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Learn the Value of Priceless Gifts.

A pearl for a red bandana, a hunk of gold for a looking glass, a tusk of ivory for a pocket knife, right spikenard and sweet cinnamon for a ten-penny nail, a treaty of subjection for a bottle of rum. Every trader has known the value of trade goods in dealing with darkened intellects.

The devil is the world's oldest trader. He offered Adam and Eve equality with God for one act of obedience to him; he told them that they would know good and evil. He kept half his promise: they now knew evil, but they knew good only darkly.

The Bulletin reminded you recently of the sense of hurt you feel when some one for whom you have fancied beautiful ideals does something which you believe unworthy of him. It means that you think more of him than he thinks of himself. Many such hurts make a cynic of one who has not strong faith and strong grace. Only a special grace prevents the priest from chucking his job when one after another of his altar boys grows up to be a rotter; his consolation in the one who becomes a priest outweighs his discouragement over the jail birds.

Baptismal innocence is a priceless gift of God, but it takes brains to realize the fact. St. John, in his description of Heaven, gives the first of honor in the heavenly procession to the virgins who accompany the Spotless Lamb in the company of angels. Most of us haven't the brains to appreciate this priceless gift, and we barter it for a bauble. The world laughs at us for being innocent; then we throw away our innocence and the devil laughs that we have been so gullible. Curiosity tempts us; we eat of the forbidden fruit, and it turns bitter in our mouth even before it reaches the revolting stomach. Nature revolts; conscience accuses; friends weep; enemies laugh; strangers mistrust; joy departs from the heart, which is now given over to fear, to remorse, to dejection, to despondency, to bitterness.

The avenues of disillusionment are many, and one may travel any of them or all of them. Happy the man who knows this truth and acts wisely upon it. A man may be a thief but not a robber; he may be an adulterer but not a drunkard; he may be a coward but not a blasphemer; he may miss Mass but not eat meat on Friday. Wise is the man who, though he has fallen, holds on to what innocence he has retained. Every vestige of innocence is precious; it reflects, even though brokenly, the full stature of the man.

What you give up of innocence is bought back but dearly, and then never so fully as to wipe out all regrets. Any man who has sinned knows how much easier the second sin is than the first, and how the flood gates seem to open after the second or the third offense. Any man who has struggle to throw off the tentacles of habit should have sense enough not to expose himself to more habits and worse ones.

"All sin has a lure," said one student on his questionnaire last year. If some particular lure is drawing you on right now, see a priest before it is too late. True values are learned on the death-bed; meditation on death may help you to see them now. See a priest and let him, who has seen sin through from start to finish, help you know the value of your innocence and the strength of its enemies.

Our Lady of Lourdes.

"I am the Immaculate Conception," was what the Vision at Lourdes answered Bernadette when she asked her for her name. Tomorrow is the feast of Our Lady of Lourdes. It is also the day of the Junior Prom.

Prayers.