

noanced in the streets of their city, " Yet forty days and Ninive shall be destroyed ! " They proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, the king and all the people, from the greatest to the least ; even the oxen and the sheep, as well as the men, were denied all food and drink. Then they prayed, and " cried to the Lord with all their strength." The Scripture adds, " God saw their works, and God had mercy." (Jnns 3 c)

Those examples are recorded by the Holy Ghost for our instruction, and yet how little do we profit by them ! Our Holy Mother, the Church, recalls them to our minds at the solemn inauguration of the Lent, and frequently throughout the forty days, in the Liturgy of the Mass and in the Divine office and other services. She blesses the ashes, and impresses them on our foreheads in the sign of the cross on the first morning of the Lent, dedicating us thereby to a course of six weeks' penance in union with Jesus, our Leader, our King and our Model, fasting and praying in the wilderness, apart from the world and its distractions and vanities. She does not require of us to deny ourselves very much in regard of food and drink and sleep and other natural enjoyments. Her indulgent discipline at the present day hardly deserves to be called penance or fast, when compared with the penitential fasts recorded in the Scriptures or with the severities of Lent, as it was enforced and observed in the first thousand years of her history, when no other food was used by her children but dry bread and herbs and water, and this only once in the day after the Vesper service in the church. She has had good reasons for relaxing the Lenten austerities. Not that sin is less offensive to God to-day that it was in former times. On the contrary, the sins of Christians involve greater guilt than those of the Jews or Gentiles who had not heard how " God so loved the world as to give up His only-begotten Son," and how the Incarnate Son of God humbled Himself, out of love for us, to a most cruel and ignominious death upon the cross, to make atonement for all and each of us, and purchase for us the reward of everlasting glory. No ; the sinful Catholic of to-day is more guilty than the Ninivite sinner ; and God's anger is pro-