

You are aware that every Catholic is bound to comply with the Paschal precept which comes into force on Ash Wednesday and extends to Trinity Sunday. The law of the Church in this matter is very clear: All the faithful of both sexes, after coming to the years of discretion, shall faithfully confess their mortal sins at least once a year, receiving reverently at least at Easter the Sacrament of the Eucharist. Those who neglect to do this may be excluded from the Church of God while living and deprived of christian burial when they die. The Church has a right to legislate thus for our spiritual welfare. "He that heareth you," says Christ, "heareth me; and he that despiseth you despiseth me."—*Luke X.*, 16. The Catholic who neglects to fulfill this precept is guilty of gross contempt for God and His Church, and, had he nothing else but this act of disobedience to answer for, it alone would be sufficient to condemn him forever. Let all the faithful under our charge comply with this precept as soon as possible. Experience shows that, when its fulfilment is unduly deferred, there is danger of its being entirely neglected.

We have already intimated that Lent is a season of prayer, of self-denial and mortification. As christians we are all bound to a life of mortification, and, it was to emphasize this fact as well as to commemorate the forty days fast of Christ in the desert that this holy season was established. During the primitive ages of the Church, the penitential discipline of Lent was characterized by a vigorous severity which, in our age of luxurious indulgence, would appear harsh and extreme.

The sainted martyrs, confessors, and virgins whose heroic lives and virtues still illumine the history of the ages of faith, followed the examples of the Apostles and triumphantly bore the mortification of Christ on their bodies in order to purify their souls. Like the Apostles, too, they sought heaven in labor and painfulness, in frequent vigils, in hunger and thirst, in fasting often, in cold and privation. These virtues and austerities, be it remembered, were not confined to the anchor-