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For 2nd, Dearly Beloved Brethren, why has Lent been instituted ?

1st. That thereby we might do the penance, so strictly commanded by our Lord, as to hear Mass every Sunday, and communicate at least once a year, were prescribed by the rules of the Church, to direct us in the positive commandments of our Lord, about praying, sanctifying his day, and eating his life-giving flesh. Oh ! Dearly Beloved Brethren, how commanding are those precepts of our Mother ; we know very well that there is no salvation without penance. " Unless you do penance you shall all perish likewise," says Jesus Christ. But how and in what measure, are we to do penance to discharge that indispensable duty ? Could we have known that by ourselves ? and should have not such an uncertainty been for us a perpetual source of anxiety in the service of God ? Whilst we are most positively certain that, by keeping well the penitential prescriptions of the ruling Church, we fully fulfill the Lord's Commandments about doing penance ; and so we live in peace, as a child is quiet about his father's orders, when, to fulfill them, he has complied with the directions of his mother.

2nd.—Lent has been instituted, that We might, according to the Prophet's warning turn ourselves to God with all our heart, with fasting, weeping and mourning : that We might imitate not only Moses and Elias who fasted forty days, not only the Rechabites and Nazarites so much commended for their abstinence, not only the Ninivites saved from destruction by a fast of forty days with sack-cloth ; not only Daniel, Judith, Esther and Tobias highly praised and blessed for their fasts ; not only David whose knees were weak through fasting ; not only the Prophetess Ann, who yet fasted at 84 years of age ; not only the greatest of men, John the Baptist, scarcely eating and drinking, and his disciples often fasting ; but that We might imitate Jesus Christ himself, who fasted forty days in the desert ; for if he suffered so much in his innocent flesh for our sins, is it not right that We should fast and suffer a little in our guilty and rebellious flesh, the cause of all his pains and death. Hence did he predict to his Apostles that after his ascension his disciples should fast ; hence did he teach them the way of fasting, not after the Pharisee's fashion, but with humility and meritoriously for heaven ; hence our Catholic Lent, ember days and vigils.

3rd.—Lent has been instituted to be a preparation for the great solemnity of Easter and for receiving the two Sacraments of Penance and Eucharist ; for, says St. Paul, We cannot hope to participate in the grace and the glory of Christ's resurrection, unless we participate in the afflictions and sufferings of his passion. Now, are not the effects of fast to tame the flesh, so often an occasion of sin, to atone for sins and preserve from relapses, to cast out Satan and overcome his assaults, to elevate the mind and give our prayers more efficacy, to increase our union with God and our merits for heaven. " Fast for your sins," says St. Basil, and fast, not to sin any more ; you know that to their fast were indebted, Sara for her deliverance from Devils ; Moses, Daniel, Elias, for the most intimate communications with God, and two barren women for their sons Samson and Samuel. Tell me now, Dearly Beloved Brethren, are not all those reasons of the institution of Lent calculated to encourage us in observing its penitential prescriptions with generous dispositions.

III.—The first and best is to abstain from sin and avoid its proximate occasion, to fulfill better one's duties, and suffer more patiently with spirit of penance ; another disposition is to accompany fasts with spiritual and corporal works of mercy according to one's means and with more frequent elevations of the soul to God amidst daily occupations and crosses, saying often in the heart : I offer it to thee, O God, for my sins ; have mercy on me, O Lord ; never forgetting these words of the Angel to Tobias, *prayers, alms and fasts are of better worth than treasures.*

These dispositions, Dearly Beloved Brethren, necessary for sanctifying Lent, are particularly so for those who, for some reason, are dispensed with fasting or abstaining ; they ought to endeavour to make up with the interior spirit of penance, what is wanting to the exterior fast. Our forefathers in faith, besides austerities in comparison of which ours are nothing, used to go to confess at the beginning of Lent ; do the same, Dearly Beloved Brethren, and you who frequent the Sacraments receive them oftener with better dispositions during this holy time ; there can be no better fruit of corporal fast and abstinence. Manna, a figure of the holy Eucharist, was the only and daily food of the Israelites in the desert. A holy King used to confess his sins and receive every day of Lent ; as for you who too seldom receive the Sacraments prepare yourselves for receiving them very soon. Were you in mortal sin and remaining in that unfortunate state, your fast would be lost for heaven ; since good works done in mortal sin, though being useful for one's conversion cannot be meritorious for heaven ; because before deserving the reward of the friends of God, we must be his friends, and you are aware that being in mortal sin, instead of being the friends of God, we are his enemies, deserving hell. Therefore, Dearly Beloved Brethren, as soon as possible make a sincere confession with hearty contrition, either to increase or to recover the friendship of God, through a Priest's absolution.

Finally, on next Wednesday, in order to begin well this holy career of penance, receive the blessed ashes with a spirit of contrition, remembering what we have deserved for our sins,—remembering that we are dust, and we shall return to dust,—remembering that this our dust shall share in the eternal doom of our soul either unhappy or happy, according to its works of flesh or penance.

The Grace of Our Lord Jesus Christ, be with you all, Amen.

Shall the present Pastoral Address be read at Mass in all the Churches of the Diocese, on the first Sunday after its reception.

TORONTO, 25th Feb., 1851.

† ARM'D. F. M.,  
Bishop of Toronto.

REV. FATHERS OF THE  
CLERGY OF TORONTO

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