

TO THE MEMORY OF FATHER "MIKE" SHEA,
WHO LEFT US A RICH LEGACY OF CHRIST-LIKE
INSIGHT INTO HUMAN FRAILTY AND A
SYMPATHETIC UNDERSTANDING OF HUMAN
PROBLEMS

Sunday Morning Storyland

Sermons for the Children's Mass

REV. WILFRID J. DIAMOND

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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 the Catholic children of America.

Francis Spellman
Archbishop of New York.

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 flock, so that they heed the warnings of the shepherd although they may no longer be within his call. What priest's heart would not glow 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.

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SUNDAY MORNING STORYLAND

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 in a 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.