

Tonight at 6:45: Father Boardman preaches at the Lenten Series.

Religious Bulletin  
April 3, 1957

Friday: First Friday of the Month - the day we pray for the grace of a Happy Death.

"Please, Don't Mention That Word"

We have a friend, Edgar, who complains: "Nearly all the teachings of the Church are beautiful -- except the one about hell. It's ignoble. I prefer to keep God's laws because of love, rather than because of fear. Preach charity, not hell."

Fact and Belief: Suppose a cancer has formed and shows up on an x-ray negative. The reality of the cancer is not changed simply because the patient refuses to look at the negative. Belief doesn't create hell; non-belief doesn't destroy hell. If hell exists, it exists independently of the belief or non-belief of anyone. Belief is only a means of knowing that hell exists.

Whether there actually is a hell -- this is the point to determine. If there is, one had better believe in it even if he doesn't like to. As to the existence of hell, read the Gospels honestly. Then answer: if there is no hell, is not Christ either a liar or a fool? Our Lord brought up the subject 15 times. Why shouldn't we?

Fear and False Fear. Suppose that an unarmed man, bent on theft, approaches the gate of a neighbor's property. Before him is a sign reading: "Danger! Ferocious Dogs Roam These Grounds." Then his presence attracts the attention of the animals. They appraise him appetitiously. The man doesn't enter. Fear of the dogs has kept him out. Is that fear ignoble?

The fear of breaking mirrors, of walking under ladders, of a black cat crossing your path -- these may be ignoble fears because there is no objective basis for the fear. But if hell exists, and if Edgar's conduct is influenced by the fact of hell, is Edgar really so stupid and ignoble?

Hell and Beauty. Is hell beautiful? Hardly. But Hell helps men and women to be morally beautiful. Absolute certainty (if it be possible!) that there is no hell -- this would make many a good-living person live less beautifully. Ask any ordinary Christian. Ask yourself. Even the comparatively few who live habitually on the love of God, even they in their meaner moments are influenced by hell to a much more beautiful life.

Why is this? Because all laws are made effective by sanctions -- by rewards and punishments. Ask human lawmakers about the necessity of punishment. And the moral law, which reaches into the silent conscience of man with the most difficult demands, does it, also, not require sanctions? If, then, the observance of the moral law makes men and women morally beautiful, and if hell is a negative sanction of the moral law, then hell is really an aid to moral beauty.

Love and Behavior. If Edgar, as he says, lives well because of the love of God and of his neighbor, let him keep on living that way. Christ came and did everything possible to make men love Him and His law. Charity, properly understood, sums up all His teachings. He wishes, above all, that men come to Him through love. But Christ is no insipid lover. Hell is really a manifestation of the fierceness of His love. If certain men, because of unholy earthly love, refuse love to Christ, then He would bring them to Him by fear. If, neither by fear nor love they will come to Him, Whom they know, then they will deserve hell for eternity; and they will get it. Hell wasn't invented by theologians, but by God Himself.

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PRAYERS - Deceased: mother of Howard (Cav.) and Brian (Morrissey) Foley; aunt of Ross Wilkinson of Badin; Col. Henry McLean; Very Rev. Thomas McMahon; George B. Sheehey, '25; Dr. Patrick Doran, '23; John J. Gorman, '05; grandmother of Dave Miller of Howard; Mrs. Mary Casey; grandfather of Bill Gulley, (O-C); father of Dick Brosk. Ill: grandmother of Mike Shipman of Zahm; father of Fred Stepanich of Lyons; father of Jack Soucy of Alumni; uncle of Roy Wessel of Howard. 5 special intentions.