

LENT.

This Holy Season is a regular and necessary part of the Christian year. With joy we celebrate the Saviour's Birth, Manifestation to the Gentiles, His Resurrection, His Glorious Ascension. But shall we follow Him only in His hours of joy and triumph? If we are worthy of His name we must follow Him in His hours of suffering and humiliation also; we must "watch with Him" in the Garden of Gethsemane, as well as rejoice with Him on the morning of his Resurrection. If we are not willing to bear the Cross with Him, we shall not be worthy to wear the Crown; and we may truly say that it is those only who at this time humble themselves for the sins which caused the bitter death of the Son of God who can worthily join in the Song of the Resurrection. That this Fast of forty days was settled at a very early period of the Christian Church, is evident from the writings of the Bishops of those times, who refer us, in vindication of it, to the examples of Moses, Elias, and our Lord, all of whom fasted *forty days*. From this, then, we see that though fasting is frequently alluded to in the Scriptures as a Christian duty, yet the *set times* for it are to be referred solely to the authority of the Church.

The Lenten Fast does not embrace all the days included between Ash Wednesday and Easter, for the Sundays are so many days above the number of *forty*. They are excluded, because the Lord's Day is always kept as a *Festival*, and never as a *Fast*. These six Sundays are, therefore, called *Sundays in Lent*,

not of Lent. They are in the midst of it, but do not form part of it. On them we continue, without interruption, to celebrate our Saviour's Resurrection.

The primitive Christians thought Lent the proper season for exercising more abundantly all sorts of charity, and surely we can think no otherwise. Thus what they spared their own bodies, by abridging them of a meal, was usually given to the poor. They likewise employed their vacant hours in visiting the sick and imprisoned, in entertaining strangers and in reconciling differences. The imperial laws forbade all prosecution of men in criminal actions, which might bring them to corporal punishment and torture during this whole season. All public games and stage plays were prohibited at this season, as also the celebration of all festivals, birthdays and marriages as unsuitable to so solemn a period.

May we Christians of to-day learn to appreciate and use this holy season as the early Christians did, that our love may be kindled and shown in works of charity and in honest progress in holiness.—*Selected.*

CATECHIZING.

CATECHISM is a word derived from the Greek, and signifies a form of oral instruction in the rudiments of knowledge by way of *question* and *answer*. The candidates for Baptism were called *Catechumens*, and they formed a large distinctive class in the Primitive Church; and a Catechist was attached to every congregation, whose office it was to instruct them in the *first principles of the oracles of God*, prior to their ad-