look at the moral or social condition of our country for a moment there are many things to fill us with thankfulness. On every side great strides have been made towards making our land a better and a happier place to

live in. Much more can be done by joint effort and hearty cooperation on the part of all the units that form the community. One may not shut his eyes however to a few matters that now and then come in for kindly criticism. . . .

Let me as a final word implore you, Brethren, to keep your Faith pure and untarnished; to cherish the name of Catholic—which without qualification of any kind is known and honored the world over—as the proudest title on earth; to love, revere, and above all, to commend it to those without by lives that exhale the odor of its sweetness and sanctity; and for the rest may “the God of Peace, who brought forth from the dead the great Pastor of the Sheep, Our Lord Jesus Christ in the blood of the everlasting Testament, fit you in all goodness to do His will, through Jesus Christ to whom be glory for ever and ever.”

Sexagesima Sunday

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BYOND one bare mention, when the preacher is about to read its Epistle and Gospel in the vernacular, little is said in our churches about Sexagesima.

The reasons for this neglect—if neglect be not too harsh a word—are not far to seek. Sexagesima falls between the Septuagesima and Quinquagesima stools. Septuagesima has not only a fine, rolling name, but also some liturgical features which proclaim its message (the imminence of Lent) even to the least observant of worshipers. The sacred ministers transact their high business at the altar in purple vestments. The joyful *Gloria in excelsis Deo* disappears from the Mass; and so does *Ite, missa est*. Although there is no longer a solemn “Farewell to Allelulia,” as in times when the Liturgical Year meant more to the Faithful than it does today, the Allelulias are silenced as of old and the mournful Tract *De profundis* takes their place. A fortnight later, Quinquagesima is equally distinct from ordinary Sundays. On that day the parish priest, who is merely the Bishop’s deputy in the cure of souls, preaches no sermon of his own, but reads the Chief Pastor’s counsels to the flock. Moreover, on Quinquagesima Sunday the order and

course of Lenten observance are clearly prescribed; and, if an indulgence is to mitigate the Lenten austerities, it is promulgated. But Sexagesima, as such, gets very scant remembrance. It is "betwixt and between." And it is the less mentioned from the pulpit because its Gospel—the Parable of the Sower—is the most-preached-from Gospel of the whole Missal and does not readily admit of Sexagesima exhortations.

While we shall not presume to suggest that the Sower might be put aside by tomorrow's preachers, perhaps we may trace a line of thought for those multitudes of our readers who will not be hearing a Sexagesima sermon.

FOR OUR PASTORS

While allowing of many other interpretations, the Sexagesima Mass may profitably be heard by the laity for the intentions of our pastors. In Rome, the Station of this Mass is at St. Paul's-without-the-Walls, and the Collect invokes the intercession of the great Doctor of the Gentiles *contra adversa omnia* (against all adversities). The long and stirring Epistle recounts the Apostle's sufferings—labors, prisons, "stripes above measure," floggings, stonings, shipwrecks. It tells of "perils in the city, perils in the wilderness, perils in the sea, perils from false brethren"; of hunger and thirst and fastings: of cold and nakedness.

Because these afflictions and privations were endured nearly nineteen hundred years ago and nineteen hundred miles away, we are prone to think of them as over and gone. At best, we leave them to the iconographer as picturesque scenes to be depicted in the stained windows of churches dedicated to St. Paul. We are wrong. St. Paul his glorious successors in the missionary toils and triumphs; and his perilous history repeats itself in many an apostolic life today. The *Tablet's* columns have contained many entries of late which are truly Acts of Apostles. Even as we write, Christ's ambassadors go "in perils of waters, in perils of robbers." In China many a new Paul has to face the scourges, the stones, the prisons; and in Mexico the brave band is *in mortibus frequenter* (in deaths often). And even in those lands where the Sexagesima Epistle would excessively describe the dolours of the new Pauls, the Sexagesima Gospel fits their sorrowful case. Year after year they sow

the good seed, only to find it trodden down; or devoured by the fowls of the air; or withered among the stones; or choked by the thorns. Surely for these laborers we ought to pray the prayer of tomorrow's Introit, *Exsurge, Domine, adjuva nos* (arise, Lord, assist us).

But it is not only for missionaries abroad that we may offer our Sexagesima Mass. Pastors at home stagger no less painfully under the *instantia quotidiana* (daily instance) of their heavy charge. Their cares do not lend themselves to oil paint and to stained glass, as do St. Paul's, nor even to the camera which records exotic scenes for missionary annals. A parish priest conning a gas or electric-light bill which he lacks the money to pay would be thought a scandalous subject for a painted window or an altar piece. So would a curate tracing the leaks in the roof; or a rector patching up a schism in the choir. Yet these are as truly apostolic cares as are the missionary's more picturesque adventures by flood and field. In many a parish neither tomorrow's Epistle nor tomorrow's Gospel will exaggerate the pastor's trials. He has his forty stripes from the ill-doing of bad Catholics and from nine and thirty other causes. As for his sermons, prepared with so much study and prayer, how seldom they seem to sink into good ground, how often into flints and thorns!

Ground down under these unpicturesque, un-epic worries, priests can grow stale and even bitter. So when we come to the Communion of tomorrow's Mass let us make it a prayer for all wearied pastors; asking in the very words of the Sexagesima Proper that the Great High Priest may richly visit them as they stand before the altar and that He may restore to them "the joy of their youth."

Lenten Liturgy

RT. REV. JAMES J. McNAMEE, D.D.

Selection from the 1928 Lenten Pastoral Letter of the Right Reverend Bishop of Ardagh and Clonmacnoise, Ireland, on the Liturgy of Lent.

THE holy season now about to open, dearly beloved in Christ, is especially adapted to serious reflection on the great purpose of life, and on our use or neglect of the means necessary for its realization. These forty days ought

to be for every true Christian a long retreat, during which, as far as is compatible with the discharge of the duties of one's state in life, each one should, as occasion may arise, withdraw the mind from the vanities of the world to fix attention on those eternal verities that determine the end of our being, and our relations with Our Creator and Sovereign Lord. It is to mark emphatically this aspect of the holy season that on the first day of Lent the Church solemnly sprinkles the blessed ashes on the heads of her children with the consecrated formula, "Remember, man, that thou art dust, and unto dust thou shalt return"; thus bringing them face to face with the stern reality of death and showing them the empty nothingness of the vanities of life for which so many are ready to barter their immortal souls. With the same thought in her mind she prays, "that as we know ourselves to be but ashes, and on account of our guilt doomed to return to dust, we may deserve to obtain of Thy mercy the pardon of all our sins and the rewards promised to the penitent"; and, finally, warning us of the uncertainty of life she exhorts us to repentance. "Let us amend, and do better in those things through which we have sinned through ignorance, lest suddenly prevented by the day of death, we seek time for penance and be not able to find it" (Liturgy of Ash Wednesday). Thus stressing by ceremonial, by prayer, and by exhortation the transience of human life, does the Church seek to adapt the hearts of her children to the Lenten spirit, and to render them responsive to its urgent call to penance.

For this, dearly beloved, is indeed the main purpose that the Church has in view in the institution of the holy season of Lent, to set aside a special time for works of penance and of satisfaction for sin. Sin, as we know, brings with it not merely the stain of guilt but also a debt of punishment; and the debt of temporal punishment often remains in whole or in part even when the guilt has been remitted by the mercy of God in the Sacrament of Penance. God is just as well as merciful; and His justice demands the fullest satisfaction for this debt of punishment, either by voluntary works of penance in this life or by the purifying pains of Purgatory in the next. It is an inexorable law that punishment must follow sin, and that the sinner's debt of temporal punishment to God's justice must be paid even to the last farthing. It therefore follows that we should

eagerly embrace the opportunity now offered us in the penitential discipline of the Church, of making atonement for our past offences by prayer, fasting, and alms-deeds, thus bringing soul and body and material possessions to the great work of propitiating the Divine Giver of them all, whose benefactions have been so often repaid with nought but sinful ingratitude. . . .

The Church has yet another purpose in view in the observance of this holy season. She wishes to turn the minds of her children to pious contemplation on the passion and death of her Divine Founder, in preparation for the solemn commemoration of the saving Sacrifice whereby our Redemption was wrought, in the Great Week which brings the Lenten season to a close. And so we shall find that as the weeks go by, the Passion looms larger in the liturgy, till it entirely predominates in the last two weeks and reaches its climax in the solemn offices of Holy Thursday and Good Friday, when the Church brings vividly before our minds the closing scenes of the mighty drama of the world's Redemption. To realize for ourselves this purpose of the Church, it is fitting that we should frequently meditate in prayer or pious reading on the saving sufferings of Our Blessed Lord; that we should assist daily, if at all possible, at the solemn representation of the sacrifice of Calvary which is the Holy Mass and that we should piously perform the beautiful devotion of the Way of the Cross, which is so highly enriched with indulgences, and so eminently calculated to excite true contrition for sin and true love of God. And finally, where opportunity offers, let us take our part in the beautiful ceremonial of the closing days of Holy Week, in grateful memory of the Saviour's supreme act of sacrifice for us. "Greater love than this no man hath, that a man lay down his life for his friends" (John xv, 13). . . .

And so when Easter Sunday dawns we shall reap in joy where we have sown in sorrow; and having been made partakers of Our Lord's bitter passion and death by penance and mortification, we shall, by God's grace, participate worthily in the joy and glory of His resurrection, "Who was delivered up for our sins and rose again for our justification" (Rom. iv, 25).

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