

anticipating this, cried out saying: Hades was embittered when it met thee face to face below. It was embittered, for it was rendered void. It was embittered, for it was mocked. It was embittered, for it was slain. It was embittered, for it was despoiled. It was embittered, for it was fettered. It received a body, and it encountered God. It received earth, and came face to face with Heaven. It received that which it saw, and fell whence it saw not.

O Death, where is thy sting? O Hades, where is thy victory?

Christ is risen and thou art cast down.

Christ is risen and the demons have fallen.

Christ is risen and the angels rejoice.

Christ is risen and life is made free.

Christ is risen and there is none dead in the tomb.

For Christ is raised from the dead, and become the first-fruits of them that slept. To him be glory and dominion from all ages to all ages. *Amen.*



## JUSTICE

(An imaginary sermon delivered to a non-existent congregation)

EDMUND HILL, O.P.

**W**HEN our Lord said 'Blessed are they who hunger and thirst after justice', he did not mean, presumably, those who are out to get justice, agitators demanding justice for the workers, or men determined to defend the sacred rights of property. Blessed are they who hunger and thirst, not after the rights of justice, but after the virtue of justice, who are eager to do, not to receive justice. These are the ones who shall be filled.

This virtue of justice, being just, is not only a matter for judges or persons in authority. It is the very first virtue required of every Christian. And it is also the very last virtue, the one that will be looked for by your judge at the end. On whether you are truly just or not will depend whether you go to heaven or to hell. Hell for the unjust, heaven for the just; the just to the right and the

wicked to the left, and these shall go into everlasting punishment, but the just into life everlasting. Then after that final sorting out, when the cockle has been gathered into bundles and thrown into the fire, then shall the just shine like the sun in the kingdom of my father. None who is unjust shall be there, and none who is just shall be missing. I think you will find that whenever heaven and eternal life and the kingdom are mentioned in the New Testament, it is nearly always in the same breath with justice and the just. These things are the reward of the just, the hope of the just, the habitation of the just. Justice is our passport into heaven. Unless your justice abound more than the justice of the scribes and Pharisees, you shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven.

Not even charity, without which the other virtues are worth nothing at all, can replace justice. Justice is sometimes said to be the Old Testament virtue, while charity is the commandment of the New. It's true that the grace preached in the New Testament has superseded the rule of the law which was given in the Old; but the old wasn't simply scrapped with the coming of the new. Christ came not to destroy but to fulfil. So too, charity perfects justice but cannot do without it. Once a house is built, you cannot remove its foundations with impunity. 'Open to me the gates of justice', cries the Old Testament, 'and going into them I shall confess to the Lord.' 'This is the gate of the Lord', answers Christ from the New Testament, pointing to his cross, and to his gospel of love, and to his Church cemented together by charity. 'This is the gate of the Lord', says Christ the door, 'and the *just* shall enter into it.'

Surely then justice is an important virtue. And like most of the things that really matter, it is something very simple. I don't mean that it's easy but it *is* simple; there is nothing complicated or subtle about it. It doesn't call for cleverness or skill or a good education. It is rather like faith, which is another foundation of charity. By faith you believe in God, you believe in the truth; by justice, it's as though you allow God to believe in you, you do the truth. By faith you see straight, by justice you act and live straight. Justice means being straight, and injustice means being crooked or twisted—a crook or a twister. To be really just we must be straight in three ways—straight in ourselves, straight with others, and straight with God.

Straight in myself; St Joseph was a just man, and St Joseph was also a carpenter. He knew from his trade what being straight means. He knew that if his planks and staves and blocks of wood weren't cut straight and true, they wouldn't fit where he wanted them. He knew that pretty furniture which isn't as solid as it looks, gimcrack chairs with fancy backs which fall to bits when you sit on them, are just a lie. The job of a carpenter is to make things which can be relied on to do what they are meant to do, chairs which can be sat on, wheels which will turn, drawers which will open and shut. Only when he has mastered that, can he think of making his work beautiful. Just so, it's no use my talking grandly about charity and the spiritual life, if I haven't yet mastered the A.B.C. of justice, and learnt to be honest, and to speak the truth, to be reliable in my duties, to be a faithful friend on rainy days as well as fine; in a word, to be a good man and true, of whom people can say: 'He's straight, is Jack; you know where you are with him'.

It's true, indeed, that there is such a thing as imperfect, or unfinished justice. A chair may be very well made, but you have every excuse for grumbling at the carpenter if you get a splinter every time you sit on it, because he didn't bother to sandpaper the seat. So you meet people who are sound at heart all right, but they stick a splinter into you every time you touch them, because their rough justice lacks the polish of a little gentleness.

We have been talking about being straight or just in oneself, as though it could be managed without reference either to other people or to God. But in fact justice is a social virtue, and it's nonsense to think you can be straight in yourself unless you are straight with others. And yet it's a sort of nonsense that most of us find it very easy to indulge in. We are prepared to be honest and fair-minded—up to a certain limit. But beyond that—well, people are fair game. It doesn't readily occur to us that such an attitude puts a big twist in our straightness straight away.

What's the first rule of justice? Our Lord gives it, and I don't think anyone would dispute it: 'Whatsoever you want men to do to you, so you do to them'. Not any particular men, just men. Do as you would be done by. It's so easy to apply it to others. 'How would you like it if I treated you like that?' But for ourselves there are some rather more convenient rules. 'If I don't take care of myself, nobody else will. In this life it's every man for himself,

and the devil take the hindermost.' He certainly will, but when the time comes for that we'll find that the last will be first and the first last. The hindermost he takes will be those who took best care of themselves. 'He that loveth his life shall lose it.'

Then there's that other favourite: 'Everyone else does it, why shouldn't I?' 'Others make it a point of honour to do as little as they can for as much as they can; why shouldn't I?' Or another variety: 'He wouldn't think twice about pulling a fast one on me; why shouldn't I get there first for a change?' Are there any of us, I wonder, who can honestly say that they have never let their thoughts run on those lines, and acted accordingly? And yet we know, don't we, in our heart of hearts, that these persuasive little voices are unjust. We have duties to each other and to society, and justice will not excuse us if we dodge them. Never mind if everyone else is busy double-crossing each other twelve hours a day; that is all the more reason for you and me to be straight in our dealings, even in our dealings with the twister. The worst scoundrel imaginable has rights, and you and I have duties towards him, simply because he is a man, a human being for whom Christ died. We have duties towards the community, or rather the several communities, to which we belong, our family, our neighbours, our country; to the parish, to our fellow Catholics, to the Church, to Christ. We Catholics especially, who have the quite undeserved honour of being members of the body of Christ, should be models of justice to our fellow men, the best of neighbours, the most loyal of citizens and subjects, the truest of friends.

It is here that the good Catholic is open to the temptation of the Pharisees, who went astray precisely by getting this matter of justice all wrong. Unless he's careful he can become proud of his religion, as the Pharisees were about theirs, in the wrong way. He can develop a contemptuous attitude towards non-Catholics, suggesting that they are all either fools or knaves; forgetting that it is thanks to no mental or moral qualities of his that he is a Catholic; forgetting that the Church seen from the outside looks very different from what we know it to be from within. To outsiders it means those odd, and sometimes rather objectionable, stand-offish people known as Catholics. We have a positive duty to show them the Church of God in as favourable a light as possible, to give a reasonable account, as St Peter says, of the faith that is in us, and

we won't do it very well if we are aggressive about it and allow ourselves to sneer at the other man's opinions. How much apostolic work is ruined for want of plain good manners! But if we are to be good ambassadors of Christ to this wicked world, not a little divine diplomacy, consisting of justice and charity, is demanded of us.

St Paul tells us why it was that the Pharisees went wrong. It was because they were ignorant of the justice of God and wanted to establish their own, and so did not submit to the justice of God. They went the wrong way about putting themselves straight with God, since they assumed that justice was something that would put God straight with them. Being just meant fulfilling the works of the law, which would oblige God to reward them, as if he were a slot-machine which delivers the goods automatically. Well, you may say, what's wrong with keeping the law and being regular in the practice of religion? We have to be, don't we? And God has promised to reward us for it, hasn't he? Yes, yes, but what counts is our attitude in doing good works. We must do them by way of submitting to the justice of God, not by way of establishing our own. We must realize, in St Paul's phrase, that God has created the good works for us to walk in, and so the credit for them belongs to him rather than to us. 'Not to us, O Lord, not to us, but to thy name give glory.' 'Who shall go up into the mountain of the Lord, or who shall stand in his holy place? The innocent of hands and the clean of heart, who has done no injustice, neither is guile found in his mouth.' But which of us, which of the Pharisees, could honestly claim to be such a man? There is only one man like that, who cannot be convicted of sin, the Just One, just in his own right, the man Christ Jesus. Consequently it's only in him, through faith in his blood, that the rest of us, who left to ourselves are crooked from birth, can climb the mountain of the Lord. That was what the Pharisees wouldn't accept. Knowing not the justice of God, they wanted to set up their own, independent of God's grace.

Our Lady too, as we know, was sinless, and therefore perfectly just, perfectly straight. But she had that privilege in virtue of the justice of her Son. As we say in the Litany, she is the mirror of justice, reflecting the brightness of the sun of justice. And that's what we must try to be, little mirrors, as clear and polished as possible reflecting the justice, the redeeming, saving justice of

Christ. Only in Christ will it be possible for our justice to abound more than the justice of the scribes and Pharisees, and for us to enter the kingdom of heaven. If we let go of him, if we give up the faith, we are lost. If we wander from him who is the way and the truth, we cannot, by going our own way, come to him who is the life. With St Paul we must be ready to suffer the loss of all things and count them but as dung that we may gain Christ, and may be found in him, not having our own justice, but that which is of the faith of Christ Jesus, justice in faith.



## A MARTYR FOR PEACE<sup>1</sup>

FRANCIS M. STRATMANN, O.P.

**B**EFORE the first world war, there was in Germany no talk of refusing to serve in war. True, we heard that in England and America there were a few sects that refused war service or military service even during peace time. But they were considered strange people; mentally and morally not quite sound!

During the four years of the first world war, we became more thoughtful. Afterwards there was an upsurge of the anti-war movement, but it was suppressed by the Nazis. The second world war, stretching over five years, was so horrible that probably the majority of all Germans came to appreciate the point of Conscientious Objection. Indeed, an interior objection, a protest of the moral sense, gripped them. But exteriorly they did not dare to come forward. In fact, their political and military thought, the legacy of centuries, held that there were moral objections against open resistance to directives issued by legitimate authority.

As a result, the Germans as a whole not only did not refuse their services in the war unleashed by Hitler, but most of them, even most of the Christians, expressed serious religious doubts, whenever this or that individual consistently and bravely answered 'no' to his draft call. Was such an answer, they asked, compatible with Christian ethics? Was not obedience to the government still a duty,

<sup>1</sup> Translated by John Doebele from *Der Christ in der Welt* (Spring, 1953, Nachreihengasse 48, Vienna, 17).