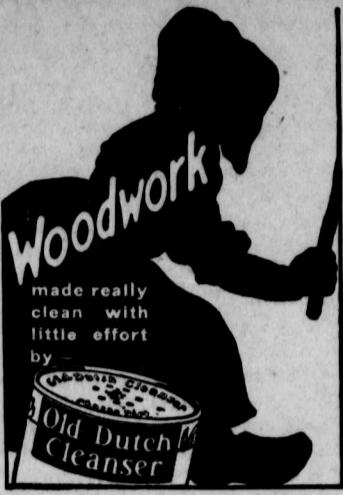


gather the unexpected recovery of Mrs. Allison.

"It was no cure of mine," the doctor would say. "Medicine had nothing to do with it. She was as nearly gone as she possibly could be without actually ceasing to breathe, when she simply made up her mind to live! A marvellous case!"

Not so marvellous, perhaps, good physician! Only a fighting for one of the disordered sequence of this topsy-turvy world!

If the words of love and appreciation which best so vainly at the closed bars of the coffin lid were spoken often to living cars, how many other weary feet might turn again from the "valley of the shadow!"



WHO IS OBLIGED TO FAST

By Rev. W. D. O'Brien in Extension Magazine

"Must I fast?" is a question that etres the conscience of every Catholic about this time of the year. Annually we hear the Lenten regulations read in our churches, and go away wondering at the general terms in which the laws of fasting are promulgated.

The practice of fasting is as old as humanity, and God Himself was the first to authorize it when He commanded Adam to abstain from the fruit of a certain tree. In Leviticus, chapter 9, we read that certain meats were forbidden to the Jews. Moses and Elias were present at Our Lord's Transfiguration on Mount Thabor, because they alone of all the Patriarchs had fasted forty days. John the Baptist fasted most rigorously, and Christ Himself gave us an example of fasting that we might follow in His steps. The Church has much authority, therefore, for placing the obligation of fasting on the people.

The Second Commandment of the Church is: "To fast and abstain on the days appointed." Fasting strictly, consists in taking only one full meal a day, which must not be taken before noon, and which must not include flesh meat. The law of fasting obligates all who have attained their majority, and are not otherwise lawfully dispensed. The faithful are ordered to fast on the forty days of Lent, the Ember days and the Vigils of certain feasts. One is said to abstain who does without flesh meat. The law of abstinence is binding on all the faithful who have reached the use of reason.

We have heard of the Catholic who, when asked by the non-Catholic friend why he did not eat on Friday, replied: "Oh, you know, the Apostles were fishermen, and wanted to help their business." But even the Catholic child can tell you that "we are forbidden to eat meat on Friday because on that day Our Lord died for us."

The obligation of abstaining from flesh meat on Friday is, perhaps, the most universally accepted restriction of the Catholic Church in the United States. "Other countries have this obligation, but, where necessary demands it, the law is dispensed with, as in Mexico, for example, because of climatic conditions. The Ember days occur four times a year, in what are known as the "quarter seasons," or the four seasons of the year, namely: winter, spring, summer and autumn. The Ember days of the winter season come first in order because the Church's Liturgical Year begins with the first week of Advent. The Friday, Wednesday and Saturday of the third week of Advent are always Lenten days. The Ember days of spring always come after the first Sunday of Lent; in the summer, in the week after Pentecost, and in the fall, about the third week of September. We are commanded to fast on Ember days because, from olden times even to our day, they are the appointed seasons for ordination to the priesthood, and it is a pious custom for the laity to implore Almighty God to send good laborers into His Vineyard. Again, we should thank God for the blessings received during the past year, and implore His assistance for the coming season of the year.

The Vigils of the most prominent feast days of the Church were formerly fast days, because the early Christians were accustomed to assemble on the eve of great festivals to pass the night in fasting and praying, after the example of Our Lord. In our busy but less religious days the Vigil of Christmas is the only one that has been retained as a night of prayer, although other Vigils than Christmas Eve remain as fast days, particularly Holy Saturday, the Saturday before Pentecost Sunday, and in some dioceses the eve of the Assumption.

Lent, the forty days from Ash Wednesday to Easter Sunday, constitutes the principal season of fasting in the Catholic Church. The Sundays of the Lenten season are not fasting days, although we are forbidden to eat fish and flesh at the same meal. One need not be a theologian nowadays to perceive that the obligation of fasting is rarely observed in its entirety. Generally speaking, the obligation of fasting is incumbent upon all Christians who have attained the age of twenty-one years. Specifically speaking, the obligation binds comparatively few, because of the application of the theological principle, that may be set forth as follows: "Inability to keep the law of fasting and incompleteness of fasting with the duties of our state of life, suffice, by their very nature, to extinguish the obligation, because as often as the obligation of positive law proves ex-

remely burdensome or irksome, the obligation ceases."

Hence it is that the sick and the infirm, the very poor, the aged (those over sixty years), and expectant or nursing women are exempted. Even those who work hard, and can not fast without detriment to their health, are relieved of the obligation. "Work, being hard labor" is the point that puzzles most Catholics in regard to fasting. One need not be a deeply of the state to come under the designation of hard labor, nor is it to be interpreted as meaning manual labor only. Shop, store and office women certainly are not bound to the laws of fasting, if it can not be done without making them sick or less efficient. The woman of the home who does all her own work, and has a house full of children, is surely not obliged to fast. Of course, the mistress of the house who is in ordinarily good health, "who labors not, neither does she spin," is, to our mind, bound to fast.

Workmen of all classes who are laboring under the eight-hour law are not bound to fast, in the opinion of some theologians, because of the exemption of "hard labor" without detriment to their health. Who is a workman? Would that another St. Thomas might rise in his Church to define him specifically! Does not the Church, always a kind mother, regard the policeman, fireman, the conductor, the motorman, the saleslady, the school teacher, and hosts of other in similar occupations? Office and clerical employees, and even professional men, whose labors are entirely mental, likewise come into the designation of workmen. None of these are bound to fast if fasting renders them less fit to do their work. If you are still in doubt as to whether or not you must fast, put the burden of decision on your confessor.

For those who fast the law is as follows: For breakfast, a cup of coffee and not more than two ounces of bread. For the collation (supper), about the fourth of an ordinary meal. For dinner, your ordinary full meal, which must not be taken before noon. If you so desire, you may transpose your collation and dinner time.

In the United States, for those who fast a certain concession has been made, which greatly lightens the burden. If in your family there is a man or woman who comes under the designation of "workingman" the entire family may have flesh meat one day, usually at the principal meal, on all fast days throughout the year, except on all Fridays, Ash Wednesday, the Wednesday and Saturday of Holy Week, and Christmas Eve. If you are bound to fast, in most dioceses of the States you are permitted to eat meat at your principal meal on Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays and all Saturdays in Lent except the spring Ember Saturday and Easter Eve.

It should be observed that, while cooks are permitted to use the fat rendered from any kind of meat in preparing food on all days of fast and abstinence, you are not permitted to take meat soups or such vegetables as beans cooked in pork, without violating the law of abstinence.

If for any reason you are not able to fulfil the law of fasting as it is promulgated, you should at least endeavor to abstain from flesh meat on the days appointed. Especially during the holy season of Lent, if by proper authority you are dispensed from fasting, you should deny yourself otherwise. Abstinence from theatres, dancing and sweets might be suggested to women, and even children, while the gentlemen who are afforded a splendid opportunity of leaving it alone. If you are a smoker and think yourself a man of will power, try going without the weed for the forty days of Lent. The sacrifices involved in fasting and abstaining will not go unrewarded: "If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me." (Matt. xvi, 24.)

A FAKE

Certain good but misguided persons, having a great desire to propagate still further the devotion of the Rosary, are circulating a story about "fifteen promises" made by the Blessed Virgin to St. Dominic. Assurance is given in these "promises" that whoever recites the Rosary shall obtain what he asks for, and that he shall surely enter heaven. The Rev. A. L. McMahon, Provincial of the Dominicans, San Francisco, writes to the Catholic Sentinel of Portland to say that the alleged promises savor of superstition,

and that the Dominican Order, which has propagated the devotion of the Rosary since St. Dominic's time, knows nothing of these promises, has not circulated them, and can not look with favor on them. "I do not know when they first appeared," writes Father McMahon, "but I can say that a few years ago the Dominican Fathers of England and Ireland made use of the press to caution the faithful not to accept them. The Catholic press of this country will do a great service to religion, not only by keeping them out of its columns, but also by calling attention to their superstitious and harmful character."—Sacred Heart Review.

THE STAYING QUALITY

There are two elements of guilt in every sin, says Father Walter Elliott, in the Missionary. One is the act itself, the guilty pleasure or the greedy interest, or the malignant aversion. The other is the interior self-complicity. Now this last is the more essential sin of every sin. It is that which creates the selfishness and consciousness and malignity of the sin; it is that which survives as a tendency after the deed is done, or even pardoned—a living root for future sin. It is so deeply planted as to hide the wickedness of the sin from our eyes. Pride rankles in every wound of the human soul. It is only after this love of self has been overcome by the love of God through years of prayer and sacraments and providential trials, that we are free from delusions and can explore the depths of our malice. In a word, be made humble. Self-love must be cast out as an unclean intruder and the love of God take its place in our heart before we can see ourselves as we are.

And then a curious thing happens; our past sins are made of avail for our perseverance in grace, because their memory puts us out of sorts with ourselves. The easy feeling of self-conceit is vanished; and we are never so strong as once we were. Humility is the staying quality in repentance, as pride is the malicious quality in sinfulness. Our Lord showed St. Gertrude how the last state of penitence in a sincere soul may be made better than the first state of innocence. He revealed this to her: "If a person has a stain on his hand, in order to get it off he must wash his hand so hard that he makes it cleaner than it was before it was stained. And He also said this to her: "If you tear a rent in a fine silken robe, and mend it skillfully, with gold lace the mending lends an additional ornament to the whole garment." Penitents, however, should have a practical view of things spiritual and watch their chances, so that opportunities to feel shame may not escape them. St. Alphonsus says: "All wish to be humble, but there are few that wish to be humbled."

What a pitiable sight it is in a city church to note the appalling lack of interest in the afternoon or evening vespers on Sunday. Thousands of idle children of the Church parade listlessly about the streets and perhaps pass the church door, where but a handful are taking advantage of the vespers and benediction. We may be active and strenuous in our faith, but what we need is more of the contemplative and passive. The same Lord who "went about doing good," was wont to retire occasionally into the mountains or the desert, for rest and intercourse with the Father. May we grow to imitate Him more in this regard and respond to the heart's yearning "come apart and rest awhile." Vespers and benediction give us a splendid chance to do so, "far from the maddening crowd" on a Sunday afternoon or evening.—Brooklyn Tablet.

VESPERS AND BENEDICTION

His Latest. The late Canon Sheehan left an unpublished novel, "The Graves of Kilmore," which will be soon brought out by Longmans, Green & Company. The last story by the beloved author of "My New Curse" and "Luke Delmege" is a tale of the troublous times of '87. That it will give a hearty welcome goes without saying. But a sense of sadness is bound to pervade such a book—the final work of a hand that has led thousands through the joys and sorrows of his inimitable creations. Further good news regarding Canon Sheehan's work comes in the announcement of a cheap library edition of six of his best known novels, brought out also by Longmans, Green & Company. The works included in this release are: "The Queen's Fills," "Lisheen," "The Blindness of Dr. Gray," "Glenanna," "Miriam Lucas," and "Luke Delmege." The first mentioned of these, it will be remembered, is cast in the dark days of the French Revolution. The others deal with Irish life and character in a way which is well known and appreciated, with settings in the South and West of Ireland, in England and in America. Canon Sheehan wrote with a purpose, the incidents of which he illuminated with incidents described by the hand of a master. He knew his Ireland and her people through and through; their joys, their sorrows, and their humor; and he has written of all with the kindly insight and sympathy of a priest and the wide outlook of a scholar.

BEST ANSWER TO BIGOTRY

There is one way, however, in which Catholics can successfully combat these slanders, and that is by wearing "the white flower of a blameless life" in public and their religious duties and by qualifying themselves to be intelligent exponents of the teaching of the Church and loyal defenders of her history and institutions. Against such the bigots rage in vain. Against such the shafts of slander are powerless. The shield of intelligent, practical Catholicity will turn aside the fiery darts of those who would malign the men and women whom their fellow citizens regard as the most exemplary of the community. Concrete examples of this kind are the best answer we can give to the bigot who would assail the Church and deprive her children of their rights as citizens solely on account of their religion.—Catholic Bulletin.

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