

Six Topics Relative To The Social Questions

Delivered by Bishop Ketteler two years before his consecration as Bishop of Mainz, November 26, 1848 through December 20, 1848.

1. **The Christian View of Private Property:** The “haves and the have-nots;” the rich growing richer and the poor growing poorer; God is exclusive proprietor of all creation; regardless of how property comes to be exercised, how it shared or delegated, or who comes into possession of property, the ultimate dominion of God remains inviolate. He sees the lack of faith which deprives the rich of any spirit of active charity to work among the poor. Where there is private ownership, goods will be property cared for.
2. **Christian Charity and the Social Problems:** Ketteler reminds the people that the answer to the social ills do not lie with the government, for no matter what “form of government, we choose, still there will not be enough bread, enough food, enough shelter, enough clothing for our poor.” He said that the poor become involved with political movements out of desperation and the unnaturalness of their poverty.
3. **Human Liberty:** He stressed the importance of interior and exterior freedom to be truly human and to become all that, we, as human beings, are destined to become. This demands a reform also of education. Ketteler believed in Christian education which was persecuted in his time. Ketteler reiterates the Christian concept of human liberty, believing that God has given us something of His own freedom and self-determination in creating us. Human liberty means we are capable of developing according to God’s plan.
4. **Human Dignity:** Here he stressed the importance to strive to heal the division between the rich and poor; he talked about halting the moral decline that victimized large numbers of people who have lost faith and hope and love for God and fellow-human beings. He presents an either/or-our destination is either outside of this world, in God, in which case our life is a preparation for our ultimate goal or else our destiny is to enjoy the here and now and to terminate our existence when we die. The human heart longs for peace and justice and this part of our human destiny.
5. **Christian Marriage and the Family:** He notes how hard it is to present the ideal to someone who had not experience of a Christian family. He mentions three essential components of Christian marriage: love, unity and indissolubility. There were elements working against food marriages in his time. His allegiance to the Church is seen in his convincing statements. “Marriage is an exclusive treasure of Christianity.” He stresses the importance of the SACRAMENT of Marriage with all the grace it brings. And because Christ demands such pure, self-sacrificing love and fidelity in marriage, He will

equip soul with grace to measure up. Ketteler speaks of the dignity of women and how much Christianity has enhanced the place of women in the Church. He urged all men and women to develop devotion to Mary. He says that the mother takes the first place as prime education of her children and adds (How about this?) that a good Christian mother is also the educator of the father in the family.

6. **Teaching Authority of the Church:** He teaches that we all need a certain amount of authority and that we must seek the higher, infallible authority. As a loyal Catholic of his time, he states emphatically that there is just one institution which offers this divine authority – “the Roman Catholic Church, our holy mother!” He said that our choice is not whether we wish to submit to authority, but rather to which authority we will subject ourselves. He makes a strong plea for adherence to the Catholic Church and to embrace its teachings with fidelity and integrity.

Throughout these six discourses there is a very prevalent and evident feeling that Ketteler sensed the mounting tensions between government factions and the Church; between ecclesiastical and political authority; between Protestants and Catholics—something we can hardly imagine, given our American tradition. Only by reading more can we appreciate his stature in the world and church of his day.

–Genevieve Brandstetter, CDP