

DIOCESE OF KINGSTON.

James Vincent, by the Grace of God, and in Favor of the Apostolic See, Bishop of Kingston.

To the Reverend Clergy, Religious Communities, and Faithful Laity of Our Diocese.

The Lenten Regulations for the Diocese of Kingston this year are as follows: I. All days within the Lent, Sundays excepted, are Fasting days, on which only one full meal is allowed, with a partial refectio, or collation, in the evening.

Young persons who have not completed their twenty-first year of age, and those who have reached the period of life when old age itself is an infirmity, like the sick, nursing women, and all who are employed at hard labor, are free from the law of Fasting, and may therefore take their usual number of meals every day in Lent.

II. The law of Abstinence, which forms part of the penitential discipline of Lent, prohibits certain kinds of food, such as meat, fish, eggs, milk, butter, and cheese have been excluded from the diet, by a special Indult renewed to this Province last year, and made available for ten years.

III. In virtue of this Apostolic Indult, the use of flesh meat is permitted on all Sundays at every meal; also at the one principal meal on all Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays, except Saturday in Ember week (24th February) and Holy Saturday.

IV. Young persons between seven and twenty-one years of age, likewise the others exempted or excused (as above) from the law of Fasting, are prohibited from the use of flesh meat at more than one meal on any day in Lent, Sundays excepted.

V. No one is permitted to use fish and flesh meat at any one meal, whether on Sundays or week days, within the Lent. The use of flesh meat at dinner does not however prevent the use of a little fish at the evening collation.

VI. Eggs, milk, butter and cheese are allowed on all days at both the principal meal and the collation, to those who come under the law of Fasting. Young persons under twenty-one years of age, and others not bound to fast, may use them at every meal.

VII. Dripping, or lard, may be used in the preparation of food on all days, except Good Friday. Should any further relaxation of the Fast or Abstinence be required by particular persons, they may obtain it from their respective pastors, who are hereby authorized to grant it to them, provided true and sufficient cause be assigned.

We beg of our Reverend Clergy to instruct their flocks upon the nature and holy purpose of the Apostolic discipline of Lent. It is the union of the Universal Church, the mystic spouse of Jesus Christ, with Him in His fast and prayer offered to His heavenly Father in atonement for our sins during His forty days' solitude in the desert. It is not an arbitrary restriction of Christian liberty, but a salutary penitential discipline imposed on all the faithful, because all are sinners in the sight of God, and the obligation of doing penance lies upon all, according to the word of the Redeemer, "unless ye do penance, ye shall all likewise perish." (Luke xvii.) It is not enough that the Great High Priest and Victim of the New Covenant has suffered and done penance for our sins. He has humbled Himself and died the death of the cross for millions of human beings who are eternally lost. In order that His merits may be applied to our souls for our forgiveness, we must co-operate with His penance by compunction of heart and self-denial, and so "fill up" those things that are wanting of the sufferings of Christ in our flesh." (Col. i.)

The Lenten observance has been most opportunely ordained by the Apostles in immediate connection with the Paschal celebration, which is the annual summons of the Church to her children, far and near, to commemorate reverently and worthily the mysteries of the passion and death and resurrection of the Son of God for the salvation of the world. We should ponder well who He is that suffered, and the extreme torments He underwent, and why He voluntarily endured them all, and we should firmly believe, and practically realize in our thoughts, the connecting truth that He laid down His life not merely for the sins of men in general, but for the sins of each of us individually, having had each of us before His mind and in the embrace of His Heart when He accepted the chalice of bitterest sorrow from His Father's hand in the garden of Olives. By this consideration the Apostle St. Paul enkindled the fire of Divine love within himself and prepared his spirit for redoubled energy and self-sacrifice in the cause of Jesus Christ. "Christ loved me," said he, "and delivered himself up for me." "With Christ I am nailed to the Cross. And I live, now not I, but Christ liveth in me." (Gal. ii.)

From the contemplation of these sorrows of the Saviour, and the part we have had in filling up the chalice of His Passion, we should draw practical lessons of compunction for sin and salutary fear of the divine justice, which punished our sinfulness so severely in the Person of the Innocent Jesus, and thus we should by the foundation of renewed spiritual life in love and devotion to Jesus Christ, our God and our Redeemer, who died for that we may live for Him. The pious discipline of Lent is therefore a preparation for newness of life, that, dying with Christ Crucified by the mortification of our sinful passions, we may share in His resurrection by a life of grace and the constant practice of Christian virtue.

To this end our holy mother, the Church, has also ordained that her children shall eat the Paschal Lamb, that is, the Body and Blood of Our Lord Jesus Christ, at this holy time, and she requires all to prepare themselves for the

Eucharistic banquet by purging their consciences from the guilt of sin in the Sacrament of Penance, and clothing themselves with the nuptial garment of charity, that they may assist worthily at the festivities of the Lamb, and derive strength from the five wounds of the Saviour's flesh, the flowing fountains of all grace, for the accomplishment of their good resolutions. Let pastors warn their flocks against the neglect of this primary duty of Christian life, of which the Lord Himself has said, "unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink His blood, you shall not have life in you" (John vi.) and in reference to which the Apostle St. Paul, writing to the faithful of Corinth (1 Cor. x), gives this solemn admonition: "Whosoever shall eat this bread, or drink the chalice of the Lord unworthily, shall be guilty of the Body and of the Blood of the Lord; but let a man prove himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that chalice. Wherefore, Brethren, let no one dare to despise the heavenly gift. Let no one fail to 'prove himself' by an honest examination of his conscience and sincere, compunctious confession of his sinfulness, that he may approach the adorable Person of the Lord Jesus Christ worthily under the mystic species of bread in the Blessed Sacrament of the Eucharist. If we had the sanctity of St. John the Baptist and the purity of an angel, we would still be unworthy to present ourselves at the Table of the Lord. But he came to save sinners" and He bids us purify our souls first in the Sacramental bath of Penance, and then come to Him and make ourselves tabernacles of His flesh and be sanctified ever more. The princes of this world do not invite all to come to their table; but now the King of kings and Lord of lords has issued His invitation to every member of the Catholic Church to gather around His banquet-table and eat the Bread of Angels, the food of immortality. His own very flesh and blood, united to His human soul and His Divinity. The man who dares to condemn the honor and the gift proffered him by Jesus Christ at this holy season is sure to draw down upon himself and his family, sooner or later, the anger of heaven. Let the clergy frequently repeat this warning to their congregations.

Although the Paschal Precept does not absolutely demand fulfillment in this Province before Trinity Sunday, it is more proper and more safe not to defer it beyond the Octave of Easter, especially because the pious discipline of Lent is intended by the Church as a preparation for her children's souls and bodies for the fruitful reception of the Word made Flesh, who is the "Living Bread that cometh down from heaven and giveth life to the world." (John vi.) To this end we hereby grant, in the name of the Sovereign Pontiff, a Plenary Indulgence to all who, having made a good Confession, shall receive the Blessed Eucharist on any day from Ash-Wednesday to Low Sunday inclusively. We especially recommend our people to approach the Sacraments and gain the Indulgence on St. Patrick's Day that they may have a share in the blessings vouchsafed to the Irish race in every clime through the intercession of their glorious Apostle on his annual Feast. We ask our Reverend Clergy to give facilities to their flocks for Sacramental Confession a day or two previous to St. Patrick's Day.

It is incumbent on us all to compensate for the relaxation of the Fast and Abstinence by more abundant and more fervent prayer and works of charity, that we may keep alive in our souls the spirit that governs the law of Lent even now, when its rigors may be said to have passed away, and the observance of bodily austerities has become little more than a name. "The Kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent bear it away." (Matt. xxi.) now as in the day of our forefathers' men's passions are as strong now as then; and the flesh is no less weak in temptation, nor is the devil less cunning in his snares, nor the world less corrupting in its maxims and fashions, nor is sin less provocative of God's anger, nor is hell less terrible, nor is heaven less worthy of our hopes and efforts, than in the time when the forty days of Lent were an unbroken succession of rigid self-denial and penitential castigation of sinful flesh.

We trust that the practice of united family prayer, at all times commendable, and especially appropriate to the forty days of Lent, shall be observed most punctually in all the homes of the Diocese of Kingston from Ash-Wednesday to Easter Sunday. If we cannot go into the desert with our Divine Master and Saviour, let us invite Him to come in spirit each evening and be the centre of the household at the time of prayer. He has promised to come if He be asked: "Where there are two or three gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." (Matt. xiii.) Where parents and children, masters and servants, assemble together in their peaceful homes to close the day with adoration and thanksgiving to God, and supplication for pardon of their offences, and petition for continuance of heaven's favors, through the intercession of the Virgin Mother's intercession, with the blessed heads in every hand and the cross pendant from every beads, they are then and there assembled in Christ's Name, and most assuredly He will be in the midst of them. We confidently expect that this, with the other practices of piety prominently recommended to the members of the Confraternity of the Holy Family throughout all the missions of this diocese, shall be encouraged warmly by our zealous clergy in their exhortations to the people during Lent; and we are no less confident that our faithful laity, of whose readiness to accept our advice we have had ample proof, shall listen with docility to their local pastors and their shop, and earnestly fulfill our hopes by compliance with the rules of pious life recommended by us for their sanctification.

We would in conclusion impress upon such members of our flock as may have unhappily addicted themselves to any habit of grievous sin, that Lent is for them a season of special grace and help from God to enable them to escape from the slavery of Satan. There are seasons of scarcity, and seasons of plenty, in the supernatural, as well as in the natural order: and there are times of God's choosing when he draws near to man, whether for mercy or for vengeance.

Lent is one of the times of copious mercy, as the Church proclaims at its opening, in the words of the Apostle St. Paul, "Brethren we exhort you not to receive in vain the grace of God: for he saith, 'in the acceptable time have I graciously heard thee, and in the day of salvation have I helped thee.' Behold, now is the acceptable time; behold, now is the day of salvation" (2 Cor. vi.) and she does not cease to repeat from day to day throughout the Lent, the divine assurance: "Let the wicked man forsake his way, and the unjust man his thoughts, and let him return to the Lord, and then he will have mercy upon him" (Is. lv.) Renunciation of all sinful habits that withdraw the soul from God, is the purpose of penance, and the end and aim of the Lenten fast; and the Fathers of the Church designate it the "perfect fast" in accordance with the word spoken by God Himself, "Is not this, saith the Lord, the fast that I have chosen? Loose the bands of wickedness, and break every yoke, and let the oppressed go free, and every burden." (Isaiah 58 ch.)

But of all the forms of wickedness and burdens that oppress the soul, none is more directly repugnant to the law of Lent, its letter and its spirit, than the drunkard's indulgence in his evil passion. Is it not a mockery of religion on his part, if he steep his flesh and his spirit in the Redeemer's blood, and receive the Blessed Ashes upon his forehead in the sign of the cross at the inauguration of the Lenten fast, for the dedication of himself to the forty days discipline of self-chastisement and prayer, and the humiliation of his rebellious spirit and mortification of his flesh, and then, when he approaches the altar, and kneels before the altar, and all the while to pursue unchanged his habitual way of sensual gratification, leading occasionally to the depths of drunkenness? He may or may not observe the Church's law as regards the restriction upon food; but what will it avail him to lessen the number of his meals, if he steep his flesh and his spirit in soul-killing liquor? He may go through the outward form of kneeling before the image of his crucified Saviour and reciting some prayers with his lips; but shall the Saviour's atonement avail for him, as he goes forth from the Church to the tavern to drown the memory of Calvary's sufferings in the foam of the foaming cup? He may go through the form of prayer, and the light of reason, and deliberately forfeit the self-control and dignity of his manhood? His pastor may preach to him the law of penance and self-atonement and the abandonment of sin and its occasions as the indispensable condition without which the Kingdom of God cannot be possessed (1 Cor. 6 ch.) He may eloquently depict the agonies of the innocent Son of the Virgin and Only-begotten of the Father, on whom "the Lord hath laid the iniquities of us all, and who was wounded for our iniquities and bruised for our sins." (Isaiah 53 ch.) 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