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Sermon Preached at Funeral Mass of Monsignor Adolph Gabbani

(Text of sermon delivered by Rev. Joseph Cirincione at Funeral Mass of Monsignor Adolph L. Gabbani, St. Francis Assisi Church, Auburn, Wednesday, April 20, 1949.)

There are three times in a priest's life when he is the subject of a special sermon. The first is on the occasion of the celebration of his first Mass. The second is on the occasion of the celebration of his funeral Mass. The third is the occasion of the celebration of his entry into glory before the court of Heaven.

The first sermon is usually preached by an older brother priest. The second, usually by a younger brother priest. The third, by the Eternal High Priest Himself.

THE FIRST OCCASION is one of great joy and happiness. Joy and happiness overflowing from the wonderful thing that a man has become and the tremendous powers he has received.

The second is one of sadness stemming from the immolation of himself in death in the final fulfillment of his calling and the final exercise of his priestly powers. For, in a sense, the great and sublime sacrifice which he was empowered to offer at his ordination,

completely claims him and absorbs him only when he has added the sacrifice of his own life to that of the Lord's, in the spirit of the Lord's own words when He said: "This is My body which is being given for you. . . This cup is the new covenant in My blood which shall be shed for you."

The third occasion is one of great glory as his soul ascends in triumph before the throne of the eternal Father, and his Eternal Brother Priest, Jesus Christ acknowledges him before His Father and the angels and saints of Heaven and admits him to eternal Communion with God.

First, second and third. Joy, sorrow and glory. How readily these words recall to our minds the mysteries of the Rosary and the Mystical Rose of whom they speak. And of whom the priest often speaks and who, in a sense, is his first love. For what priest has ever reached the altar of God without Mary's help and has ever celebrated Mass without a deepening of his devotion to the Mother of Jesus, and therefore, his Mother? His first model.

FOR WHAT PRIEST, on his ordination day, has not been overcome by the likeness of his joy to that of Mary when the Angel stood before her and said: "Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with thee. Blessed art thou among women. Do not be afraid, Mary, for thou hast found grace with God. And behold thou shalt conceive in thy womb and shalt bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name Jesus. . . the Holy Spirit shall come upon thee and the power of the Most High shall overshadow thee; and therefore the Holy One to be born shall be called the Son of God."

What priest has ever spoken at Christmas time those powerful words that transform a bit of bread and wine in his hands into the flesh and blood of the Son of God without sensing his oneness with Mary and without being transported in spirit to the cave of Bethlehem, and feeling that he, like no one else on earth, has penetrated as far as one can, the mystery of the Motherhood of God?

And just as the joys of the priestly life cannot help but draw him closer to Mary because his relationship to Christ is so similar to hers, so too, his sorrows cannot but intensify his union with her. We read in the fourth Gospel: "Now there stood by the cross of Jesus his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary of Cleophas and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus therefore, saw his mother and the disciple standing by, whom he loved, he said to his Mother, 'Woman, behold thy son.' Then he said to the disciple, 'Behold thy Mother.'"

NOW THE DISCIPLE whom Jesus loved was the Virgin Apostle, John, the newly ordained priest chosen by God to represent in that hour all priests as he was privileged to be united with Mary and Jesus Himself in the offering of the Lamb of God upon the gibbet of the cross. It was to him, that Jesus gave the Mother of Sorrows to be his mother. "And from that hour the disciple took her into his home." And that is why today, wherever you find the priesthood you find Mary, and wherever you find Mary, you find the priesthood. Because wherever you find Mary and the Priesthood, you find Jesus.

If the joys and sorrows of a priest's life unite him to Mary, they do more than that with regard to Christ. They make him one with Christ. By virtue of a mystery of faith that blinds us by its very brilliance of truth, a priest at his ordination, becomes another Christ. Or, rather, Christ himself. The extension of Christ in every age and every time.

THE PROFOUND humility of the Son of God which did not hesitate to make Him empty Himself and take the nature of a slave being made like unto men; the profound humility of the Son of Man which, denying all human comprehension, deigned even to make Him enter into and to become present in the simple elements of bread and wine, has drawn Him even to the union of Himself with sinful men, and to the sharing with them without making them impeccable, of his priestly powers.

What St. Paul said of himself when he had reached the heights of holiness, can be applied, in a sense, to every sense, to every priest from ordination on: "I live now, not I, but Christ liveth in me." For

from the moment that the Bishop lays his hands upon him and the Holy Spirit comes down upon him, there is a new man there who did not exist before and who will never cease to exist. There is a priest there, another Christ. And his life is no longer his, because, from that moment on: "he is appointed for men in the things pertaining to God, that he may offer gifts and sacrifices for sins." And his life is no longer his, because he has made an offering of it to God, a spontaneous and free offering that goes beyond the offering as an official minister of the renewal of the Sacrifice of the Cross; for to that interior offering, he has added an offering of himself to God in the spirit of Mary when she said: "Behold the handmaid of the Lord. Be it done unto me according to thy word."

THAT IS ANOTHER reason why the priest's First Mass is an occasion of joy. For it is a time of promise and hope. It is a time of dedication and that always brings joy. As it is counted among the joyful mysteries when Jesus was presented to His Eternal Father in the temple.

But there is nothing on earth that brings out the priest's oneness with Christ more than the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass itself. "This is my Body. . . This is my Blood," he is not only privileged but ordered to say.

If all else fails to remind him of that marvelous unity, he can never, like the disciples on the way to Emmaus, fail to recognize his oneness with Christ in the "breaking of bread."

IN FACT, more than the Rosary, every Mass is the epitome of a priest's whole life. The offering of himself at ordination is renewed every morning in the offering of the Mass. And what the first few years after ordination teach him, a priest's first Mass has already prefigured, that after the offering, after the dedication comes the consecration. After the promise, the fulfillment.

"IF ANY MAN" will come after Me let him take up his cross daily and follow Me." To whom can those words be applied more aptly than to the priest? He, among all men, offers to go after Christ. He is one with Christ each morning as Christ's immolation is renewed by him on the altar. And he is one with Christ, as Christ's immolation is renewed in his daily life. As he takes up his cross daily to follow Christ. For that is what a priest's life essentially is and is meant to be.

Just as in the consecration of the Mass there is renewed the sacrifice of Christ on the cross so in the priest's daily struggle to be in the world and not of it, to lift up sinners and sanctify souls without himself becoming a castaway, to be surrounded by worldly men and yet to be detached from the world, to be human and live by faith in that daily consecration of himself upon the altar of his priestly life, is renewed also daily the Passion of Jesus Christ.

Today it is my sad duty to preach the second sermon to which Monsignor Gabbani has a right as a priest of God. When the first one was preached, over fifty years ago, I was not even born. Yet, it would hardly be rash presumption on my part to say that it was a very joyous occasion.

THIS ONE, today, however, finds us united in sorrow; the sorrow of his loved ones who have lost a member of the family; the sorrow of his parishioners who have lost their pastor; the sorrow of brother priests who have lost a friend. Yet I do not consider the purpose of this sermon to be merely an expression of our bereavement; still less do I consider it to be the praise of him whose passing we lament. For it has always seemed to me rather futile for men to essay to pass judgment on a fellowman. Judgment belongs to God. The things in a man's life that merit praise or censure can never be adequately comprehended by mere human beings.

I do consider it within the scope of this sermon, however, to try to draw some profit both for parishioners and fellow priests from the life of Monsignor Gabbani.

TO HIS PARISHIONERS, I say, learn to carry the cross of life as cheerfully as he did. For he has had to carry the cross of physical infirmities as long as I have known him, and that goes back almost thirty

years. I was an altar boy at Mt. Carmel Church in Rochester when I first met Father Gabbani. And what I remember most of those days is that he was a sick man.

How well I remember his being taken to the hospital and the concern and the prayers of the school children for him. And Father Foery, our pastor, then, now His Excellency, Bishop Foery, confiding in me that Father Gabbani's days were numbered because it was feared he had cancer.

I remember well too, years later, when I was sent to him as his assistant at St. Francis in Rochester, my telling him that I never thought he would live to be my pastor, and his jovial and hearty laugh because he considered it a source of great amusement to have been able to play a joke on us.

And yet, though he then considered himself practically well, he was suffering from two ailments that would have been enough to make most of us think of retiring. He considered himself to be in fairly good health while he was taking digitalis for his heart and suffering from high blood pressure.

AND THOSE of you who live in Auburn know only too well how his days here have been marked by a series of re-

curing illnesses, all of which were borne by him with truly admirable Christian fortitude.

For the profit of us priests, there is to be considered the fact that Monsignor Gabbani was a priest over fifty years and retained to the last the humility and simplicity of a child. Those of us who have been priests much, much less than that, can appreciate, in a single glance of the mind almost, what that really means.

THERE IS ONE last thing to be said: to pray for his soul. For remember that there is one sermon yet to be preached for him. There is one last division of the mysteries of the Rosary to be considered. There is a third principal part of the Mass. And for that final Communion with God in Heaven, of which his daily Masses for over fifty years were a figure and a pledge, Monsignor Gabbani is, as every single one of us shall some day be, dependent on the charity of those left behind.

Let it be a pledge from us then, to his priestly spirit that our prayers will be successful in his behalf that God may speed the moment, if that moment has not already come, when not mere words, but the Word will be spoken in his behalf and he will enter the glory of the Eternal day.

Monsignor Gabbani Funeral Rite Held

(Continued from Page 1) officers of the Holy Name Society and of the Sacred Heart League accompanied the body to Holy Sepulchre Cemetery in Rochester.

Monsignor Gabbani was born Nov. 24, 1872, at Monsummano, Lucca, Italy. He entered the Italian army at the age of 20 and two years later re-entered the Seminary at Pesca. He was ordained to the Holy Priesthood on April 11, 1897. After ordination he was chaplain at Lucca Cathedral.

THE YOUNG priest came to America in July, 1907 under the auspices of the Society for the Propagation of the Faith and although trained for missionary work in South America was sent to North America.

He first was sent to the Buffalo Diocese but at the request of the late Bishop Bernard J. McQuaid was transferred to the Diocese of Rochester in 1908. First assigned to Elmira he established St. Anthony's Church there and was pastor for 18 years.

In 1925, Monsignor Gabbani was transferred to Mt. Carmel Church, Rochester, where he assisted the Rev. Walter A. Foery, now Bishop of Syracuse. In 1929 at the direction of the late Bishop John F. O'Hern, he was assigned to establish a new parish

of St. Francis of Assisi, Rochester.

DURING THE reign of Archbishop Edward Mooney, now Cardinal Archbishop of Detroit, Monsignor Gabbani on May 3, 1939 was assigned as pastor of St. Francis of Assisi Church, Auburn.

Death came to Monsignor Gabbani the day before the 52nd anniversary of his first high Mass which he celebrated in Italy. He was created a domestic prelate with the rank of Right Reverend Monsignor and was invested in Sacred Heart Pro-Cathedral Rochester on Nov. 11, 1947.

During his pastorate in Auburn, he became well known throughout the city as he administered his pastoral duties and took part in civic and religious projects for the benefit of the community.

On the occasion of his 50th anniversary as a priest, April 11, 1947, the parish had arranged an impressive celebration in his honor but he was stricken ill a few days before the event.

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