

all over the western world, with a few interesting exceptions.

The same is true of the celibacy of the clergy. Nobody doubts that a priest is cut off from marriage by an implicit vow; and yet no one can point to any official decree which gave rise to this obligation, or which stands as the ground for it. The whole rests on the informal but effectual ground of administration rather than law — a usage gradually induced and enforced by the authorities. If there should ever rise a revolt against clerical celibacy the Church might find it necessary to issue an official decree; but till this happens, priests will go on accepting the obligation on the strength of practical tradition and administrative enforcement alone.

#### THE DUTY OF FASTING

The same is true of the duty of fasting before Communion. Christ Himself instituted the Holy Eucharist in the evening, at the end of the feast dinner. The early Christians used to celebrate regularly in the evening, and, therefore, of course, without fasting. At some obscure point in history the Mass came to be transferred to the early morning, and this became the invariable custom. Out of this arose the fact of receiving the Eucharist fasting from midnight, and this fact gradually came to be regarded as an obligation. Hence it got formulated into a law in theological text-books and instructions, on the strength of traditional usage, rather than any official decree. The custom is strictly obligatory all the same; and only if there ever should arise a party calling it into question, would the Church find it necessary to issue an official definition of the law in order to put an end to such a dispute.

Even the "six" Commandments of the Church are not, as they stand, official enactments. The hearing of Sunday Mass did not arise from any formulated decree of the Church, but merely from recognized and enforced custom. The holidays of obligation became obligatory in the same manner by local usage. The laws of fasting and abstinence were practiced out of