
Sunday Morning Storyland

Sermons for the Children's Mass

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To the memory of Father “Mike” Shea,
who left us a rich legacy of Christ-like insight
into human frailty and a sympathetic understand
of human problems.

In his book, *Sunday Morning Storyland*, Father Diamond speaks of Christ to children in the language of a child. He knows that the hearts of the young must be touched with fire, and through stories he enkindles fires of faith, hope and love. These stories will help parents, priests and teachers to fulfill their responsibility for the spiritual guidance of Catholic children.

Frances J. Spellman
Archbishop of New York

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INTRODUCTION

The primary purpose of this book is to assist busy priests in the difficult but pleasant task of preaching to children. The secondary purpose is to supply nuns and lay-teachers with material for explaining the Gospels in the classroom. Parents may also find it useful in the home.

The plan of the book is to take a text from the Gospel of each Sunday of the year and to explain it with illustrative anecdotes and moralizings. These sermons are intended merely to be a framework around which a priest can build an edifice embellished with the ornaments of his own personality and intellect.

The priest who preaches at the children’s Mass is confronted with a unique problem in the field of sacred eloquence. No audience is so quick to decide that they will not bother listening or on the other hand so eager to give full-souled attention. No priest, however, will ever regret the time and effort he puts into his sermons for children. Those little souls which are so big in the sight of God await the touch of a priestly hand to mould them into images of Christ. The priest will be gratified by the fruits of his labors, if he has caught and held the children’s attention, he will find on later questioning that they can repeat the very words he said with uncanny accuracy. They repeat them at home and thus perhaps the Holy Ghost, through one of His little ones whom He has taught to speak and understand, will reach a heart that would ordinarily be beyond the hearing of the preacher’s voice. The priest will also be gratified to find that years later the echo of his words still rings in the hearts of the lambs of his Rock, so that they heed the warnings of the shepherd although they may not longer be within his call. What priest’s heart would not blow with divine rapture to learn that a story he told many years ago stood by one of his flock in a time of need.

Thus does the priest carry out Christ’s commission to “feed my lambs.” It is hoped that this little work will help priests to fulfill that divine command.

THE NERVOUS LADY IN THE TROLLEY CAR

“Then they shall see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with great power and majesty.”

A NERVOUS lady was riding an electric trolley car. As the car was speeding along it came to a downgrade. She asked the conductor, “Will we be able to stop?” “Oh yes,” he replied. “We have an electric brake.”

But the lady was not satisfied. “Suppose that fails. Can you stop the car?” “Oh yes. We have an emergency brake.”

She was still not satisfied. “And if that should fail, can you stop the car?” “Oh yes. We have a hand brake.”

The nervous lady was still not satisfied. “But suppose the handbrake should fail. What will happen to us then?” “If the handbrake should fail,” said the conductor, “some of us will go to heaven and some of us will go to hell.”

Today the Church wishes us to ask ourselves this question:

Are we ready for the judgment? The coming of the Son of Man is like lightning out of the East. We should always be ready. People who say, “I have no time to take care of my soul; I have too many other things to do,” will have all eternity to regret that they did not take the time.

It is better for us to be like the blacksmith of a little village who was asked, “Aren’t you ashamed to be seen in church? A big strong man like you? What will people say if they see the blacksmith in church? To which he answered, “What will people say if they see the blacksmith in hell?”

The judgment will go something like this: God asks Himself about each soul that comes before Him, “Do I see the image of Myself in you?” If the soul is in the state of grace then it shines forth in the image of God Who made it. If the soul is not in the state of grace, then God cannot see Himself and He says to the soul, “I do not know you.”

According to an old Chinese legend, a soul crept up to heaven, and knocked timidly at the gate. When asked who was there, the soul replied, “It is I, Lord.” “If you say, ‘It is I,’” said a voice, “you are not ready yet for heaven.”

Back to earth the poor soul went and lived a life of prayer and penance. During that time, the soul learned the lesson that at judgment God is going to ask, “Do I see the image of Myself in you?”

Back to the gate of heaven crept the soul and when the voice asked, “Who is there?” he replied, “It is Thyself, Lord.”

The voice told him to enter: “Good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of the Lord.”

“It is appointed for men once to die and after that the judgment.” Our whole lives lead up to this. Are we ready for the judgment? Is there anything in our souls which would make God say “I do not know you?” If there is something that stands between you and God, make up your minds to remove it this week by a good confession. Then you need not be worried like the nervous lady in the trolley car. You will be ready like the soul that crept to heaven’s gate carrying within himself the likeness of God. God will look at you and ask, “Do I see the image of Myself in you?” If He does He will say to you, “Good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of the Lord.”

FATHER SMITH'S GUARDIAN ANGEL

"Behold, I send my angel before thy face."

NOT so many years ago, a priest named Father Frank Smith died in New York. Father Smith's story is a very sad one. Before he was ordained a priest, while he was still in the Seminary, he was helping to decorate the hall for the feast of Our Lady. He slipped and fell while climbing a ladder. He hurt his back a little but thought nothing of it at the time. Several years passed. He was already ordained and had been working in a city parish for a while. One morning he felt very weak and asked to have a doctor. And the doctor told him that he had the beginnings of paralysis. His fall from the ladder years before was only now making trouble for him. From that day onward, for more than ten years, Father Smith was confined to the sick room. One by one his limbs began to lose their power. For a while he was able to say Mass by himself, then he had to be supported, and finally he had to stay in bed all the time. Priests used to come in and say Mass for him in his bedroom. He would prepare the Chalice for them, but after a while he could not do even that. Father Frank Smith lay helpless until he died, just a few years ago.

Here is the point of the story: Someone once asked him what he thought about all day long, alone. He replied, "My Guardian Angel and I are very good friends. I talk to him all day long." Sometimes the book he was reading would slip from the bed or he would be unable to reach something which he needed. His Guardian Angel would pick up the book from the floor and put it within reach, or get him whatever else he needed. Time and time again, Father Frank Smith was found with something that he could not possibly have reached by himself.

This is an example of the power of our Guardian Angel. Most children neglect their Guardian Angels very much. You all know that when we were born, God gave us an angel to be our guide and guard. He is to be beside us day and night. Where we go, he will go. He will be with us -- not like our shadow which disappears when the sun goes down, but all the time from the day we were born to the day we die. It is very rude to neglect him. We could very easily say "hello" to him now and then and ask him to watch over us. He doesn't take up any space but he is there all the time.

A little girl used to leave a space on the bench beside her. "This is for my Guardian Angel," she would say. She didn't have to do that. Guardian angels have no bodies. They don't need space but it is a good thing always to remember that you have an angel of God beside you. He goes wherever you go. He is forced to listen to the things you say. He sees what you do. Don't force him to look upon things which displease him. Rather treat him like a friend. Have a little chat with him now and then about yourself and your worries. Ask him to wake you early in the morning if you want to get up. Ask him to help you during the exams, ask him for whatever you need.

Do you remember this little prayer? It is a good one to say every morning.

Angel of God, my guardian dear,
To whom God's love commits me here,
Ever this day be at my side,
To light and guard, to rule and guide.

“IS GOD BIG OR LITTLE?”

“There hath stood one in the midst of you whom you know not.”

Saint John scolds the people in this morning's Gospel, because they did not know Christ even though He stood at their elbows. He was beside them and they did not know it. God stands beside us all the time. Only, very often, we forget that He is there.

A wicked man once tried to trap a little girl by asking her questions about God. First of all, he asked her, “Can you tell me where God is?”

She replied, “You tell me where He isn't.”

Then he asked, “Is your God a big God?”

“Yes.”

“Is He a little God?”

“Yes.”

“How can He be both big and little at the same time?” The child gave a beautiful answer. “He is so big that the Heavens do not hold Him and yet He is so small that He can fit right inside my heart.”

That girl knew very well what we mean when we say that God is everywhere. “He is so big that the heavens do not hold Him and yet He is small enough to fit right inside my heart.”

There are two things that we should always remember. First, that God is always thinking of us; and, then, that we should always try to think of Him.

God is always thinking of us; in fact, He thinks more about us than we do ourselves. He thinks more about us than our mothers do. Anytime we want to remember how much God loves us, we have just to think of our mothers' love and remember that God loves us more than they do. He numbers every hair on our heads. He counts every winking of our eyelids. He helps us digest our breakfast. If it were not for Him, the blood would stop flowing in our veins and our heart would stop beating. At every moment, no matter where we are, God is thinking of us.

Wherever we go, then, we should always try to think of Him. He should not be one who stands in the midst of us whom we do not know. If we always kept in our minds the thought that God sees us, we would never sin.

A young boy was once talking with Saint Philip Neri and told him that he was troubled with bad thoughts which would not go away. No matter what he did, he could not get them out of his mind. The things which the kind old Saint suggested did not seem to help very much until he told him this, “Would you keep these thoughts in your mind if your head were made of glass and everyone could see what was going on inside your brain?” The boy of course said that he would not.

Our heads are made of glass before the eyes of God because He knows our thoughts, even our most secret ones. We should make it a rule never to do anything that we would not want God to see. He sees our every action. Therefore, we should not do anything to displease Him. He sees your every thought. Therefore, you should pretend that your head is made of glass.

Remember, finally, the clever words of the girl in the beginning of this sermon. “God is so big that the heavens cannot hold Him and yet He is so small that He can fit right inside my heart.”

“HOW CLOSE CAN YOU COME TO THE DITCH?”

“Prepare ye the way of the Lord.”

WE PREPARE the way of the Lord by rooting sin out of our lives, and the way to root out sin is to avoid the occasions of sin. Avoid occasions and prepare the way of the Lord. This morning’s story tells us how we can avoid occasions of sin.

There was once a rich man who was very fond of his aged mother. One day he was going to hire a chauffeur to take her out for a drive every afternoon. Three men asked for the job.

The rich man said to them, “I wouldn’t want any accidents to happen while you are taking my mother for a drive. I’ll give you all the same test and see how well you can drive. Beside the road, there is a ditch. I want you to see how close you can drive to that without falling in.”

The first driver said to himself, “This is easy.” He got behind the steering wheel and came zooming down the road to miss the ditch by four inches.

The second man whispered to himself, “I can do better than that.” He came zooming down the road and missed the ditch by two inches.

The third man had been thinking very hard in the meantime. He missed the ditch by three feet.

The other two men giggled. But the rich man said to him, “The job is yours. I want a man who will drive safely. A safe driver does not come as close to the ditch as he can.”

The lesson is that we must avoid the occasion of sin. We must not see how close we can come to sin without falling into it. We must stay away from it. If, then, whenever you go out with so and so, he tempts you to steal, stay away from him. If when you are with a certain girl, you always backbite someone, stay away from her. Those people are bad company for you. They are occasions of sin and are to be avoided. If you know that you have sinned in someone’s company, avoid him in the future, if you curse and swear when you are with a certain group, avoid that group. Do not see how close you can come to the ditch of sin without falling in. Stay in your lane. The man who was hiring the chauffeurs knew that if they drove close to the ditch all the time they would fall into it some day.

The devil tries to tempt you to come close to sin. He knows that you will fall into it if you do. You can fool him if you want to simply by staying in your own lane and by not driving close to the ditch. Stay away from the occasions of sin. Root sin out of your soul and you will be preparing the way of the Lord.

A BOY'S LAST WORDS

"They wondered at these things which were spoken concerning Him."

THE THINGS which had been spoken concerning Christ were wonderful things. There was the message of the angel to Mary and to the Shepherds. All wonderful things. But listening to the way some children speak of Him, Mary and Joseph must still be wondering. They must be wondering what sort of children they are who take the Name of Jesus in vain. "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain." We should respect the Name of Jesus above all names.

Today, we have a problem for you. You will have to think very hard, but then you will find that the answer is really very simple. We begin with a story.

A boy was ill in the hospital, very ill. On examining him, the doctor said, "I'm sorry to tell you this, Sonny. You will have to be very brave. But then I know you can take it. You have cancer of the tongue. The only way we can save your life is to operate. You will never be able to speak again." The boy was very sad, but brave.

When the time for the operation came, the doctor leaned over him and whispered very kindly, "This will be the last time you'll be able to speak, Sonny. Say whatever you want." The boy said something and kept repeating it until he went under the ether.

That is a sad story, but the problem is: If you were in that boy's place, just what would you say? I said that you would have to think very hard, but that the answer was very simple. Try to figure out what you would say.

What the boy in the story did was very simple. He just kept repeating over and over again the sacred Name of Jesus. It was a pleasant memory to him in the future years to think that the last words he spoke were the holiest and most sacred ones that he could possibly say. When he gets to Heaven and his body is made perfect again, how sweet it will be for him to look at Our Lord and say this was his last word spoken in life and his first word spoken in eternity -- "Jesus, Jesus."

This boy is very different from children who use the sacred Name of Jesus carelessly and in vain. Such action is the result not so much of bad will as of habit. Just the same, it is a very bad habit. Some children fall into the habit because they think it is smart. They think they sound grown up. Real men, however, use the Holy Name of Jesus only in reverence. You will never hear a true gentleman taking the Name of Jesus in vain.

There is a simple cure if you are foolish enough to have fallen into that habit. That is simply to get into the habit of saying something else. There are enough good words with which to relieve your feelings -- words which do not make you common or cheap. Pick one of these and use it when you strike out or get caught off second or miss a drop kick. Because you try to hit a home run and miss is not a reason for you to shout God's sacred Name in vain.

It is the name given to His Son by God Himself. An angel told it to Mary. It is a name which tells why He came into the world, for it means "Saviour." To live up to His Name, He died.

This is what St. Bernard says, "Are you downhearted? Let the Name of Jesus be in your heart, let it be on your lips. Have you been guilty of grievous offense? Call on the Name of Jesus and hope revives. By it, all temptation is overcome, every passion subdued. O my soul, you have a universal remedy in that Holy Name of Jesus, that Name so sweet and so powerful."

EGBERT, THE STUPID ENGINEER

“He was subject to them.”

THE GOSPEL this morning gives us a picture of perfect home life. “He went down to Nazareth and was subject to them.” There is a big difference between a house and a home. We speak of going to someone else’s house but we call the house in which we live a “home.” Our love for our parents and theirs for us; our love for our brothers and sisters and theirs for us makes a house become a home.

The secret of a happy home lies in the obedience of the children. Why must we obey? For the simple reason that our parents are placed over us by God. They know more than we do and have a right to command.

On an ocean-going steamer, there was once an engineer by the name of Egbert. Egbert’s job was to stay in the engine room of the ship and obey the orders that were signaled down to him from the captain on the bridge. Egbert had made the trip across the ocean so many times that he knew what the signals would be before they came. The captain would ring down “Full Steam Ahead,” and Egbert would obey. “Hard to Starboard,” and Egbert would obey again.

One day Egbert sat thinking and saying to himself, “Nobody appreciates me on this ship. I’m really the most important man on it but the captain up there in his gold braid likes to ring bells and show off. He knows I am buried down here in the engine room and cannot see where we are going so he rings bells all day long to make me unhappy. It is all part of a vast plot to keep me from enjoying myself.”

Deep in his thoughts, Egbert began to think of himself as more and more important. Then the bell rang, “Hard Astern.”

“You see what I mean,” continued Egbert, “I’ve been an engineer for thirty years and I’ve crossed the ocean hundreds of times. This is the first time anyone told me to go backwards in the middle of the ocean. That captain is just being bossy.”

So instead of going backward, Egbert went forward twice as fast. When they collided with another ship, Egbert wasn’t seen or heard of again.

When our parents ask us to obey, we are like the man in the engine room of the ship. We can’t see where we are going. We don’t know why the command is given, but our parents know and we must obey. They were children themselves once and they know what is good for us. When you feel like rebelling and saying, “They don’t know what they are talking about,” just remember -- don’t be an Egbert.

Home is the place where we are treated best and yet we grumble most. Children will grumble for almost any reason at all. Just like Egbert, the stupid engineer. If our home is to be peaceful like the house at Nazareth, we too must be like Christ and be subject, be obedient. Perhaps this motto will help you:

“Christ is the unseen head of this house,
The welcome guest at every meal,
And the silent listener to every conversation.”

I'LL TELL YOUR MOTHER ON YOU

"Mary the mother of Jesus was there."

DEEP in the heart of every child should be a love of Mary the Mother of God. It should be a devotion like that of the little boy who went to Lourdes on a pilgrimage. He was a victim of paralysis, a helpless cripple in a wheel chair. As he sat in the great court of Lourdes, he prayed for a cure. "Lord, let me walk like other kids."

The long procession was passing by. The strains of the Lourdes hymn, "Ave Maria," were sung in hopeful voices. The priest was at the end of the procession carrying the sacred Host in the monstrance. As he passed the lines of the sick he blessed them with the Host. Coming near the boy's chair, he stopped, blessed him, and passed on. How the boy hoped his prayers had been answered! He looked down at his withered limbs. They were still the same. He tried to get out of his chair and could not move. There was no cure.

Then across that vast courtyard above the noise of the crowd, above the swell of the organ and the chant of the hymn, a cry rang out from the heart of that child, "Jesus, I'll tell your Mother on you!"

Of course Our Lady of Lourdes answered a prayer like that one.

Mary's position as the Mother of God places her high above the angels. It places her closest to the heart of God Himself, and yet from that lofty position she is always willing to reach down and help us. No request is too large or too small for her attention. How sweet and charming was her behavior in this morning's Gospel! Seeing that the young bride would be embarrassed by the shortage of wine, she asked our Lord to perform His first miracle. Nobody is as close and dear to anyone as Mary is to her Son. She has but to ask and He grants her wish. That is why we must pray to Mary often -- always. We ask her to use her sweet power in our behalf.

There is always one way in which you can test a person's religion. Ask: Is he sincere in his beliefs? Then ask how he feels toward the Mother of God. In paying attention to her we do not take away any honor from Christ. In praising His Mother, we are praising Him and there should be no limit to our praise. That is the way Christ wants it.

The artist Murilo painted his picture of the Immaculate Conception twenty-seven times. After each attempt, he was not satisfied. It did not praise Mary enough. On the twenty-seventh attempt, he painted the most beautiful picture of Mary ever painted.

Somewhere in the world there is a soul which loves Mary more than anyone else in the world. Why couldn't that soul be one of you?

A blind girl was once asked what she would most like to see and she replied "Sometimes, I think that I should like to see the Mother of God."

We too hope someday to see the Mother of God in heaven. Therefore, we should listen to the words of Saint Bernard:

"If the winds of temptation arise, if you should fall on the rocks of tribulation, look toward that star -- call on Mary. If anger or avarice or the allurements of the flesh have dashed against the ship of your soul look towards Mary. When endangered, when perplexed, think of Mary -- call on Mary."

THE PRINCE AND THE TIGER

“Lord if Thou wilt Thou canst make me clean.”

A PERSIAN prince went out hunting one day. He had a good day because he killed the largest tiger in the forest. He brought the tiger’s cub home with him as a pet, and a wonderful pet it was. Every day, he would play with the tiger cub and take it with him wherever he went. Even when the tiger grew bigger, the prince took it along. It grew to full size and even then the prince would walk through the streets with his tame tiger on a chain. The tiger was so gentle that children used to pat him on the head.

One day the prince was playing and wrestling with his strange pet. By accident, it scratched him, and drew blood. As soon as the tiger had tasted blood it turned on his master and tore him to pieces.

So it is with sins of impurity. Once our lower instincts are aroused, they can get the better of us, if we are not careful. In matters of purity, we should watch out for beginnings. We should be on our guard for little sins of impurity which can easily lead to bigger ones. We must remember never to put our purity in danger because impurity is like a tiger which can eat us up once it has tasted blood. Don’t feed the tiger blood.

While hunting one day, a hunter saw an ermine. An ermine, as you know, is an animal with beautiful white fur. The white fur of the ermine is very highly prized by hunters because it is used to make ermine wraps and coats. This hunter chased the ermine to a place where he could catch it, to a place where it would have to cross a swamp.

Between the animal and safety lay a field of mud and ooze. Rather than plunge into the filth and stain its beautiful white coat, the ermine ran around the swamp. It risked death rather than place mud stains on its spotless white fur.

It is well known among hunters that an ermine will do anything rather than stain its white coat. No wonder the fur of the ermine is worn by kings and cardinals. Our purity is much like a white coat which we should guard against all stain.

From these two stories we can learn two lessons. First of all, to resist beginnings and not to feed the tiger blood. Second, to protect our purity from all stain. Christ said, “Unless you become as little children you shall not enter the kingdom of heaven.” He also said, “Blessed are the clean of heart for they shall see God.”

The reason Christ loves children so much is that they are clean of heart. You should not do anything that would make you less attractive to Christ.

A good prayer that will help you is the prayer of the leper in the Gospel today: “Lord if Thou wilt Thou canst make me clean.”

THE PICTURE ON THE POPE'S DESK

"Why are you fearful?"

BEING crowned Pope is a serious thing. When Pius XI was crowned, he went through all the ceremonies bravely, but after they were over, he went into his room and sat at the desk which had belonged to the Pope before him, Benedict XV. As he sat at the desk a great fear fell upon his soul. It was not a very easy time for a man to be pope. There were attacks on the Church from all sides. The first World War was just over and the world was in a turmoil. They were very trying times for the Church.

Thinking of all these things, Pope Pius XI was filled with fear. Then he did the only thing a man should do when he is afraid. He fell on his knees and prayed. While he was praying, his hand reached out and touched a picture which was left on the desk by Pope Benedict. He picked it up and looked at it and his fear vanished. His soul was filled with peace. It was a picture of Christ calming the waters and saying to the wind and the waves, "Peace be still." The waves of fear in Pius' soul subsided. He kept that picture on his desk all the time. After that, whenever he was worried, he could always look at the picture and remember that Christ stands ready to calm any storm by a word.

Christ always brings peace into the soul. If your soul is not at peace then you can recognize the work of the devil. Any time you are upset, nervous, worried, anxious, all those things mean that the devil is at work in your soul. His favorite weapon is confusion. He gets you all upset so that you do not know just what to do. Then while you are that way, he tempts you to sin. Wherever there is confusion, there is the work of the devil. When Christ acts in the soul, however, there is peace and calm. Everything is clean cut and straightforward. The cards are all on the table and there is no hesitation. You know just what has to be done.

Very often we may find ourselves undecided about something, perhaps about our vocation. To make up our minds properly about a matter like that we need three things. These three things are guaranteed to solve your problems.

Prayer. The first thing to do is to pray for light.

Advice. We should ask help from our parents, our confessor, or someone else whom we trust.

Thought. Use your head and a little common sense.

In the storms of life we should imitate the example of the Apostles, who ran to Christ and said, "Lord, save us, we perish!" For an answer Christ will calm the storm, just as He brought calm to the soul of Pope Pius XI with the one word, "Peace."

PETE AND REPEAT

“Suffer both to grow until the harvest.”

YOU MAY have heard your elders speak something I like this: “The bad people get all the breaks. If you are good you don’t have any luck.” You may have heard them complain: “Everything happens to me. What have I done to deserve this?” I know a story about that very thing which teaches the same lesson as the Gospel of today.

In a farmyard one day two turkeys were born. They were twins, exactly alike. The farmer called them Pete and Repeat. All summer Pete and Repeat played together in the farmyard, eating the same food and being treated equally well. One day in September, the farmer came and put Pete inside a pen and left poor Repeat outside.

Pete, inside the pen, didn’t like this at first. He was angry -- until dinner time. For dinner he was given twice as much as he could eat. But poor Repeat was kept on the same old diet. Pete began to enjoy himself inside the pen. All the farmer wanted him to do was eat and eat and then eat some more. Pete would no sooner settle down for a nice peaceful snooze than more food would be thrown to him and he would have to get up and eat it. It was a glorious life and it went on for weeks and weeks.

All this time, poor Repeat was moping around the farmyard, pecking around for just about enough to keep body and soul together. He came over one day and stuck his neck into Pete’s pen. “Pete,” he groaned, “you are getting as fat as an elephant. You get all the good food, while I’m out here scratching around for an odd bit of grain. You get all the breaks.” “Aw shucks, ‘taint nuthin’,” replied Pete. “There aren’t many great turkeys in the world, but we do our best.”

Poor, skinny Repeat walked off into the garden to dig worms, grumbling just the way you sometimes hear older people do: “Some people have all the luck.”

Weeks went by. Pete filled out like a pudding and poor Repeat just lived from day to day. Then a day came when Repeat poked his long neck inside the pen and shouted for Pete. No answer.

“Pete,” he shouted again, “where are you?” “He has eaten himself to death and I’m starving to death,” he whined.

A car turned up the drive. The farmer came out of the house and shouted, “Come in, everybody. Happy Thanksgiving to you all.”

Pete did some quiet thinking and said to himself, “I think I’ll just stay happy for a while. The turkey that is being fattened is not always so well off.”

Now suppose God does decide to send some suffering into your life and you see other people who live bad lives getting all the luck. Some day the ax will fall. “Suffer both to grow until the harvest.” That is one way of looking at it. But then, there is another way. Pain is sent to you as a chance to do penance for your own sins and for the sins of others and as a challenge: Can you take it? God promises you the crown of eternal glory, if you earn it.

Next time you hear people complain about bad luck and ask what they have done to deserve it, just remember today’s Gospel and today’s story and say to yourself, “I have sinned enough to deserve more than this. It’s a chance for me to repay. Anyway, I can take it. The turkey that is being fattened isn’t always so well off.”

MARIO'S STAINED GLASS WINDOW

"The least indeed of all seed, but when it is grown up it is greater than all herbs."

LITTLE things like a grain of mustard seed can become very important. A story will show how true that is.

The artists of the city of Florence in Italy were very proud of their skill in making stained glass windows. They were so proud that they held a contest to see which of them could make the best stained glass window for the Cathedral. Young Mario, a lad of thirteen, wanted very much to be a great artist, but he was only a poor helper to one of these window makers. Mario wanted to enter the contest but he had no money to buy the stained glass for his window.

On Saint Mark's day a year later, the contest was over and the Duke picked out the winning window of them all. It showed the figure of Christ, beckoning "Come Follow Me." Who was the artist? On every work except this one the artist had scrawled his name in large proud letters.

Looking closely at the winning work the Duke saw a tiny letter "M" on the hem of Christ's garment. Mario was the winner. His was the best window. The blushing boy was brought before the Duke to receive his reward.

"Where did a poor lad like you get the glass to make so fine a window?" asked the Duke, smiling.

Mario answered, "I made that window out of scraps of glass which I picked up every day." There is a lesson hidden in this story for every one on the value of little things. It is amazing how much we can do by simply doing little things one after the other. Life is made up of a series of little things which can become very important. Just as the grain of mustard seed is the smallest of seeds and becomes a great tree.

"For the want of a nail the shoe was lost. For the want of a shoe, the horse was lost. For the want of a horse, the rider was lost. He was overtaken and slain by the enemy, and all for the want of a horseshoe nail."

Before we stop, here is a little task for you this week. Sometime during the week come into the church and sit and look steadily at any of these windows for a minute and a half, and think over what was said this morning. "I made that window," remember Mario said, "out of scraps of glass that I picked up every day." Then turn to the tabernacle and tell our Lord that you would like to make an image of Him in your soul out of the little things that you do every day. You want to make this image out of little actions just as Mario made his window out of little scraps of glass. These little actions will be prayers, little visits, little words of kindness, little acts of obedience -- every little thing that you do for God.

"A little thing is a little thing, but to be faithful in little things is a great thing."

THE GRUMPY OLD GRANDFATHER CLOCK

“Why stand you here all the day idle?”

IN ONE corner of the drawing room of a great house stood a beautiful grand piano. In the opposite corner stood a gracefully carved grandfather clock. When all the house was quiet at midnight the grandfather clock would boom out the hour and settle down to sleep again with a groan.

From his corner, the piano said, “Listen, Grandfather! Why do you keep going all the time, striking every hour and keeping me awake? Why don’t you stop?”

The grandfather clock groaned back, “I wish I could but they keep winding me all the time. Winding me up. As soon as I think I can get a good rest, somebody comes along and winds me up. I wish they would stop it. I wish they would leave me alone.”

Said the piano, “I wish they would leave you alone, too, so that I could get some sleep.”

The master of the house went away soon after that and the ticking of the clock was not so steady. His chimes were not so loud and finally they stopped.

“This is the life,” he said and settled down to a nice long sleep.

Days passed by and he slept, but the days dragged on into weeks and months and he was tired of sleeping. He began to get a little rusty in the joints. His face was dirty and a spider was weaving a cobweb right under his nose.

One night he complained to the piano, “I’m tired of doing nothing. I wish somebody would wind me up again.” The piano said, “I wish somebody would wind you up, too. I miss your chimes.”

After a year the master came home. The first thing he did was to wind the clock. How happy the grandfather clock was after that!

That night he said to the piano, “That old motto is true: If I rest, I rust. I’m glad to be working again.”

Children can sometimes be the laziest people in the world. It is a question of habit. It is very easy for us to let ourselves become lazy. We have to guard against it all the time. We see so many up-and-coming young men and women. They are up-and-coming all right, but where on earth do they go? They disappear, and laziness has a lot to do with it.

Whenever the great musician Paderewski had a concert, he practiced all day until one hour before it.

When General Cortez was planning to build a canal, they told him, “You can’t do that. There are mountains there.” He replied, “But there are also hands.”

An old monk, used to say, “Every stitch of the needle is an act of love for God.” He was making acts of love all day long.

Captain Scott, the polar explorer who went as far as the South Pole, wrote a letter giving instructions for the education of his son. In it he said, “Above all, you must guard the boy against idleness.”

In the words of a successful businessman, “The secret of success is to jump at the opportunity.” How do you know the opportunity? You don’t. You just keep on jumping.

THE THREE SICK CHILDREN

“He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.”

DURING most of their young lives children are receiving advice. Some children take it and others do not. It is very easy for us to work ourselves into a state of mind where no one can tell us anything. There are some children who will start an argument no matter what advice is given to them. Advice from parents and teachers is good. It has been the same for centuries. The trouble is that children are like the soils in the gospel. Some can take it, and others cannot.

Three children went to the doctor. All of them were suffering with the same pain. The doctor examined the first and said.

“I’m sorry, but you have appendicitis and need an operation immediately.”

The child said to himself, “He doesn’t know what he is talking about. It isn’t appendicitis. I’ve been eating green apples, that’s all.”

To the second child the doctor said the same thing: “I’m sorry, but you have appendicitis and need an operation.”

The child went home and said, “Maybe he is right about the appendicitis but I don’t need an operation. I’ll take care of it in my own way. A hot water bottle is all I need.”

To the third child, the doctor said the same thing: “You have appendicitis and need an operation.” This boy went to the hospital and was up and around in a couple of weeks.

The point of the story is that the third boy went to the funerals of the other two. When advice is given to us we can act in different ways, just like the people in the gospel. We can refuse, we can do something else, or we can do what we are supposed to do.

In regard to taking advice there is another very common failing which we can fall into. That is to sit and listen and say to oneself, “He doesn’t mean me. He means Johnny Jones across the aisle.”

After Mass one Sunday morning, a priest was talking to a boy who said, “That was a good sermon Father. It is just what my sister needs.”

After the next Mass, the sister said, “That was a good sermon Father. It is just what my brother needs.”

Then the priest began to laugh, for he had preached the same sermon at both Masses.

During this week you will be receiving all kinds of advice. Your parents will advise you about dressing warmly in this cold weather, about eating enough food, about taking cod-liver oil to prevent colds. Sister will be advising you over and over again. What wonderful patience nuns must have! She will advise you about what and when and how to study. This is good advice because she knows what is best for you. The policeman will advise you about crossing streets against the light. I am giving you advice now, and the advice I give you is to listen to the advice that you receive during the week. The seed fell on all sorts of ground, but only the good soil received it: “they who hearing the word keep it and bring forth fruit in patience.”

HOW ACHAB KEPT HIS HEAD

“And they rebuked Him but He cried out much more.”

THE blind man of today’s Gospel did not worry about what people thought of him. They told him not to pray but he kept right on praying anyway and his prayers were answered.

Unlike that blind man, some children are always worried about what people think of them. Before they do anything they always wonder what people will think. This is a very common fault with children and it goes by the name of vanity. Some children don’t like to tip their hats when they pass a church because of what people might think. Some children do not study because the other children might think they are pluggers. It goes on and on. But fortunately it is an easy thing to overcome. Here is how a man once did.

This man’s name was Achab and he lived in India a long time ago. Like some of you, he was always afraid of what people would think. He came to the wise old emperor and asked for his advice. He said:

“I am always worrying about what people will think. It has got so that I am afraid to do anything. I can hardly move without worrying about what everyone is going to think. I am almost going crazy and would like to get over it.”

The Emperor answered, “I will cure you if you do what I tell you. Take this vessel which is filled to the brim with oil and carry it through the streets of the city and then back to me.”

Then the Emperor called a large slave who carried a sword as big as himself and said to the man, “If you spill one drop of oil on the way, your head will be chopped off the next instant.”

Out into the street went Achab, carrying the vessel filled to the brim with oil, followed by the tall slave with the long, sharp sword. An hour later he came back to the palace. He had not spilled a drop of oil and his head was still on his shoulders.

“Now,” said the Emperor, “did you notice anyone looking at you while you walked along? You must have looked very funny.”

“No,” said the man, “I did not see anyone at all. All I was worrying about was the oil in the pitcher, and the slave with the big sword.”

“Then learn your lesson,” said the Emperor. “Just keep your mind on what you are doing and don’t worry about what people think of you. That is the easiest way to keep your head.”

The man learned his lesson and had no more trouble from that day forward. He was happier because now he was not afraid of what people thought of him. After all, what people think isn’t very important because they change their minds every day. You all remember Babe Ruth. When Babe hit a home run, all the people would cheer. The next day, if he struck out, they would all boo at him. People change their minds overnight. As long as you know that what you are doing is right, just go right ahead and don’t worry about what anyone thinks. Be like the blind man in the Gospel who, although they rebuked him, cried out all the more.

THE MAN WHO ESCAPED FROM PRISON

“Begone, Satan! for it is written: The Lord thy God shalt thou adore.”

A MAN in prison once made his escape in a very unusual way. This man was locked up in a high tower, so high that no one could climb down from it. To escape, he would pull two hairs out of his head every day and tie them together. After a while he was able to make a thread out of them. He let this thread out of the window of his cell and a friend waiting below tied a silk thread to it. He was able to pull up the silk thread. To the end of that was tied a length of string. To the end of the string was tied a thin rope and to the thin rope a thick one. Down this last rope the man made his escape.

This is just the way the devil tempts our lower natures to break loose. We keep our passions imprisoned, but the devil helps them to escape little by little. He very seldom tempts us to commit a serious sin at first. That would frighten us. But he will tempt us to do some small thing which will lead us to commit a serious sin. He will never tempt us to do two things at once. Time enough for the other thing later. But he will tempt us in such a way that one temptation will lead to another and that to another and so on until we have sinned mortally.

Notice how, even when he tempted Our Lord he used the same method. He would not tempt Him first of all to fall down and adore Satan. He leads up to that gradually. So it is with us. He will not tempt us to tell a lie about something important until he has got us into the habit of lying. He will not tempt us to steal a large amount of money until he has got us little by little into the habit of stealing. Then will come a big temptation.

We should, however, always bear in mind this fact. It is not a sin to be tempted. From this morning's Gospel we learn that Our Lord was tempted and when we are tempted it means just that we are being tried. We should do our best to stand up under the trial.

A saint who was able to see the devil once walked past a monastery and saw devils sitting in every corner, even in the chapel. He walked into the city and saw that there was just one devil on the job. He asked why and the devil replied, “One devil is enough to tempt the souls in the city because they do not try to resist, but to capture one good soul a legion of devils is necessary.”

If we are being tempted it means that our souls are getting strong. If God allows us to be tempted He will also give us strength enough to say, as our Lord did, “Begone, Satan.” And we can draw comfort from the last words of the Gospel: “The devil left Him and angels came and ministered to Him.”

THORWALDSEN'S PICTURE OF CHRIST

"And they lifting up their eyes saw no one, but only Jesus."

THORWALDSEN was an artist who painted a picture of Christ in agony in the garden of Gethsemane. It was very well done and he was rather proud of it. It showed Christ kneeling by the rock in the garden in agony over the sins of men. When the picture was completed he called in his old teacher to ask his opinion. The teacher stood in front of the picture and then stood up close and then looked at it from either side. Then he turned to the young artist and said,

"It is a good picture, but there seems to be something missing -- something I can't put my finger on."

Thorwaldsen smiled and said, "That is the way it should be. You are standing up looking at the picture but to see its real meaning you have to kneel down."

The teacher did so and said, "That is true. When you kneel down you see its real beauty." When we kneel down we have to look up and, like the Apostles, "see no one but Jesus."

In every child's heart there should be a personal love for Jesus Christ. We should see only Jesus and follow Him as our leader. He never asks us to go where He does not lead. He leads the way and we should follow.

King Henry of Navarre, when fighting for the Throne of France always wore a white cockade or ribbon on his helmet so that his men could see him and follow him to victory. In a poem, it goes this way:

"The king is come to marshal us in all his armor drest;
And he has bound a snow white plume upon his gallant crest.
Press where you see the white plume shine amid the ranks of war;
And be your guiding star today the helmet of Navarre."
(Macauley)

So must every boy and girl follow Christ, the leader.

The strongest man in Scotland was Black Douglas. He was a strong knight who always wore black armor. He was a friend of King Robert Bruce. When Bruce died he told Douglas to put his heart in a silver box and carry it with him until he captured the holy city of Jerusalem. Fighting before Jerusalem, Douglas' men were at the point of running away. Douglas stood up, holding high the silver casket containing the heart of King Robert Bruce. He threw it toward the enemy and shouted, "Where the heart of Bruce is, we must follow." His men tried harder and won the battle. Where the Heart of Christ is, we too, must follow.

If you have a personal love for Christ, you will win your battles against sin.

THE DEVIL AUCTIONS HIS TOOLS

“Jesus was casting out a devil.”

ACCORDING to an old legend the devil was at one time thinking of going out of business. He called all of his demons together and began to auction off his tools. All the younger devils eager to become masters in the art of temptation began to bid for them. Anger, pride, lust, untruth, all these were sold for a fairly low price until just one tool was left. The bidding for the last tool was terrific. Each devil was trying his best to get it because he knew that here was a tool which in the hands of a skillful tempter would make the capture of a soul very very easy. The devil decided that since they were all so anxious he had better not sell this tool and stay in business anyway. The name of that tool by which the devil gets more souls than any other is discouragement. That is a big word but it means simply this: When you are discouraged you quit trying, and if you quit trying you are licked.

All through our Lord’s teaching, we can hear Him telling us never to quit trying. “You must forgive not seven or seventy times but seventy times seven,” which is the Hebrew way of saying “always.” “We ought always to pray and not to faint.” “The devil will try to sift you as wheat but I have prayed for you that thy faith fail not.” You all remember the story of the man who kept knocking at the door until it was opened and of the man who kept crying out, “Jesus, son of David, have mercy on me.” All of these are examples of not quitting.

Who is this creature which we call the devil? He is first of all a real person. An angel, even if he is a fallen one. He is someone whom we should really be afraid of. He is stronger and far more clever than any of us. He knows more about us than we know ourselves. We should have a healthy fear of him as an enemy.

Even though we fear him, we should be confident, because there is a way of dealing with him. There is a very simple rule when it comes to dealing with the devil and that is: Run -- don’t walk -- to the nearest exit. You are not a coward if you run. You are a coward if you stay. Because if you daily with him, he will certainly overcome you and then you will get discouraged and then you will quit trying and then you are licked.

We should draw confidence from this story about Saint Catherine of Genoa. Whenever we are tempted, God is right beside us. St. Catherine used to receive visions of our Lord. One night when there was no vision the devil tempted her very severely. When Our Lord appeared to her again, she said, “When I was being tempted last night, I needed You. Where were You?” Our Lord replied, “When you were being tempted, then I was closest to you.”

ST. ANTHONY AND THE MULE

IN THIS morning's Gospel, Our Lord works the miracle of the loaves and the fishes. He worked this miracle in order to prepare the minds of His hearers for His teaching on the Eucharist which was to follow.

The Eucharist is the mystery of the real presence of Our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament. He is present in the bread and wine with His body and blood, soul and divinity -- really and truly present.

There is an old, old story about Saint Anthony and a mule and a man named Bonvillo who was a fallen-away Catholic. Bonvillo scoffed at the Church and especially at the sacrament of the Eucharist. He thought of a test for Saint Anthony. He said that he would starve his mule for a week and then lead it into the market place. On one side would be a bale of hay and on the other would be Saint Anthony carrying the Blessed Sacrament. If the mule would adore the Blessed Sacrament first, before eating the hay, he would believe. Saint Anthony accepted and Bonvillo was surprised. The day of the trial came. The mule adored the Blessed Sacrament without a moment's hesitation and saved his master's faith.

A painter of the sixteenth century painted a picture. In the center was the picture of Christ and under it, the words "This is My Body." On one side was a picture of Luther and the words, "This contains my body." On the other side, a picture of Calvin and the words, "This is the type of my body." In the background are the words, "Which of these three speaks the truth?" We know the answer very well. When Christ said, "This is my body," that is just what He meant.

How pleasing it would be to God if we could make as good a record as Margaret Mullaney. Margaret Mullaney died in 1933. She was a chambermaid in the Grand Hotel in New York City. She had received Communion every day except on Good Fridays for forty-seven years.

But the man whom a priest visited on his deathbed was very different. He was unconscious and the priest asked if he was a Catholic. They told him, "He hasn't been to church in years but he always tips his hat."

If you have made a resolution to go to Communion every morning during Lent, you may be tempted to weaken around this time. But do not weaken. Keep it up until Easter. If you have not made any resolution how nice it would be to make one now and keep it until Easter. Our Lord's greatest delight is to be received into the hearts of boys and girls because He loves them so much. He often used to set aside important things just to talk with them. We should be willing to set aside a little comfort in order to receive Him and then talk to Him. We should aim at Margaret Mullaney's record rather than at that of the man who only tipped his hat. Instead of tipping our hats we should open our hearts.

WHY THE ROBIN'S BREAST IS RED

WE ARE entering now into the Church's greatest week -- Passion Week. It is the week in which good Catholics relive the passion and death of our Lord.

There is a lovely little legend told about the Passion of Christ. It explains why the robin's breast is red. In those days, the robin was a proud little fellow and the envy of all the birds because God had created him with a silver vest. As the robin flew through the air and hopped around, his silver vest would gleam in the sun.

On Good Friday morning, a robin was hopping around on Mount Calvary. He watched the crowds force Our Lord up the hill under the cruel weight of the cross. He watched them throw Him down and nail Him to it in a cruel manner. He watched our Lord with pity in his eyes wondering how men could be so cruel to the good God Who had given the robin his silver vest. He wanted to do something to help. The nails were too big for him to draw out with his little beak. He thought, "Perhaps I can draw out one of those cruel thorns that are piercing Our Lord's brow." He flew over to the cross and tried to pull one of them out. While he was tugging away the thorn pierced his breast and the robin's beautiful silver vest was covered with blood. This little poem tells the story:

"A little bird that warbled round that memorable day
Flitted around and strove to wrench a single thorn away;
The cruel spike impaled his breast and thus 'tis sweetly said:
The robin has a silver vest incarnadined with red."
(James Ryder Randall)

This is only a legend, but we can learn a lesson from it. By our sins we nailed Christ to the cross. We were there on Calvary just as much as the Romans and the executioners. If we were there by our sins it is also true that we can be there by our good works and relieve Our Lord's pain. During this week, make up your minds to do something special. Perhaps you can reach back and remove a single thorn from Christ's brow. That is the spirit of Queen Elizabeth of Hungary who would not wear her crown on Good Friday saying, "I cannot wear jewels when my Lord wore thorns."

The Emperor Clovis was listening to a sermon on the Passion. He was so moved that he stood up and cried: "If only I had been there with my soldiers." That is the spirit we should try to have for this week. "If only I had been there." We can be there by our good works and, please God, we will be.

CHUMLEY, THE PIOUS ENGLISH SETTER

“You seek Jesus of Nazareth. He is risen.”

THIS is Easter morning. We are going to learn a lesson today from a very smart dog. This dog is an English setter by the name of Chumley. If his master would put a piece of meat in front of him and say, “Now it is Lent,” Chumley would not eat the meat, but would stand there with his big eyes gleaming until his master would say, “Now it is Easter.” Then Chumley would gobble up the meat and bark very happily. Chumley found out that he got a lot more meat this way than he would ordinarily get, so he even learned the trick in three languages.

This morning, we learn a lesson from Chumley. It is the lesson which the Church has been trying to teach us since Lent began, namely that we must have the fast before the feast, the cross before the crown. If we learn this lesson now and remember it all our lives, we can save ourselves a lot of trouble. It means that we must not always be looking for an easy way out of things. Our Lord could have chosen the easy way out, but He did not.

King Charles V once called his son before him and offered him a choice. On the table he placed a sword and a crown. He said, “Which do you choose?” The son hesitated a moment and then picked up the sword. “Why the sword?” his father asked. The son took up the sword and pointed at the crown and said, “With this, I can get that.” So it is with us. With the sword of penance we can gain the crown of eternal life, but the cross comes before the crown.

Hercules once stood at the crossroads wondering which way to turn. Two guides approached him. One said, “Follow me. This is the road of pleasure and the easy way.” The other said, “This is the road of effort, the hard way. This is the hard way, but it leads to happiness.” Hercules chose the hard road and made a wise choice, because the cross comes before the crown, the fast before the feast.

King Cyrus of Persia was leading his troops on a campaign against their enemy Media. At one point the soldiers were tired and anxious to return home. Cyrus encouraged them by saying, “If you light the Medes now, the labor is short but the reward is long.” He was right and that is the lesson we must learn this morning, that Lent comes before Easter, that the Crucifixion comes before the Resurrection, the fast before the feast -- the cross before the crown.

THE DEVIL STUCK IN A TRAPDOOR

“Whose sins you shall forgive they are forgiven.”

MANY children have a false idea of God. They think of Him as a monster, waiting for a chance to catch them and throw them down to hell. Nothing could be farther from the truth than this. God wants to keep us out of hell. He wants to forgive sins, if we will only let Him.

I wonder if anyone here knows the story of Faust. It was written as a play in German by Goethe. In the play, Faust is an unusually bright student who sells his soul to the devil. Because of that bargain, all Faust has to do is wish and the devil will get his wish for him. Faust enjoys himself, forgetting that when the time is up the devil will claim his soul and carry it off to hell. Finally, all Faust's wishes are satisfied. The climax of the play comes when the devil seizes Faust in his arms and jumps through a trapdoor out of which smoke and flames are bursting. And that is the end of poor Faust. Once, when this play was being done in Breslau, a college town in Germany, something funny happened. The devil seized Faust in a powerful grip, carried him to the flaming trapdoor, and was just about to jump down into hell when the trapdoor stuck. There was the devil, stuck in the trapdoor. The audience thought it was very funny and applauded because Faust was saved.

We want to learn this morning about something which will keep the gates of hell tight closed for us -- the act of perfect contrition. What is an act of perfect contrition? An act of perfect contrition is a prayer in which we tell God that we are sorry for our sins because we have offended Him Who is so good. Maybe this parable will make it clear. There are several kinds of contrition, see if you can pick them out.

A father once gave a lamb to each of his two children. While the children slept, a wolf killed the two lambs. One child woke up and cried, “I'm sorry because my father will beat me.” The second child woke up and said, “I'm sorry because my father was fond of that lamb and will miss it.” Which of the two had perfect contrition? The second, of course.

If you find yourselves in a position where you cannot go to confession, you should say an act of perfect contrition. As you know from your catechism, when God hears you make an act of contrition He will forgive your sins even before you go to confession. But you must intend to confess when you have the chance. It is a very good idea to say an act of contrition when you say your night prayers. The prayer you say in confession is just the one to say: “Oh my God, I am sorry for having offended Thee (Notice we start off by saying we are sorry; then follow the reasons why we are sorry) and I detest all my sins because I dread the loss of Heaven and the pains of hell (That is imperfect contrition, which is sufficient in the sacrament of Penance), but most of all because I have offended Thee, my God, Who art all good and deserving of all my love. (That is perfect sorrow, just like the boy who was sorry because his father would miss the lamb.) I firmly resolve, with the help of Thy grace, to confess my sins (We must intend to go to confession when we can), to do penance, and to amend my life. Amen.”

MONMOUTH'S ESCAPE

"I am the Good Shepherd."

IN ENGLAND many years ago there was a general named the Duke of Monmouth. His army was hopelessly defeated in battle and Monmouth was forced to flee for his life. He hid in the fields all day and traveled every night. Finally, his enemies caught up with him. They chased him into a shepherd's hut. Instead of closing the door on poor Monmouth the shepherd did a brave thing. He changed clothes with the Duke and stepped out to meet his foes. Long and well he fought, trying to delay the soldiers until Monmouth could make his escape. He held them off with his sword, for three hours, until he fell exhausted and was killed. The Duke of Monmouth by this time was far away and safe -- saved by a good shepherd.

In the war against sin, people have always been pursued by the devil. But Our Lord became a man and fought the devil for three hours on the Cross of Calvary until He too was slain. During the struggle sinful man was able to escape from the devil's power. That is why Our Lord has a perfect right to call Himself the Good Shepherd Who lays down His life for His sheep. Over and over again He tells us that He is the Shepherd of souls. "If a man has a hundred sheep and loses one, does he not leave the ninety-nine in the desert and go after that which was lost?" "Other sheep I have that are not of this fold; them also must I bring."

What wonderful things our souls must be if Christ the Good Shepherd is willing to lose his life to save them. We should always keep this in mind. We have something within ourselves which is very valuable, something which we must treasure and guard. To be the Shepherd of our souls Christ came down to earth. Sheep go to the shepherd for all their needs. For food -- Christ has given Himself in the Eucharist to be the food of our souls. For water -- our souls drink the sweet waters of Christ in Baptism. For healing -- Christ heals the wounds of our souls in the sacrament of Penance. For guidance -- whenever we go astray Christ draws us back to Him as the shepherd draws back his sheep with his crook. For protection -- the good shepherd will lay down his life for his sheep and Christ died on the cross for us. What wonderful things Christ has done for our souls! What wonderful things our souls must be! We should treasure them and not do anything that will make them displeasing to their Shepherd.

Just as the shepherd died to save the Duke of Monmouth, so did Christ die on Calvary to save us. That is why He has a perfect right to say, "I am the Good Shepherd. I lay down my life for my sheep."

EVEN THIS SHALL PASS AWAY

“Your sorrow shall be turned into joy.”

AN OLD Persian king was wondering what he could give to his son as a present for his sixteenth birthday.

He decided on a ring. When his birthday came, his son, the prince, was very proud of the ring, until he saw what was written on it. For on the ring, in Persian letters it said, “Even this shall pass away.” The prince did not understand what those words meant, but he wore the ring anyway and often read the inscription on it. He read it over and over until he knew the words by heart. Later he went off to war to fight beside his father. He was struck by an arrow and lay in bed for weeks in great pain.

Many times during his illness he would look at the ring and say to himself, “Even this -- even this pain shall pass away.” And it did. He grew older and married. He was very happy then, but just the same he kept looking at the ring and saying, “Even this -- even this joy shall pass away.” And it did. His young wife died. Again he said to himself, “Even this -- even this grief shall pass away.” And it did. He was crowned king after the death of his father. On his coronation day he looked in a mirror and said to himself, “Even this -- even this body of mine shall pass away.” And it did. His last words before he died were, “Even this -- even this great empire which I rule will pass away.” And it did.

Now perhaps you can answer a question. Is there anything about you which will not pass away? Yes, your souls. They had a beginning but they will have no end. What is the word for things which have a beginning and no end? Immortal. Our bodies are mortal. Our souls are immortal. They will never die. Immortal is a terrible word. It means that your soul cannot die even if it wanted to. You must live forever.

If you think about eternity enough you will never sin. If you are tempted say to yourself, “Even this — even this temptation will pass away. But my soul will not pass away. Therefore, I must resist the temptation.” Get into the habit of repeating to yourself the words on the ring. “Even this shall pass away.” “You shall be made sorrowful but your sorrow shall be turned to joy.” If you have something that is hard to bear, remember, “Even this shall pass away.” If you are tempted to be conceited about something, even that shall pass away. What is not eternal does not matter. We are not born for the present but for the future.

There is an inscription over the doorway of the Cathedral of Milan, in Italy, which is very much the same as the words on the ring which the Persian king gave to his son. Over the main doorway are carved three pictures. On the left are some roses and a ribbon. Underneath is written, “All that pleases will pass away.” On the right are a cross and a ribbon and the words, “All that pains will pass away.” In the center is a triangle and in the triangle are the words, “All that matters is eternal.”

TWO DREAMS OF HEAVEN

“I go to Him that sent Me.”

WHEN our time comes to say, “I go to Him that sent me,” what will be in store for us? We have two stories this morning to show you that what we do during our lives decides what our reward will be in heaven.

A rich lady had a dream, one that we would all like to have. She dreamed that she was in heaven. She walked around and saw a huge mansion being built. She asked her guide, “Whose will that be?” The angel replied, “That is for your gardener.” The lady was surprised because on earth the gardener lived in a tiny cottage with hardly enough room for his family. The angel said, “He might live in a better house on earth if he were not so generous.”

They walked on a little bit and saw a tiny little cottage being built. The lady asked, “And whose will that be?” The angel replied, “This is for you.” “But,” the lady cried, “I live in a great mansion. I can’t get used to a little cottage.” “Well,” said the angel, “We do the best we can up here but we can use only the materials that are sent us from on earth.”

The lady learned her lesson from this dream and began to do good works and lay up treasures for herself in heaven.

The other story is about the palace of good works. Alexander the Great, who conquered the whole known world of his day, made up his mind that he would have the most beautiful palace ever built by man. Being the richest man in the world, he could afford to do it. He chose a place far off in the hills and sent his agent Stephen with gold and jewels to do the work.

Stephen sent word to Alexander. “There is a village of people living in just the spot that you have chosen for your palace.”

Alexander sent an order back, “Drive them away and destroy the village.”

But Stephen was a kind and generous man. Instead of driving the people away and destroying their village, he used the jewels and money to feed them and help them. The starving came to Stephen and he fed them. The sick were brought to him and he cared for them.

After some time, Alexander came to see his palace. He saw what Stephen had done and was very angry. Poor Stephen was cast into jail. But that night, Alexander had a dream. In his dream he saw a palace far more wonderful than the one he had planned. Its walls were of gold, its floors of silver, and set in the walls were myriads of gleaming jewels. A voice in the dream spoke to him and said:

“Alexander, this is the palace of good works that Stephen has built for you.”

Alexander awoke and released Stephen from jail. From his dream he had learned the lesson that we should so live that when our time comes to say, “I go to Him that sent me,” we will know that we have sent up plenty of material from earth and that there is a palace of good works waiting for us in heaven.

SILENCE, ANGELS, A CHILD IS PRAYING

“If you ask the Father anything in My name, He will give it to you.”

THE things which are dearest to the heart of God are the prayers of children. One day God sat on His throne listening to the song of the angels, which is sweeter music than any ear ever heard. But suddenly God raised His hand and called for silence, saying, “Stop the music. Down on earth a little child is praying to me. I must listen to her prayer.” So dear are the prayers of children to the heart of God.

Prayer is the raising up of the mind and heart to God. This is just what the child in the story was doing, raising up her mind and heart to God. We make a mistake when we think that all there is to prayer is reciting the same things over and over again. There is more to it than that. It is true that the Church has given us certain prayers to use because she knows that we are not very good at talking to God. We should use these forms, but we should not use just these. We should talk to God in our own way too. Tell Him just what is in your heart. Tell Him what you need. If you have a headache tell Him about it. Maybe you need a new coat, or a football. Maybe you are worried about being promoted, or don’t know how to do fractions, or are not so good in geography, or want to play end on the football team — any one of a thousand things. Just tell Him all about them and He will listen to you. “If you ask the Father anything in My name, He will give it to you.”

Here are some examples of people who prayed well.

An old lady was asked how she prayed. She said, “Oh, I just talk to Him and He loves to listen.”

A Breton peasant once said almost the same thing, “When I am in Church I just sit quiet and He looks at me and I look at Him.”

During an earthquake a man fell down on his knees to pray, but the words would not come to his lips. So he said the alphabet. That was a good prayer because it was in the man’s heart and God understood.

A soldier used to spend an hour a day in church. “I’m doing sentry duty,” he used to say.

A night watchman in a church in the middle west stumbled over someone lying face down at the foot of the altar. He heard a voice say, “Don’t mind an old bishop talking to his Lord.”

One priest when leaving the room would always bow to his statue of our Lady and say, “I’ll be back in fifteen minutes.”

Prayer, then, is not rattling off words like a parrot. A victrola record can do that even better than you can. Prayer is the raising up of the mind and heart to God. Because God is everywhere you can raise up your minds and hearts wherever you are. On the subway, at a baseball game, walking home. Do like the lad who used to wake up in the morning and say, “Nice day, isn’t it, Lord.” To have a habit like that is to have the habit of prayer -- the raising of the mind and heart to God.

SOMEONE THE LIGHT SHINES THROUGH

“You shall give testimony of me.”

A LITTLE boy was once walking through a church with his mother. It was a beautiful day and the rays of the sun streamed through the windows and sent colored beams of light across the floor of the church. The boy saw this and pointing up to the window asked his mother, “What is that?” The mother replied, “That is one of the saints.”

Each time they came to a beam of light the child asked the same question, “What’s that?” and the mother answered, “That is one of the saints.”

Some time after that the same boy was in Catechism class and was asked the question, “What is a saint?” To which he answered, “A saint is someone the light shines through.”

How true that is. Our Lord did say, “You are the light of the world. So let your light shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven.” Did He not say in the Gospel, “You shall give testimony of me?”

A most important Catholic duty is the giving of good example. We do this by the fearless practice of our religion. You gave a good example on your way to church this morning. You give a good example when you go to Communion. Any time you live up to your religion and show people that it really means something to you, you are giving good example. You are being someone whom the light shines through. You are giving testimony of Christ.

We never know how far good example will go. It is quite possible that some small action of ours will have a good effect even to the end of time. In the story of her life, the Little Flower tells about Sister Mary of the Eucharist. Sister Mary of the Eucharist wanted to light the candles of the other Sisters for a procession. She had no matches, and seeing the lamp which burned before the relics, she went for it. Only a weak thread of light remained on the smoking wick. It was almost ready to go out. But she lit her candle with it and then lit the candles of all the other sisters. In that way, one small action of ours could go on and on. That is why our Lord tells us to be the light of the world, to be someone whom the light shines through.

We must make up our minds to do two things this morning. Never to give bad example and always to give good. Some boys are careless in this matter when they use indecent language. Make up your minds that no child will ever learn these things from hearing you say them. You can give bad example by going to the movies when those who see you know you were sent to go to confession. Those who have younger brothers and sisters should be careful in the example they set them. Good example always, that should be your rule. You can set an example at home. How do you expect your younger brothers and sisters to obey if you don’t? You can set them good example by taking them in for a visit to the Blessed Sacrament on the way home from school. There are a thousand ways to be like the flickering flame that was used to light all the candles in the chapel. In a thousand ways, you can give testimony to Christ. You can be someone the light shines through.

THE HYMN OF THE BRAVE NUNS

*“But the Paraclete, the Holy Ghost, Whom the Father will send you in my name,
He will teach you all things.”*

WE SHOULD always have a tender devotion to the Holy Ghost. Many children just take Him for granted. They treat Him like something extra which is added on to the Father and the Son, as if He were a spare tire or the feather in a hat. He is much more important than that. He is equal to the Father and the Son.

The nuns of the convent of Vendee in France did not forget that the Holy Ghost is important. During the French revolution many priests and nuns were being put to death. The entire convent of nuns at Vendee were condemned to death on the guillotine. They all knew what that meant, but not one of them showed the least sign of fear. Instead, standing close together, they lifted their voices in a sweet song. In the face of death they sang, and the song they sang was, “Come Holy Ghost.” For these nuns the Holy Ghost was a real person, a tender consoling Counselor, not just an afterthought.

For a few moments let us take a look at the work of the Holy Ghost and be grateful to Him. He is like a finger of God’s right hand. As a young child grows the light of reason shines forth and he begins to learn to speak. The Holy Ghost is there, fulfilling His promise to teach little ones to speak and understand. The sun rises and sets, the welcome rain falls on the parched earth, the seasons follow one another. The finger of God’s right hand is there. For the purity of Mary we can thank Him. For the humanity of Christ we thank Him. For the Mass we thank Him. For preserving the Church from a million dangers we thank Him.

Are you thinking: “He has done these things for everybody, but what has He done for me alone?” You may remember sometime when you were undecided. You were bothered by having to choose what to do: to sin or not to sin, to go to Mass or to stay in bed, to skip your prayers or to say them. While you were wondering what you should do, a gentle whisper sounded deep down in your heart and you did the right thing. That whisper was the voice of the Holy Ghost.

As a lesson for this week, each of you should start to get into the habit of praying to the Holy Ghost before and after you do your homework. The Holy Ghost is equal to the Father and the Son. They are the three equal persons in the one God. We should make the Holy Ghost a part of our lives, just as we do the Father and the Son. We should make Him a part of our lives just as did the nuns of the convent of Vendee who sang this hymn on their way to death:

“Come, Holy Ghost, Creator blest,
And in our hearts take up Thy rest.
Come with Thy grace and heavenly aid
To fill the hearts which thou hast made.”

SAINT BARBARA

“In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost.”

THIS morning we are going to hear the story of Saint Barbara, the story of a saint who was very devoted to the Trinity.

Saint Barbara lived in the third century in the days when to be a Christian meant to be a martyr. In spite of this, Saint Barbara kept her faith and spent much of her time in praying and fasting. Her father, whose name was Dioscorus, was a pagan. Before he went off on a journey, he had drawn up plans for a new house to be built. In Barbara’s room, the plans called for two windows. But because she desired to honor the Trinity even in the building of a house, Barbara thought it would be nice, since there are three persons in one God, to have three windows in her room.

On his return, her pagan father noticed the change and guessed the reason for it. Saint Barbara admitted that she had been a Christian for a long time. Dioscorus was angry. He did not wish to get himself in trouble with the pagan emperor, so he brought her to trial. She was condemned to be beheaded. To save his own skin and to show the emperor how loyal he was, Dioscorus carried out the sentence himself.

God was angry at this cold-blooded deed and caused Dioscorus to be struck by lightning immediately. Now, on all the pictures of Saint Barbara, you will see a palm of martyrdom in her hands and three windows behind her through which the sun is brightly shining.

This is Trinity Sunday. We should remind ourselves today how important the Trinity is in our lives. We are baptized in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. When our sins are forgiven it is in their name. Our parents were married with their blessing. They are present in the host which we receive in Communion because where the Son is, there also must be the Father and the Holy Ghost. We receive them into our souls in Confirmation. A young priest gives his first blessing in their name. On our deathbeds, the priest will recommend our souls to the Holy Trinity. From the beginning of our lives to the end, the Trinity is there.

As a lesson for this week, making the sign of the cross always very well and carefully. Make it as if you meant it, not as if you were chasing flies. Slowly and carefully, like this: “In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.”

HOW TO MAKE FRIENDS WITH A TIGER

“And they began all at once to make excuse.”

WE ALL meet with difficulties in this life. Some people know how to handle them and some do not. Any man who has been a success in business will tell you the answer. “Meet difficulties head on -- full steam ahead.” That is true, and the only way. If you say to yourself, “Tomorrow will be time enough, or next week,” or if you say, “I’ll get around it somehow without doing any work,” or if you say, “I’ll do something else instead,” you will find that you are not getting anywhere at all. You do not take violin lessons to get on the football team. You go right out on the field and get pushed around. It is the only way.

Here is an example of how a little boy once met his difficulty head on and conquered it. This boy used to have nightmares. He dreamed every night about a tiger who came running up when he fell asleep. Then he would scream and stay awake for the rest of the night. He began to get so thin and pale that his parents were worried about him. They called in a doctor who took the boy on his knee and said,

“You shouldn’t be afraid of that tiger. I know him very well. He once lived in the woods with his mate. They were very happy. Then along came some men who shot his mate. Since that time, the tiger has been wandering around the forest all alone. The other animals were afraid of him and he was afraid of men. Sometimes he would come to the edge of the wood and run back when he saw them. Then one day he saw you playing with a ball. You did not look cruel like the others. He wanted to be friends with you so he trotted out to meet you. But you ran away from him, afraid. The tiger is still lonely. Tonight when he comes trotting out to see you, just say to him, ‘Hello, old fellow. I didn’t know you wanted to be friends.’ Then throw your ball and he will fetch it for you. Then you can pat him on the head and roll him over and have lots of fun with him.”

That night the boy was anxious to go to bed. Not many boys have a tiger for a pet. He fell asleep earlier than usual and his parents wondered as they watched him what would happen. They saw his face grow tense. They could see his nails clutched tightly to his palms. He was struggling. Then they saw him relax and his little hand began to pat the covers. He had met his tiger and made friends with him. That is the only way to handle difficulties. Meet them head on.

In a town in Europe, there is a statue of a saint. He is shown standing, crushing underfoot a crow which is crying all the time, “Do it tomorrow. Do it tomorrow.” But the saint is listening to an eagle, perched on his shoulder and crying, “Do it today. Do it today.”

Make up your minds not to be like the people in this morning’s gospel who began all at once to make excuses. You should rather meet your problems the way the little boy met his tiger -- head on, immediately, and with confidence.

JACKIE, THE FAITHFUL PUP

*“There shall be joy in heaven upon one sinner that doth penance,
more than upon ninety-nine just who need not penance.”*

NO MATTER how lost a soul is, no matter how long it has been lost, Christ will always welcome it back. “There is more joy before the angels of God upon one sinner doing penance than upon ninety-nine just who need not penance.” This reminds me of a story about a faithful puppy dog named Jackie.

Jackie lived with his master in a small town, just like any other small town in the country. When they would go for a long walk over the hills, Jackie would trot along happily. Usually he ran in front, but every now and then he would stop to see if his master were following. Never did Jackie let his master out of sight. In the evening he would curl up on the floor and keep one eye open all the time.

But what Jackie liked best was to meet his master when he came home from work on the 5:45 train. Every day, at 5:22, Jackie would leave the house and trot down Main Street right into the paper shop. The man would roll up the evening paper and put it between Jackie’s teeth. Down the Street he would go and up on the station platform three minutes before train time. Then he would sit down as proud as a little king and wait. When the train whistle blew, he would cock one ear and wag his tail. When the people got off the train, he would run between their legs and right up to his master, give him the paper, get a pat on the head, bark a few times, and follow him up the street to home.

People used to smile when they saw him, but once they didn’t smile. They felt sorry for him. Jackie’s master had to go away for a long time. Just the same, Jackie was waiting every day at the station with the paper. When his master didn’t come he would leave the paper down, shake his head and walk slowly, very slowly, up the street without even a wag of his tail. Every day he came back and waited, for almost a year -- until one day his master came back. He gave him the paper, barked a few times, and followed him home. If dogs could smile, Jackie would have smiled that day. There were no questions about why his master went away. The waiting was forgotten. Now he was back. That was enough for him. They were together again.

A man named Francis Thompson wrote a poem called, “The Hound of Heaven,” in which he makes Christ like a hound who follows the soul all through life. It is not disrespectful to do so, because the hound is a noble animal.

When we go astray, our Lord always waits for our return. Every day, He is waiting for us to take the road back. Patiently, faithfully, He waits. When we do not return He is saddened, but is still waiting. When we do come back, He is there, with outstretched arms. There are no questions asked about why we went away. The waiting is forgotten. We were away. Now we are back. That is enough for Him. We are together again. “So I say to you there shall be joy before the angels of God, upon one sinner doing penance more than upon ninety-nine just who need not penance.”

THE VOCATION OF POPE LEO

“From henceforth thou shalt catch men.”

A YOUNG man easily recognized by his clothes as an Italian nobleman was walking along a country road in Italy. Coming the other way was an old lady dressed in rags with the lines of starvation written across her face. Moved by this sad picture, the nobleman went over to her and spoke a few words of comfort. He reached into his purse and gave her all the money that he had. His kindness and his gift so touched the old lady that she began to cry. Then she promised to recite a rosary for him every day in order that some day he would become a priest. The young man forgot all about the incident, but years later that poor old lady’s prayers were answered. He became a priest, and even more than that; he became Pope Leo XIII.

That woman, by her prayers, won a great grace for Leo XIII. The grace of a vocation. What do we mean by a vocation? Simply this: It is a desire to give oneself entirely to God.

How can one tell if he has a vocation? That is very easy. Most probably you will not hear any voices in the dark or see visions of angels beckoning you to follow Christ. That does not happen as a rule. What happens is that you make up your own mind about it. You simply ask yourself three questions and if the answer is “yes,” then you have a vocation.

1. Am I physically fit? Any normal healthy boy or girl can answer “yes” to that question.
2. Am I mentally fit? In other words, have I got brains enough to be a priest or nun or brother? If you can pass your examinations in school, that should be sufficient. So far, there does not seem to be much trouble. But we ask ourselves the very important third question.
3. Have I the right intention? In other words, would I be doing this for the honor and glory of God and for no other reason? Not because you always wanted to wear a biretta, or because you look cute in a habit, or because you had the part of the Blessed Mother in the Christmas play; but for the honor and glory of God and for that reason alone. That makes things very simple.

If you do not want to be a priest or nun you do not have to be. You are the one to make up your mind about that and no one else. Year after year boys and girls from all walks of life, from the city and the country, answer the call of Christ, “Come, follow Me.” They are like pearls lifted from the depths of the ocean to shine in the crown of God forever. If you think you have a vocation you should protect it and care for it. It will grow. If you think you have heard the whispering of Christ in your hearts, then remember the words of the Gospel of today, “Fear not. From henceforth thou shalt catch men.”

VINCENT VINEGAR AND SALLY SOURCREAM

THE mark by which we can tell a good Catholic is the way he treats his fellow man. In the Gospel, God tells us to be reconciled to our brother before going to the altar. And in the Our Father we pray, "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us." Here are two stories which may help us to be kind to our fellow man. They are stories in which two children learned the lesson of charity.

The first of those children was Vincent Vinegar. Vincent Vinegar had a disposition like a rotten egg. No one could get along with him. He would grumble, fight, complain, and argue about everything. Nothing pleased him. To help him cheer up a bit, his mother made a suggestion. There was a boy in the next block who was always cheerful and happy. Vincent's mother said:

"Call him on the telephone and introduce yourself. Then talk to him over the wire every night for a week. When the week is up, you can go around and meet him."

Vincent Vinegar thought this was silly and argued and grumbled, but finally he did it. The boy he spoke to was always cheerful and gay. When the week was up, Vincent's mother took him to meet the cheerful boy.

On the way to the house, Vincent said, "Aw, he is happy because he has everything he wants."

But Vincent was in for a surprise when they got to the house, because the cheerful boy was crippled. Vincent Vinegar has been kinder ever since.

There was another child, a girl named Sally Sourcream. Sally couldn't get along with anyone either. She was always fighting and pulling hair and criticizing. She said to her mother once, "None of the girls like me. I think they are all mean. It's not my fault."

Her mother told her, "Go out to the edge of the woods and shout, 'I hate you. I hate you.' Then come back and tell me what answer you get." Sally enjoyed saying, "I hate you," so off she went. She came back crying, "Even the man in the woods hates me."

Then her mother said, "Go back again and this time say, 'I don't hate you.'" Sally did, and the echo came back, "I don't hate you." Sally Sourcream has been kinder ever since.

If you wish to be a saint you must first be kind. God will treat us as we treat others. If we are kind to others He will be kind to us. If we forgive others He will forgive us. By making others happy, you make yourselves happy; so force yourselves to be kind now and then. Vincent Vinegar and Sally Sourcream learned that lesson. If you are like them, you must learn the lesson too.

THE ARCHBISHOP CARRIES THE COAL

"I have compassion on the multitude."

OUR Lord was always the perfect gentleman. In the Gospel this morning he gives us a lesson in politeness. He was thoughtful for the multitude and worried that they might faint on the way.

A group of boys were racing down the street. As they swerved around the corner they bumped into an old man. The man was old and ragged and dirty. The gang kept right on running as boys will do, but one boy stopped and helped the old man to his feet. "I hope you aren't hurt, Sir."

"Not much," said the man. "I'm sorry we bumped into you," said the boy, tipping his hat.

His companions asked him later, "What did you tip your hat to him for? He is just an old hobo."

To which the boy replied, "That makes no difference. My father always told me that the question is not whether he is a gentleman but whether I am one. The fact that he was wearing a shabby coat has nothing to do with it."

If we are polite we are imitating our Lord Who was always the perfect gentleman.

We must be polite both to God and to our neighbors. It is easy for us to be impolite to God, if we are not careful. Do we make a polite genuflection when we come into church or do we just bend our knee half way down to the floor as if we had rheumatism? Do we try to grab the end seat in the pew and then make everyone climb over us? Do we come late for Mass and then leave before it is half over? All these things show that we are not being polite to God.

We must be polite to others especially at home. Have we fallen into the habit of excusing ourselves by saying, "I forgot?" We would soon get over this habit if our parents forgot to call us for meals. Have we fallen into the habit of saying, "I'll do it in just a minute?" These are examples of how easy it is for us to fall into the habit of being impolite.

One very cold day a little Jewish boy was picking up scraps of coal along the railroad tracks in Philadelphia. He was not very strong and had picked too heavy a load to carry by himself. Turning around a corner he bumped into a very dignified gentleman. The coal fell out of the bag and the dust got all over the gentleman's clothes.

The boy was frightened but the man smiled and said, "I think that was my fault. Let's gather it up again and I'll help you carry the coal."

So on they went together, the little boy running alongside the gentleman who had the bag of coal on his shoulders, while the coal dust spilled all over his clothes. They went up the stairs to a poor tenement flat and the man left.

A few hours later a basket of food and some more coal arrived as a gift from the nice old gentleman. When they read the name of the man who had sent them these things, the Jewish boy knew his name was Archbishop Ryan.

SOME MEN OF CHARACTER

“By their fruits you shall know them.

YOU have often heard it said about someone, “There is a man of character.” How do we know he is? The answer to that is in the Gospel of today, “By their fruits you shall know them.” In other words you can tell what people are by what they do. Good people do good things.

We must lay the foundation of our characters while we are young. Things do not happen suddenly. In people’s lives there is a history of everything. A man who won a Marathon race said to the reporters, “I really won this race five years ago.”

A famous architect was once commanded to build a church. The plans for it were carefully drawn up but during the building, due to the carelessness of the foreman, the pillars which were to support the church came out a quarter of an inch too short. They were rooted firmly in the ground but stood up without touching the roof at the top. Not long after it was built the church collapsed. So it is with character. Without it our lives collapse. Under a strain there is nothing to fall back on.

The world is full of men and women of character, people who had something to fall back on. There was Hugh Dailey, for example. Your grandfathers may remember him as one of baseball’s greatest pitchers. He pitched for Chicago against Boston on July 7, 1884, and struck out nineteen men in one game. That record has never been broken. A man who read about Hugh Dailey’s pitching wanted to meet him. When they met he was surprised to see that Hugh Daily had only one arm.

Michael Dowling had an accident when he was fifteen years old in which he lost both hands and feet, yet the people of Minnesota raised a monument to him. In spite of his accident Michael Dowling taught school, ran a newspaper, was president of a bank, and served in the state legislature. One time he said, “Don’t think you are a cripple because you have lost a leg or two. It is the mind that counts.”

The secret of character is to make the most of every day. Day by day we grow and grow or else day by day we rot and rot. You never dream yourself into a character. You can’t pretend even to yourself that you have one. You do not get a character by dreaming of how good you will be twenty years from now. You do something about it today. “Work while it is day for the night cometh when no man can work.”

A general once said to a soldier, “I want dangerous mission. Will you do it?”

The soldier replied, “I will try.”

“That,” said the general, “is not enough.”

“I will do it or die in the attempt.”

“That is still not enough.”

“I will do it.”

“That,” said the general, “is what I want.”

THE BEAUTIFUL RIVER

“Give an account of thy stewardship.”

WE HAVE an example in this Gospel of dishonesty. Dishonesty is a vice which will spoil an otherwise beautiful soul. We can compare a soul to a beautiful river. This river flows through a land of wondrous beauty. On its banks flowers of every color and shape nod their heads in the breeze. Lilies float on its silver water. In the light of the sun you can see fish of startling colors streaking through its waters. On either side are rich green pastures and forests which the river feeds. There are hundreds of birds of gay colors and sweet voices. So flows this lovely river along its peaceful and beautiful course.

But at one point a brook enters the river and spoils its beauty from that place down to the sea. This brook carries in mud and refuse. The waters are no longer clear and silvery but dark and forbidding. Flowers no longer bow their bright heads to the sun. The meadows are no longer fertile and the river flows on through parched and dry wasteland. So it is with our lives. They flow on sweetly and beautifully surrounded by beautiful things until dishonesty enters them. Then they become dry waste and forbidding.

The way to avoid having dishonesty enter in and ruin our lives is to watch beginnings. This was the motto of the Roman emperors. “Resist beginnings.” If a ruler of one of the conquered cities held back even a small portion of his tribute to Rome, the Roman legions would come thundering at his gates. Why? Because they knew they must resist beginnings. The devil will not tempt you right away to steal a million dollars. He is too smart for that. But he will tell you to steal a three-cent stamp because he knows that he can lead you on from one small thing to another until dishonesty has become a habit with you. Then he will tempt you to steal something big. That is why we must resist beginnings. It is very easy for you to steal a nickel from your mother’s pocketbook, or to hold back a nickel from the change when you go to the store. If you do that, you are letting dishonesty enter your lives just as the brook entered the beautiful river and spoiled it all the way down to the sea.

You all know the example of Judas and what dishonesty did for him. From being an Apostle of the Lord he became an outcast. Judas’ downfall began with small thefts from the purse of the Apostles, and ended with his soul becoming so hardened and wicked that he sold our Lord for thirty pieces of silver.

You will not pass an exam in English if you compare the adjective, “good” by saying “good, gooder, goodest.” But you will pass life’s tests if you give the three degrees of honesty as “Get on, get honor, and get honest.”

EXAMPLES TO FOLLOW

“My house is the house of prayer.”

WE ARE going to make up our minds this morning once and for all about something important. It is going to Mass. The first commandment of the Church is to assist at Mass on Sundays and holy days of obligation. The thing we want to make up our minds about is this: we must decide now that as long as we live we will never miss Mass through our own fault. Once our minds are made up the rest will follow.

Here are some examples of people who made up their minds about going to Mass and stuck to it.

Someone once went up to a policeman on Sunday and asked where the nearest Catholic church was. The policeman said, “Follow that man. He goes every Sunday.” That man was Alfred E. Smith.

A French Colonel once received a complaint that his men were going to Mass in uniform. He answered, “It is true they went to Mass in uniform -- I was with them.”

General Henri Giraud was the general who commanded the rainbow division in the Argonne Forest in 1918. When he arrived on a visit to the United States he came down the gangplank and pushed his way through the crowd of reporters and spoke to a Father Brennan who had come to see him. “What did he say to you?” asked a reporter. “Oh,” said Fr. Brennan, “He wanted to know where he could hear Mass.”

Compare that with the boy who was asked, “Do you go to Sunday Mass?” He answered, “Oh I’ve graduated from school.”

Make up your minds now to go to Mass every Sunday for the rest of your lives. Once your minds are made up the rest is easy.

The Mass is Calvary all over again, in an unbloody manner. You have often said to yourselves, “If I could have been at the foot of the cross, how I would have prayed!” You are at the foot of the cross when you go to Mass. The Victim on the cross and the altar is the same, Jesus Christ. The one Who offers the sacrifice is the same because the priest is another Christ when he says, “This is my Body.” The one to Whom the sacrifice is offered is the same, God the Father. The only difference is that on Calvary blood was shed. The Mass is unbloody.

There are 168 hours in the week. On Sunday, God demands a little less than one of those hours from us. If you refuse it is as if you gave a beggar 167 dollars and he knocked you down and took the other one too. The best way to save time is to use an hour of it at Mass. Don’t be a skinflint in your dealings with God.

To help you decide now never to miss Mass through your own fault as long as you live, here is one more story:

One cold, winter morning a priest was on his way from the rectory to the church. The snow had been blown high into drifts. The sidewalks were frozen and treacherous underfoot. To top it off, it was one of the coldest days of the year. This priest saw an old woman, feeble, gray, and bent. She was coming step by step to church. He said to her: “What are you doing out on a morning like this?” “Faith, Father, and I’m going to church.” “It’s too cold for you.” “Oh no it isn’t. You see Father, I have a little secret. Each time I take a step I say to myself, ‘One more step for Christ. One more step for Christ. One more step for Christ.’ Somehow or other I get there.”

THE BIG STEAMER WITH THE LITTLE WHISTLE

“Everyone that exalteth himself shall be humbled.”

TODAY’S story of the Pharisee and the Publican carries a lesson about boasting. It is a vice which children fall into very easily. But it is also one which they can easily overcome.

Can you all spell Mississippi? Well, this story happened along the Mississippi River. A man named Amos Blowhard had a steamer which he used to sail up and down the river. It was the smallest steamer on the water and Amos had trouble getting the right of way with it. Then he got an idea. He bought the biggest whistle he could find, a whistle ten times too big for his boat. For a while his idea worked. When he blew the new whistle all the other river craft thought a big ship was coming and got out of the way. He fooled them only once. As soon as they saw that his was just a little steamer with a big whistle, they paid no attention to him. They would look at Amos’ boat and say, “Here comes the little steamer with the big whistle.” Then they would all laugh. Amos had his troubles too. His whistle was so big that every time he blew it, it took all the steam out of the boiler and he lost speed.

Maybe there is someone here this morning to whom our story applies. If you are a boaster, you are a little steamer with a big whistle. Here’s what a boaster sounds like: “The team won, but they couldn’t have done it without me.” “I could be first in class, if I really tried, but I’m not that proud.” “I can play half-back better than that guy. The coach is down on me, that’s all.” “If I had the same chances he has had, I’d have done better than that.” “I can lick him with one hand behind my back.” “I’ve never lost an argument yet.” “They can’t get along without me.” All those things are boasting. People are not fooled by it at all. They just look at you and say, “There goes a little steamer with a big whistle. He’s all noise. He just blows off steam and does nothing else.”

There is really no need to boast anyway. In the first place nobody will believe you. In the second place, if the thing comes true, you won’t have to talk about it. Maybe you can lick Johnny Jones with one hand. If you boast about it, no one will believe you. After it’s done (if you can do it) there is no need to say anything. The word gets around without your saying it. If you think the team can’t get along without you, you are in for one of the greatest surprises of your life, when you find out that they can. If you say they can’t manage without you, no one will believe you. They will believe you only when you break your leg or something and can’t play for a while. They will believe you then if the team falls to pieces without your brains and skills. But write this somewhere where you won’t forget it. They will get along without you. The world got along without you for a long time before you were born. Learn that lesson while you are young.

People cannot tolerate a boaster. If there is any of that vice in your character, get rid of it at once. If you have good qualities, they will be noticed. There is no need to point attention to yourself. Remember the story of Amos Blowhard on the Mississippi. No one paid any attention to his loud whistle. And all he did was blow all the steam out of his boiler. If you are a boaster, people will say the same thing about you that the big steamers said about Amos’ boat:

“There goes a little steamer with a big whistle.”

CARDINAL FARLEY AND THE BRICKLAYER

“He hath done all things well.”

THE secret of doing things well is to have the right intention. When Saint Patrick’s Cathedral was being built, Cardinal Farley went around and asked all the workmen what they were doing. One said, “I am a carpenter,” the other, “I’m painting,” and so on. He came to a bricklayer and asked him what he was doing. He replied, “I’m helping to build the house of God.” You can see that the bricklayer was doing good work because he had the right intention. The Cathedrals of Europe took centuries to build. Each craftsman would try to do better than the other to produce beauty in his work. On the roofs of these cathedrals high up where no man could see them there were beautifully carved statues. It meant nothing to the men who carved them that no one would see them. They were building the house of God and all things had to be done well.

A very good habit for children to get into is that of making the Morning Offering. By this, we offer to God all the works that we do during the day. We start the day with the right intention. There is a picture which shows a boy writing on the blackboard. He is writing six ciphers in a row. Over his shoulder an angel looks and is writing number one in front of the zeros making it a million. It was nothing, but the angel made it a million. That is what a good intention does for our actions. Of themselves they are Just like a row of zeros. With an intention in front of them, they take on a great value.

A man who throws a dime into a beggar’s cup receives a reward. But a man who does the same thing in order to show off receives no reward. A child who washes the dishes because he loves his mother receives more love from her than a child who washes the dishes because he wants money to go to the movies.

The most important thing about everything we do is the intention. It is not what we do that counts but why we do it. It is not the verbs that count but the adverbs. Two people can do exactly the same thing. One person will receive credit for his actions from God. The other will not.

You all remember the story of the Pharisee and the Publican in the temple. Both did exactly the same thing. They made a visit to church. But one did it from a good intention, the other from a bad intention. The men who were building Saint Patrick’s Cathedral had different intentions. Some of them were just building. One was building the house of God.

By making a good intention in the morning we sanctify our every action. Because of that, when we stand before our Lord in judgment He will be able to say of us, “You have done all things well.”

PRINCESS EUGENIE'S PEARLS

"Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself."

IN THE days of Princess Eugenic a man came to her with a sad story. The poor people of the city were not receiving proper medical care. When they were sick they were just left to die and nothing was done to help them. What was needed most of all was a hospital.

Princess Eugenic was very much moved by this story. She went through the streets of the city and saw that it was true. Then she did a very generous thing. She sold all her jewels to raise funds for the hospital. Soon it was built and the princess went to visit it. One day she was walking through the wards and stopped by a poor man's bed. He said to her, "You sold your jewels to build this hospital. I am very grateful to you," and with that, he began to cry. The princess smiled and turned to those who were with her and said, "I gave my jewels away. Now I can see them again. This man's tears are worth more than all my pearls." This story teaches the same lesson as does the Gospel. "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself."

It is a wonderful thing for children to train themselves in doing small acts of charity because by nature children are very selfish. Each act of charity that we do makes us less self-centered. A man once gave a coat to a friend of his who had none. He said, "My friend is warm now and that makes me feel warmer too."

Here is another story which carries a lesson in charity. In the days of the hermits who lived in the desert of Egypt and served God in prayer and fasting there was a hermit named Josephus. Someone gave Josephus a beautiful bunch of grapes. Josephus had been reading this morning's Gospel and remembered the words, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." So, instead of eating the grapes, he took them over to the hermit who lived not far away. Several days passed and another hermit came to Josephus' door and gave him the same bunch of grapes. Josephus then learned that the bunch of grapes had been given to each member of the community and passed on from one to the other until it came back to himself again.

The good Samaritan in the Gospel gives us an example of charity, the greatest of all the virtues. There are plenty of opportunities for children to practice charity. They are little opportunities, but when you are older you will have bigger ones. Suppose you receive a box of candy as a present. You should not hide it in a corner and eat it all yourself. That is not charity, that is being piggish. To take your younger brother or sister to the movies once in a while would be a wonderful act of charity. Each charitable act that you perform makes your hearts larger and more like the heart of Christ. By being charitable you are fulfilling the greatest commandment of the law, which is to "love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart and thy whole soul, and with all thy strength and with all thy mind, and to love thy neighbor as thyself."

THE BANQUET OF THE VIRTUES

“He fell on his face before His feet, giving thanks.”

ONE day, so says an old legend, God gave a banquet for all of his servants, and a really grand feast it was. All the virtues came and had a fine time. Humility was there sitting in the lowest place at the table. Charity was cutting the meat without rationing it. Patience was there and didn't mind at all being served last. Faith and Hope sat together. Everyone was having a wonderful time.

At the height of the banquet Charity noticed that two of the virtues were strangers to each other. He was surprised because he thought they were always together and he had purposely placed them side by side for just that reason. He came down to them and asked each one whether she had met her partner before. When they said that they had not, Charity introduced them:

“Kindness, I want you to meet Gratitude.”

Both the virtues were so surprised to find out who the other was. Kindness said to Gratitude:

“We are supposed to be always together. Where one of us is the other should be, but when men receive kindness they don't give gratitude. Isn't it a pity that we have never really met before?”

It is a pity, a very great pity, that kindness and gratitude so seldom meet. But it is true. This morning's Gospel gives us an example of it. To make it worse some of the most ungrateful people in the world are children. No matter what is done for them, some children are not grateful. From the day they are born they are always receiving kindnesses. Every minute of the day someone is doing something for them. It was probably children that Kindness had in mind when she said to Gratitude:

“We are supposed to be always together. Where one is the other should be, but when men receive kindness they very seldom show gratitude. Isn't it a pity that we have never met before?”

Gratitude is a habit which every one should learn. It means that we appreciate things that are done for us and do not take them for granted. When something is done for us which we have no right to expect, the least we can do is say, “Thank you.” The lepers in the Gospel, had no right to be cured, and yet only one of them was gentleman enough to be grateful.

We can tell whether we have the habit of gratitude or not by checking up on our prayers. Do we ever offer prayers of thanksgiving, or are all our prayers asking for something?

There were two angels in heaven who worked in the prayer department. One poor angel worked overtime. Prayers were coming through on his wire every second. The other angel just sat around playing his harp. Once in a great while a prayer would come through on his wire.

The first angel asked him, “Why is it I have to work so hard and you have almost nothing to do?”

The second angel replied, “That isn't my fault. It's the fault of people on earth. You see, you have charge of all the ‘Gimme’ prayers and I have charge of the ‘Thank you’ ones.”

THE SOLDIER'S SOUVENIR

"No man can serve two masters."

OUR Lord is very clear on this point. He tells us that it simply cannot be done. Yet we see people spending most of their lives in trying to prove that it can be done. If we try to serve two masters we will be putting a weight on our shoulders that will slow us up in our journey towards God.

A soldier during the Italian campaign of World War II was hunting for souvenirs after a battle. He wanted something that would help him to remember the campaign and among the ruins he found it. It was a huge mirror, as tall as himself and twice as wide. How it had remained unbroken during the bombing he never knew, but it was the most wonderful souvenir of the whole war. He put it on his back and carried it with him. All through the rest of the campaign he protected it from explosions, bullets, and wreckage. He would have to leave it behind him at times and go back for it. Everything the soldier did depended on his mirror. He lost sleep, food and energy just so that he could carry the mirror with him wherever he went. One day the mirror fell and was broken to bits. He was free again to devote all his attention to soldiering. That soldier had let the mirror become his master and no man can serve two masters.

In the same way a person who serves two masters makes himself miserable trying to please both of them. In the end he pleases neither one. We see people who are mastered by some habit or other. They wish to please God but they wish also to keep the habit. God has said of people like this, "I will vomit thee out of my mouth." Children should make up their minds early not to follow two masters, but to follow God and Him alone.

Elias the Prophet was sent to call the Chosen People back to the worship of God. The people had left the worship of the one true God and fallen into the worship of the idol Baal. Elias challenged the priests of Baal. There were four hundred and fifty of them. He told them to prepare a sacrifice and he, Elias, would do the same. Both were to call upon their gods to send fire down from heaven to burn up the sacrifice.

Only the true God would be able to send down fire. The priests of Baal cried to their idol from morning until evening, but no fire came from heaven. Elias teased them, saying, "Cry with a louder voice. Perhaps he is talking, or in an inn, or on a journey, or perhaps he is asleep and must be wakened."

Then Elias called upon the true God and fire came down from heaven and consumed his sacrifice. He then told the people, "How long do you halt between two sides? If the Lord be God, follow Him." These words should be the keynote of our lives: "If the Lord be God, follow Him."

In the city of Jaffa in Palestine there is a terrace called the Terrace of Decision. The waters which flow into it hesitate for a moment and then go in either of two directions. The waters which go one way flow into the beautiful gardens of Sharon. The waters which go the other way flow into the Dead Sea, the sea in which there is no living thing. So it is with our lives. We must go one way or the other. No man can serve two masters. "Why do you halt between two sides? If the Lord be God, follow Him."

THE MOTHER OF MATADOR GALLINO

“And when the Lord saw her, He had compassion on her, and said to her: Weep not.”

OUR Lord was the only son of a widow. When He saw the widow of Naim weeping at the death of her only son, He was moved with pity. The prayer of this widow brought her son back to life. The prayers of St. Monica brought the soul of her son, St. Augustine, back to life. Our mother’s prayers win more for us from the heart of God than we will ever know.

A tourist in Spain was very anxious to watch a bull fight. He saw posters all around the town saying that the Matador Gallino would enter the arena against the mightiest and most vicious bull in all Spain, a big, black animal who was nicknamed Signor Torro. The tourist went to see the bull in the corral. He did look like the most vicious bull in Spain. Signor Torro was big and heavy and as black as ink. He had small fiery red eyes and long horns. Besides that, he had a wicked temper. He was a born killer and had already gored seven bull fighters.

On the morning of the fight the tourist stopped by to see Matador Gallino. He thought that a man who is going in into the arena with Signor Torro would be very worried. When he found Gallino, he was surprised, because the matador was sitting on the steps of his house, basking in the sun, and strumming a guitar.

“You can’t be Gallino,” he said.

“That I am,” Gallino replied and went on strumming.

“But you can’t be the man who is going to fight Signor Torro.”

“That I am,” said Gallino.

“But he is the most vicious bull in Spain. Aren’t you afraid?”

“Why should I be afraid?” Gallino pointed to an old lady who was sitting under a tree with her hands clasped. “Why should I be afraid? The bull has no mother to pray for him.”

Every day of our lives we enter the arena against a vicious foe. Our mother’s prayers are with us always. But the prayers of our mothers are things that most of us forget, or at least, just take for granted. We know they will pray for us and we give them very little thanks for it. But we can make things easier for them by trying to be the kind of children our mothers pray that we will be. If we do wrong we add to their suffering. If we do well, we add to their joy. This gives us a reason for not committing sin; namely, so that our parents need never be ashamed of us. It is a safe rule always to ask ourselves, “Would I do this or say this if my mother were watching?”

Most parents give their children every chance to be good. A good home, good schooling, good example, everything; and yet the children often do not turn out right. Then parents ask themselves, ‘Why, when we have done all that we can, do not our children grow up better?’ It is not the parents’ fault. They have done all they can. The fault is with the children. They have resisted everything good and have grown up bad. It is the children’s own fault, not their parents’. Many and many a mother is sad because of the children she tried to bring up to be good men and women. She was proud of them once, but now when their names are mentioned she is ashamed of them. Make up your minds now that, come what may, you will never behave in such a manner that your mother will be ashamed of you.

THE PROUD CHOIRMASTER

“He that humbleth himself shall be exalted.”

IN A certain Cathedral in Europe devotion to the Blessed Virgin was very important. Her feasts were celebrated with great pomp and ceremony. Her praises were sung by the choir with great fervor. On the feast of the Immaculate Conception it was the custom to sing that beautiful hymn to Our Lady, “The Magnificat.” Mary put together the words of that hymn herself. It had always been sung in this Cathedral by the whole choir together.

One year, though, the choir leader, who had a very beautiful voice, decided that instead of having everyone sing it he would do it alone. Which he did, well and beautifully. That night he had a vision and was asked by the Blessed Virgin why the Magnificat had not been sung in her honor, as it had been for hundreds of years. The choir leader said that the hymn had been sung, and by himself, personally. Mary replied, “You wished to glorify yourself. You sang the hymn out of pride and not one sound of it reached heaven.” “He that exalteth himself shall be humbled.”

Humility is a virtue which makes our souls very dear to God. He even told us to imitate Him because He is meek and humble of heart. Being humble means that we do not think too much of ourselves. When children think too much of themselves it can show in several ways. By being stuck up, for example, or by showing off, or by trying to attract attention to themselves, or by boasting. All these things are signs that the virtue of humility is not very strong in our souls and that we should try to strengthen it. We should try to strengthen it by performing actions which will humble us. By letting someone else do most of the talking for a while, by not boasting, and so on. In this way our souls will become more and more beautiful. We do not like to see children who are not humble. God doesn't like to see them either.

Peter Reubens, a great painter, was traveling in Madrid in Spain. He visited a monastery and admired the paintings that were hanging on the walls. Reubens pointed out one picture which was a masterpiece, and asked the prior who the artist was, because his name did not appear on the painting. The prior replied that it was done by a monk of the monastery who wanted to remain hidden from the world and go through life without any worldly praise. Reubens tried in vain to find out who the artist was. No one would tell him. When he left, the prior went up to his rooms and fondled his brushes. He was the painter of those pictures. “He that humbleth himself shall be exalted.”

THE ATHEIST AND THE AIRDALE

“Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart.”

GOD has made us to know Him, love Him, and serve Him. These three things follow one after the other. If we know Him, we love Him. If we love Him, we serve Him.

God made us to know Him. An atheist was once the guest of a good Catholic man. While at dinner the atheist began to boast, saying, “I am proud to say that I am the only one in the room who has the honor of not believing in God.” His host, a man who knew God and therefore loved Him, said, “I’m afraid you are mistaken, Sir. You share that honor with my airdale in the corner. But he doesn’t boast about it.” Unlike that atheist, or the airdale, we are given a knowledge of God from our earliest days. We should appreciate it and try to make it grow.

God made us to love Him. If we know God, it means that we will love Him. There is a plant called the compass flower because it points always to the North. When the sun is shining and warm the compass flower points to the North. Even if the heavens are filled with darkness, the compass flower points to the North. The wind can rage, the storm howl, and the sky flash with lightning and echo with thunder; still the compass flower points northward. So should our hearts point always toward God. Like little compass flowers in sunshine or in shadow they should always point Godwards. God made us to serve Him. If we know Him, we love Him. If we love Him, we serve Him.

The Cathedral at Freiburg in Germany had a splendid organ. One day a white-haired old man came to the Cathedral and asked permission to play the organ. He was refused and went away disappointed.

Someone asked, “Do you know the name of that man to whom you refused permission? That was Felix Mendelssohn, the greatest musician of the day.”

“What a pity we refused him,” they said. “What beautiful music he could have made!”

God is a master musician who plays on our heartstrings. He asks permission to fill our souls with beautiful music. If we refuse permission, He goes away sad because He will not force His way into our hearts. What a beautiful melody He could have played if we had let Him!

If we know God, we love Him. If we love Him, we will serve Him; and if we serve Him in this life, we will be happy with Him forever in the next.

THE LILIES OF THE STREAM

“Why do you think evil in your hearts?”

WE ARE going to learn this morning what to do about bad thoughts. The devil knows very well that if he can control our thoughts he can control our actions. We never sin without thinking about it first.

A father once wished to teach his son a lesson about the control of thoughts. Past the house where they lived ran a stream.

One day the father said to the boy, “Take this pail of garbage and go up to where the stream begins and dump the pail into the water.”

The boy did, and the next day garbage was spread all along the stream. It would float on the surface for a while and then would disappear only to pop up again.

Then the father said to his son, “Take this basket of lilies and go up to where the stream begins and throw them on the water.” The boy did, and the next day all along the course of the stream there were lilies floating on the surface. They would disappear for a while and then pop up again.

The father then began to explain to the boy: “The stream is like your mind. Whatever you put into it will float along it for the rest of your life. It will disappear for a while but will come to the surface again. If you fill your mind with evil thoughts they will be there all your life and will pop up to the surface and annoy you when you least expect or want them. If you fill your mind with good thoughts they will be there all the time and will comfort you when you need them most. You are careful about what you throw into a stream at its source so be careful about what you put into your mind.”

We can learn a lesson from that father’s story. If we guard our thoughts we will never have to worry about our actions.

Sometimes bad thoughts just seem to force themselves into our minds. We don’t want them. We fight against them but they are still there. Here is a simple cure which you should try in times like that. When a bad thought comes to mind, fighting it directly only makes it worse. It is better to change the subject, and you can do that very easily in this way. Imagine that someone gives you a hundred dollars with instructions to spend it all in three hours. Where will you spend it? Will you buy ice skates, a football helmet, a new dress or a hat? Before you have spent all the money, the bad thoughts will be gone.

“Why do you think evil in your hearts?” There is no need for it. There are so many beautiful things to think about. Why dump garbage into the stream of your mind to flow along its course when you can cast lilies upon the waters and keep them sweet and beautiful?

THE DYING CAMEL

“Friend, how camest thou in hither, not having on a wedding garment?”

DID you know that camels go out into the desert alone to die? A traveler once watched a scene like that. An old camel stumbled off across the sand dunes on his last journey, pitiful and alone. As the traveler watched, a shadow appeared in the sky. It was a vulture, wheeling above the camel in circles, watching and waiting. Slowly the camel walked along until it finally stumbled. Right away the vulture swooped down. But the camel got wearily to its knees and then to its feet; so the vulture moved away and continued to fly in great circles, watching and waiting. The rays of the sun caught it and threw its shadow on the sand. Again the camel stumbled and again the vulture swooped. This went on and on until they passed out of sight, the camel stumbling and the vulture swooping. It is a picture of a soul in mortal sin. Always the devil is there watching and waiting, always ready to swoop down for the kill.

Mortal sin robs our souls of grace. When we commit a mortal sin, the light of God that shines in our souls goes out. If we die in mortal sin, the devil swoops down on us and we belong to him for all eternity. We become like the man in the Gospel who did not have on a wedding garment. We will be cast out into the exterior darkness where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth.

In this regard, there are two resolutions which every one of us should make:

1. Never as long as we live to commit a mortal sin.
2. If through some misfortune we should commit sin, not to stay in that state but to remove it by going to confession as soon as possible.

We can help ourselves to keep these resolutions by thinking of the seriousness of sin, the greatness and goodness of God Whom we offend, and the danger in which we place ourselves. Mortal sin is a serious offense against the law of God. When we sin, we say, “I don’t care what God thinks, I am going to do it anyway.” What a shame to offend the God to Whom we owe so much -- the kind and gentle God! And what a danger we place ourselves in! The danger of falling into the hands of the devil.

There was once a fish who got tired of life in the pond where he lived so he jumped out of the water onto dry land. He gasped and flopped around and said to himself, “I wish I was back in the pond again.”

A little boy came along and felt sorry for him. He picked him up and threw him back in.

After a while the fish got tired of life in his pond again and jumped out once more. Again he gasped and flopped around and again the little boy threw him back where he belonged.

Over and over the fish did that, and the boy saved him every time. But once the fish jumped out when the boy was not there to save him, and he died. We are taking chances like that poor fish when we place ourselves in danger of death by sin.

THE DYING MINISTER'S FAITH

"The man believed the word which Jesus said to him."

A PRIEST and a Baptist minister who lived in the same town used to talk a lot about religion. As time went on the minister began to believe in the truths of the Catholic religion one by one. He believed in everything except one truth -- that of the real presence of our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament. This one truth he could not bring himself to accept. He used to keep saying, "If I could believe that I really and truly received God in Communion, I would be the happiest man on earth; but I just can't seem to do it."

Some time passed and the minister became very ill. The priest came to see him but he was unconscious. Kneeling down, the priest prayed that the dying man would regain his senses and the prayer was answered. The dying minister smiled and asked to be allowed to sit up and lean comfortably against the pillows. He might have gone on speaking but his eyes were fixed on something at the foot of the bed. He pointed, but the priest could see nothing. Then the dying man gazed and suddenly his face shone with joy. He gasped, "Really present -- if I had only known it in time, I would have preached it to the whole world." With that, he died.

We are lucky -- very, very lucky -- that we were given the gift of faith at birth. Other people often have to struggle to believe in things which come to us without any trouble.

One of the easiest and surest ways to guard this gift of faith is by receiving Communion frequently. Wherever the Blessed Sacrament is, there the faith is strongest. In Sidney, Australia, there was once a prison colony. Convicts were sent there from England. Since it was a crime in those days to be a Catholic, many Catholics were among them. They lived on, trying to keep their faith as best they could until priests came to say Mass for them. Now we have a Cathedral in Sidney. Where the Blessed Sacrament is, there the faith is strongest. It was the Blessed Sacrament that kept the faith of the martyrs strong when they hid in the catacombs from the soldiers of Rome. It is the Blessed Sacrament that will keep your faith strong.

The last words of the dying minister were, "Really present -- if I had only known it in time, I would have preached it to the whole world." You have known it all your lives and will know it all your lives. Be sure you make the most of it.

I FORGIVE YOU FOR RUNNING OVER ME

“So also shall my heavenly Father do to you, if you forgive not every one his brother from your hearts.”

THE greatest act of charity that we can perform is to forgive. Christ tells us over and over again that we must forgive our enemies. A little boy once showed how this could be done. This little boy was playing in the street when he was run over by a large bus. His leg was broken and he was taken to the hospital. When he regained consciousness, the first thing that he did was to ask for a toy bus with a driver in it. His mother, wondering why he should want it, went and bought one for him. The boy took the toy in his hands and said, “It’s all right. I forgive you for running over me.”

The reason why we must forgive is told us in this morning’s Gospel. By our sins we have offended God. If we have sinned mortally, we have offended Him more than words can tell. When people hurt us there is a limit to it. There is no limit to the offense we do to God when we sin. God is perfectly willing to forgive us our large debt but He insists that we forgive people the smaller injuries that they do to us. If Christ is willing to forgive us for nailing Him to the Cross, we should be willing to forgive someone for pulling our hair or calling us names. When we refuse to forgive we place ourselves in the position of the unjust servant and say, “Pay what thou owest;” then we forget the many sins that God has forgiven us, and forget what we owe to Him.

A boy was once holding a grudge against another boy. He came up to him after Mass one Sunday morning and offered to shake hands. He said, “I was saying the Our Father this morning and I have just seen what it means, ‘Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us.’”

A Chinese emperor once said, “After I have conquered their country, I will destroy all my enemies.”

He conquered the country and all his courtiers were expecting that there would be a great slaughter of the enemy leaders. They expected to find them beheaded, maybe after being tortured. They were surprised to find them all sitting at table with the emperor, laughing and joking!

They asked him, “You said you would destroy all your enemies.”

He answered, “I have destroyed them. I have forgiven them all and made them my friends.”

HOW A LITTLE LIE GREW

“Master, we know Thou art a true speaker.”

WHAT a wonderful tribute the Pharisees paid to our Lord when they said these words! How nice it would be if the same could be said about us!

So many boys and girls have the habit of lying. It should be overcome because it is a dangerous habit. The most dangerous thing about a lie is that it grows in the telling. Each time it is repeated it becomes worse. Here is an example of how a lie can grow and grow with each person who repeats it.

Some neighbors of a certain Farmer Jones came to tell him that Johnny Williams had taken a whole wagon-load of apples out of his orchard.

“Who told you?” the farmer asked.

They said that they heard it from Johnny Flannelmouth. Farmer Jones went around to see Johnny Flannelmouth. He asked, “Did you see Johnny Williams steal a wagon-load of apples out of my orchard?”

“Goodness, no,” said Johnny Flannelmouth. “What I heard was that he took a wheelbarrowful. Jimmy Gabbygut told me about it.”

The farmer went to see Jimmy Gabbygut. “Did you see Johnny Williams take a wheelbarrowful of apples out of my orchard?”

“Goodness, no,” said Jimmy Gabbygut. “All I said was that he took a pocketful of apples. Gertie Garrulous told me.”

The farmer went to see Gertie Garrulous. “Did you see Johnny Williams take a pocketful of apples from my orchard?”

“Goodness, no,” said Gertie Garrulous. “I said he took one of your apples. Lizzie Longtongue told me about it.”

The farmer went to see Lizzie Longtongue. “Did you see Johnny Williams take an apple out of my orchard?”

“Goodness, no,” said Lizzie Longtongue. “Johnny was talking to me the other day and said that your apples were ripe and it was about time somebody picked them.”

That is the way it is with a lie. We can do great harm without meaning to just because we are careless in what we say. A very simple rule to get and keep in mind early in your life is this: If you cannot say anything good about a person do not say anything at all. Telling lies makes us very unlike our Lord, to Whom even His enemies had to say, “Master, we know Thou art a true speaker.”

MEMENTO MORI

“My daughter is even now dead.”

AT THIS time of the year the Church actually wants us to think about death. It is not a thing that people like to think about, but it is always good for us to remember that “It is appointed unto men once to die.”

A certain nobleman once made a pilgrimage to Rome in order to go to Confession to the Pope. In memory of this visit the Holy Father gave him a ring and asked him to read the inscription on it every day. On the ring was written, “Memento Mori” -- “Remember that some day you must die.” Wearing the ring and reading the inscription every day made such a change in the man’s life that when the time came for him to die he was ready.

Death is a thing that we must prepare for. They once asked an old priest on his deathbed if he was afraid to die. He answered, “Do you think I would be such a tomfool as to be afraid of what I have been preparing for all my life?”

Mortal sin is the only thing which will make death hard. We should resolve never to stay in the state of mortal sin but to go to confession as soon as possible. The favorite trick of the devil is to get you to postpone going to Confession as long as he can because if he can keep you in the state of sin, you will belong to him for all eternity.

An Arabian proverb says that sin has five fingers. With two fingers it blinds our eyes so that we will not see how evil sin really is. If we really knew how great an offense sin is against God, we would never offend him. With two fingers it blocks our ears so that we will not hear the voice of God. When we are in the state of sin for a length of time, our hearts become hard and we do not wish to repent. With the last finger it blocks our lips so that we will not speak words of sorrow and repentance. We should never be afraid to speak words of repentance because God is always ready to hear them.

Death seems far away for children; yet our Lord keeps reminding us: “You know not the day nor the hour.” When we say the Hail Mary we pray that Our Lady will protect us now and at the hour of our death. We forget that there will come a time when “now” is “the hour of our death.”

An excellent habit for you to cultivate is to say this prayer for a happy death every day:

“Jesus, Mary and Joseph, I give you my heart and my soul.

Jesus, Mary and Joseph, assist me in my last agony.

Jesus, Mary and Joseph, may I breathe forth my soul in peace with you.”

LIGHTNING OUT OF THE EAST

“As lightning cometh out of the east, so shall the coming of the Son of man be.”

IF YOU were asked, “What makes going to school unpleasant?” you would answer, “Exams. Without them going to school would be fun.” But there is an exam at the end of the world which we must all pass and that is the judgment. “It is appointed unto men once to die and after death the judgment.”

On judgment day Christ will speak terrible words to sinners. “Depart from Me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire which was prepared for the devil and his angels.” Who must depart? From whom? Why? Where to? For how long? The answers to all these questions are in the words of Christ.

Who must depart? Ye cursed. What a terrible thing to be cursed by Christ, dried up arid shriveled, just like the barren fig tree. You who should have loved Me most. My little ones. Ye cursed. Of you I said, “Suffer them to come to Me.” Ye cursed.

From whom must they depart? From the loving Christ. David wept at the death of his son Absalom. How it must grieve the heart of Christ to see one of His little ones among the lost.

A king once traveling in disguise through His own country knocked on the door of a house and asked for shelter. The man, not knowing who he was, refused him, struck him, kicked him, and sent him on his way. The next day the king put on his royal robes, gathered his court around him, and sent for the man. “Do you know me now? I am he whom you abused.” On judgment day Christ will say, “I am He Whom you sinned against.”

Why must they depart? Our own consciences will tell us why.

Do you remember the story of the brothers of Joseph? They envied him because he was the favorite of his father who gave him a coat of many colors. They sold him into slavery and sprinkled goat’s blood on the coat to make their father think that he was dead. And Joseph rose from slavery to be the ruler of Egypt. His brothers were brought before him many years later and did not know him, until he said, “I am Joseph whom you sold into Egypt.” Then their consciences filled them with shame. So it will be when Christ says, “I am He Whom you sinned against.”

Where must they go? Into everlasting fire, which was prepared for the devil and his angels. Not to heaven prepared for the good angels of God.

For how long? For all eternity. Some of us are so impatient we cannot wait five minutes for lunch. But think: Eternity is for ever and ever!

The judgment is a terrible thing, but we have no need to be afraid if we have loved Christ in this life. He is the Good Shepherd. He knows His sheep and they know Him. If we have loved Him we will be happy with Him forever. Keep the judgment in mind and you will never sin. “Remember thy last end and thou shalt never sin.”