Sermon Corner

Art Is Long Haste Is Fatal

By Rev. James M. Gillis, C.S.P.

I didn't complete the article that appeared last week. In fact I had just about commenced it when my allotment of space ran out. You will perhaps remember that the subject was the compounding of several of Dickens novels into one volume, cutting out perhaps seven-eighths of the original because of the impatience of the modern-day reader.

But what really concerns me is not so much whether one who turns to Dickens for entertainment and enlightenment will read "The Pickwick Papers," "David Copperfield," "Oliver Twist" and "Martin Chuzzlewit," from beginning to end. I should imagine that people would either love Dickens or avoid him, and that those who love him would never find him tedious. But let that met with what we made a week ago.

Quite obviously, however, impatiently to reading Dickens is one phase of the rush, rush, in which we live our lives. We are becoming so accustomed to hurry that the chances are we shall soon find it impossible to appreciate art or literature in music at—and here I come to what worries a good deal of us—religious worship. I wonder how many Catholics know, for example, that what we call "low" Mass (terrible word) is only a fragment of the original Sunday Mass of centuries ago. In the good old days when people came to Mass they settled down for a prolonged period of adoration and praise and petition. They communed with God in very deed, and when one is being entertained by God it is bad manners to look at one's watch. Away back in the Catacombs the Christians made a whole night of it.

But the paradox of it is that when we were free to come up out of the ground and spend all the time we wished at worship without fear of interruption or of sudden death, we commenced to cut down on the time we gave to God. The process has gone on now for many centuries, and the tendency is to be more and more sparing of the moments we give to God. I should be ashamed to put down here in print, where any critic of modern Catholicism might happen upon it, what I have heard from the lips of some of our brethren in regard to their desire and their demand for a "quick" Mass. St. Alphonsus, who wrote a great deal for priests (and to tell the truth didn't spare us his sanctimonious hold down some rules that make us tremble if we condescend too much to the people, or to our own indevotion and rush the Mass.

But I refrain: I shall not say what I would for fear of scandalizing the "little ones." The wiser and better type of Catholic will know what I mean. Suffice it to say that the speed with which some of us "hedge our obligations" of [illegible] [illegible] and blood of Christ were so [illegible] that is appalling. And in for serious [illegible] when a Catholic congregation would gather for High Mass and settle back for a good hour's [illegible] after the Gospel and have dodged if they [illegible] operated for were a good preacher and an [illegible] to it. Also at evening services, there was no [illegible] Double hurry. In my younger days on the [illegible] to Catholics and non-Catholics we always preached for all minutes to Catholics and one hour to non-Catholics. In addition there was an [illegible] of 30 minutes or the answering of questions from the Question Box for a half hour. Do I love it or not, the people enjoyed it. I have been in parishes not a few where they demanded longer and where the more they got the better they were pleased. An hour and a half of sermon and question quarters of an hour more for questions delighted them.

But now—cut, clip it, rush it! And the good part is that a preacher, no matter how eloquent he may be, or how important his thesis, must be "down out of the pulpit" in twenty minutes. People say it is an improvement. Is it? In twenty minutes enough for "Mrs. Miniver" or "Random Harvest"? Oh but that's different a picture to entertain and a sermon is not. Why not? If you ask him (if [illegible] at the business) it is because the ability of his ordinary worshiper to put his mind on something religious and keep it there for a reasonable time is becoming less and less.

So with art. The old joke about "doing the galleries" is really no joke. It is patently. Tourists who went once to Europe and may never go again get a quick glimpse of Murillo's "Immaculate Conception," or Rembrandt's "Night Watch," or Raphael's "Madonna," perhaps two minutes or three or five for a world master piece, and on they went! It is ridiculous. Worse than ridiculous, outrageous! I know a man who spent five hours a day for a whole week at the gallery in Dresden looking at it's one greatest treasure and nothing else. He was right—Art is long, and art appreciation is longer. To rush in and out, to give a quick glance at the noblest and best and most beautiful works that man has wrought is a profanation, just as to rush in and out of Mass, the Work of God par excellence is, or may be a sacrilege.

So of music. The people at large don't want a symphony that lasts half an hour or a concerto that runs for twenty minutes. No, but a jazzy piece that carries one along with hectic excitement and is quickly over.

It's all wrong. No amount of explanation can make it right. And it's all of a piece—in literature, art, music, divine worship, haste is fatal. That, and a hundred times more than that ran through my mind when I saw the ads in the Literary supplements announcing that the juice had been squeezed out of Dickens' out of deference to impatient readers.

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STRANGE BUT TRUE

Little-Known Facts for Catholics

By M. J. MURRAY

EDITORIALS

(Continued from Page 10)

The devil boldly asks Christ to show him He is the Son of God. The three Apostles meekly live their faith in Christ, and ask no sign or miracle to prove it. Peter had spoken for all the twelve when he answered Christ's question: "Whom do you say that I am? Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." The revelation of the Father was enough for Peter and for the twelve; nothing could add nothing to the certainty of the faith they had. Hard days were ahead, the way of suffering and death lay before Christ. Their faith was now to be blessed with a vision of glory that would be a remedy for the vision of desolation soon to come.

"He was transfigured before them." Their eyes were blinded at the brightness of the Holy Face that now shone like the sun, at the sacred vestments that now became brighter than snow; they fell on their faces as they heard the words of the Father. Their way of sorrow lay before them, they were to keep secret the Transfiguration till after the Resurrection. Our way of penance lies now before us, we are in the second week of Lent. All not striving toward the better things of Christ becomes easy as we make our thoughts of the Temptation of Christ with our knowledge of His Transfiguration. Temptation is before us in life; glory awaits us in overcoming it.

Library Signpost

3 Great Saints In One Week

By Rev. Benedict Ehmann

This week St. Patrick—St. Joseph—St. Benedict. I'm not overlooking St. Cyril of Jerusalem, a great Saint, too, and a Doctor of the Church, besides; but his memory has been somewhat eclipsed by the more familiar Saints who encompass his Feast.

ST. PATRICK—I recall having signalized his Feast in past years in this column by quoting excerpts from the rich storehouse of Christian Gaelic literature. This year I turn to the Second Nocturne of the Office for March 17, which is based on the well-known "Confession" of St. Patrick. There it is written:

"Besides his daily care of the churches, his invincible spirit never slackened in prayer. For it is said that he was wont to recite every day the whole Psalter (i.e., the 150 Psalms of the Bible), together with the Canticles and Hymns, and two hundred prayers; that he every day knelt down three hundred times to adore God; and that at each canonical hour of the day, he signed himself a hundred times with the sign of the cross. He divided the night into three parts; first, he repeated the first hundred Psalms, and genuflected two hundred times; the second was spent in reciting the remaining fifty Psalms, standing in cold water, with his heart, eyes, and hands lifted up to heaven; the third he gave to a little sleep, stretched upon a bare stone. Remarkable for his practice of humility, like the Apostles, he did not abstain from manual labor. At length, worn out by his incessant cares for the Church, glorious in word and work, in extreme old age, he fell asleep in the Lord, after being refreshed with the divine mysteries. He was buried at Down, in Ulster, in the fifth century of the Christian era."

I don't know what historical source this derives from. Even if there are exaggerations in the report, it does express that devotedness to prayer which is so evident in the "Confession," in which he writes, "My faith was enlarged and my spirit was stirred till I prayed in one day a hundred times and at night nearly as often, so that I used to linger in the woods and on the mountain. Before dawn, I would awake to prayer in snow and in frost and in rain, and I was none the worse for it . . ."

Must we not see in the heroic holiness of this Father of Ireland the cause under God of the epic fidelity of his Irish sons to the Christian faith through 15 stormy centuries?

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ST. JOSEPH—Really, if only a Saint can write about a Saint, what shall we say about the husband of Mary, and the foster-Father of the Savior? In a sermon which we priests have to read in our Breviaries on Mar. 19, St. Bernard says:

"From the great honor of being privileged to be called and considered the father of God (though, of course, he was only the foster-father), we may judge the character and personality of Saint Joseph. And we must not forget that great patriarch, Joseph, who in ancient days was sold into Egypt and of whom Saint Joseph was heir not only in name but in purity, innocence and grace. To the former was given the gift of knowing the mysteries of dreams; the latter was graced not only with knowledge of, but even participation in, the mysteries of heaven. The former Joseph kept foodstuffs, not indeed for himself but for all the people; but the latter received into his care the living Bread from heaven for himself as well as for the world. We dare not doubt that blessed Joseph, to whom the Mother of the Savior was espoused, was a good and faithful servant; a prudent and faithful servant, I repeat, dear brethren, for the Lord appointed him guardian and consoler of His Mother, nourisher of His own body, and coadjutor on earth in the incomprehensible designs of heaven. (Trans. from the Short Breviary, Collegeville, Minn.)

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ST. BENEDICT—There is food for thought in the coincidence of St. Benedict's Feast with the first day of Spring. He founded an Order and established a way of life which were of supreme importance in the establishment of Christian Europe out of the wreckage of the Imperial collapse. You may remember my saying two weeks ago that St. Augustine's life and work were a bridge between two epochs—that of Imperial Rome and that of Christian Europe. When he died the barbarians were swarming over the Empire. For a century they laid waste the old monuments and institutions of the Empire, until finally toward the middle of the 6th century it was prostrate and helpless.

The old order was gasping its last; the new was in process of birth. When St. Benedict died the new order was already born; and he, more than any one else had helped to bring it to birth. He did it with the monasteries of his Benedictine Order. These were beacons of peace and order in the harassed countrysides where they were established. They became centres of learning in what a modern writer has cleverly grouped as cult, culture, and agriculture. Many of them were the nucleus around which grew some of our big European cities of today.

Says Dom Cabrol: "St. Benedict was a great "realizer" . . . since without leaving his monastery he stirred the Christian world more deeply than any of those who took a violent part in the politics of his time, thus modifying the course of events."

Historians consider the span of his life to have been approximately between the years 485-547.

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Read: Saint Patrick, by Hugh de Blacam.
Give This Man Place,
—by Hugh Francis Blunt
. . . a book on St. Joseph.
Saint Benedict, by Dom Fernand Cabrol.

FIVE and TEN Years Ago—

From Thursday, Mar. 14, 1918

With the Very Rev. Thomas F. Conlon, O.P., National Holy Name Society Director, lending encouragement and inspiration, the permanent organization of the Rochester Diocesan Holy Name Union was effected. Delegates to the first convention pledged support to President Roosevelt and Congress.

From Thursday, Mar. 17, 1938

"Only hypocrites or fools are taken in by the provision of religious freedom to be found in the new Soviet Constitution," declared the Rev. Benedict Ehmann in a radio talk on WHAM in conjunction with the diocesan-wide discussion club program on "Godless Communism."

'Quiz' Corner

What sin does a Catholic commit who attends services in a Protestant Church?

To take part in heretical worship is a sin against the virtue of religion which prescribes the true worship due to God. Outwardly it is also a denial of one's faith, and as such is a sin of scandal, which is contrary to fraternal charity as the love we owe our neighbor. Then, too, it leads to indifferentism in religion, which is the error of those who regard all religions as equally good, whereas every Catholic knows that there is only one Church of Christ, and one true religion of which she alone is the guardian.

Does not the Fifth Commandment forbid killing of another? How then can the Church approve of soldiers going into the Army, and killing others in battle?

Assuredly, the Fifth Commandments does forbid the killing of another on one's own authority. God has, however, given to the State authority over life and death in certain circumstances, such as, e.g., the execution of certain criminals, and also the defense of rights against attack or aggression in war. Thus the individual soldier who kills an enemy in war does not do so on his own authority, but in obedience to the lawfully exercised authority of the State.

What are the four emblems of the Evangelists or Gospel-writers and what do they mean?

(1) St. Matthew, a man or human form, because St. Matthew begins his gospel with the human birth of Christ. (2) St. Mark, a lion, because this gospel begins with St. John the Baptist, "the Voice of one crying in the wilderness." (3) St. Luke, an ox or ass, because this holy writer begins with Zachary, the priest of the Old Law who offered sacrifices of animals and other gifts. (4) St. John, an eagle, because St. John opens his gospel with the eternal birth of the Son, and thus soars on the wings of inspiration, like an eagle, into the far reaches of eternity.

Is it sinful to buy stocks on margin? I am very anxious to know this.

In general, the business operations of the Stock Exchange, including buying on margin, are not necessarily unjust or sinful, provided that fraudulent means are not resorted to, and that the speculator does not invest to such an extent that he cannot carry his obligations. But the risks that are taken, the habits so easily acquired of immediate indulgence in this commercial betting, and the many chances so readily opened up by a craze for making money without proportionate industry and labor, make the marginal purchase of stocks an occasion of sin and the frequent cause of financial and moral ruin.

Spiritual Thoughts

By the obedience of one, many shall be made just. Rom. V, 19.

Learn to THANK God for all things, especially for pain and sorrow. You cannot offer any more fitting to please Him.