

as a Sovereign, who, wishing to show mercy to a capital convict, may either grant him a remission of all punishment, or may leave him subject to some lighter infliction. Thus, on several occasions, some of which are of recent date, the Executive of this Province, has commuted the capital punishment into penal servitude, for a certain period of time. Now no one who is versed in the Sacred Writings, will deny that many instances occur there of God's remitting the essential guilt and the eternal punishment due to it, and yet leaving a temporary punishment to be endured by the penitent sinner. Few out of many facts of this kind, recorded in Holy Writ, will suffice to illustrate this merciful dealing of God with sinful man.

Thus, for example, the sentence of spiritual death and everlasting torments was remitted to our first father, upon his repentance, but not that of sufferings and corporal death which has passed to his posterity. Thus, also, when God reversed the severe sentence against the idolatrous Israelites, he added: "nevertheless, in the day when I visit, I will visit their sin upon them."—*Exod.* Thus, again, when the inspired Nathan said to David, that model of penitents: "the Lord hath put away thy sin, he added: "nevertheless, the child that is born unto thee, shall die."—*Kings.* The Catholic Church teaches that the same is still the common course of God's mercy and wisdom, in the forgiveness of sins committed after Baptism. The essential guilt and eternal punishment of sin, she declares, can only be expiated by the precious merits of our Redeemer, Jesus Christ. But a certain temporal punishment God reserves for the penitent himself to endure, lest the easiness of his pardon should make him careless about falling back into sin. "Hence, satisfaction for this temporal punishment has been instituted by Christ as a part of the conditions on which we are to expect the remission of sin. And, hence, "a Christian life" as the Council of Trent has declared, "ought to be a penitential life."

Keeping this doctrine before his eyes, no Catholic will be at loss what to answer, when asked by our separated Brethren, why we fast in the Catholic Church. He will, at once, tell them:—We fast in order to mortify the flesh, the better to overcome sin, and conquer the temptations of the enemy of mankind, in accordance with the words of our Blessed Redeemer to his Apostles: "This kind of devil cannot be cast out otherwise than by prayer and fasting." We fast in order to humble ourselves, and do penance for our sins, that so, like the Ninivites, we may obtain mercy of God. We fast to subdue and restrain our passions which, unless curbed, would soon become masters, instead of servants. "Treat thy slave indulgently, says the Holy Ghost, and he will rebel against thee." "Give thy soul her desires, and she will make thee a joy to thy enemies." But the principal reason we have to fast, is to do penance for the sins we have had the misfortune to commit, and by that means, avert the wrath of God, from us, as many sinners did, mentioned in Holy Writ. For those, therefore, who do not live *piously, soberly, and justly*, at other times, this fast of Lent is peculiarly necessary. And, to all it is useful; for let us be as diligent as possible, there is no one, says Saint Bernard, whose soul, in its intercourse with the world, does not contract something of its dust.

Now, Beloved Brethren, in order to enter into the spirit of the Church, during this holy season, we should consider that by fasting on one meal a day, and abstaining from flesh meat on certain days in the week, we have discharged but a small portion of the duty enjoined on us. We have, as yet, fulfilled only the letter of the Law. The spirit is to be observed. It behooves us, particularly, during this penitential season, to take great care to reform our lives, to rule our passions, and bring the flesh under subjection to the spirit. Let us beware in those days of penance that we fall not into sin which does not only annul the merit of the fast, but brings down greater judgement upon us. As we fast in body from meat, our soul must fast from sin. *This is the perfect fast which God has chosen*, without which the other will do us no good. What more absurd, says a pious Author, than, while we fast to appease the wrath of God, to provoke him by new offences! While we mortify the body, to permit the soul to fall a prey to the devil by sin! External works of penance can deceive men; they cannot impose on Him who rejects whatever does not come from a sincere and pure heart. A change of life, a passing from vice to virtue, and from worldly to heavenly desires, behold the worthy fruits of penance which we are to bring forth during this holy season!