

PASTORAL ADDRESS FOR THE LENT OF 1852.

ARMAND FRANCIS MARY DeCHARBONNEL,
BY THE GRACE OF GOD, AND THE FAVOUR OF THE HOLY APOSTOLIC SEE, BISHOP OF TORONTO:

To the Clergy and Laity of the Diocese:—

DEARLY BELOVED BRETHREN:

The Council of Trent commands repeatedly all the Pastors to preach the Word of God every Sunday and Holyday, and more especially during the Penitential Seasons of Advent and Lent. How pressing are the recommendations of the Holy Council, when it imposes on us the charge of watching over the local Pastors, that on those days they feed with Sanctifying words the people intrusted to their care, according to the capacity of both the preacher and the hearers, teaching them all whatever is necessary for Salvation, explaining to them in short and easy instructions what they have to shun and to follow, in order to escape eternal punishment and conquer eternal glory! Oh, how urgently likewise is our solicitude requested with respect to children, that, at least upon Sundays and festival days, they be taught the rudiments of our Divine Faith, the religious obedience they owe to their God and to their parents! Oh, how earnestly we are called upon to remind the people with zeal that every one is bound to hear the Word of God!

If this sacred duty of teaching lies heavy upon the conscience of Pastors in any age and country, how much more is it overwhelming in such a time, in such a country as this! for we must say, using the language of the Catechism of the Council of Trent: "False prophets have gone forth into the world with various and strange doctrines, to corrupt the minds of the faithful, of whom the Lord has said: *I sent them not, and they ran; I spoke not to them, yet they prophesied.* In their unholly work, to such extremes has their impiety, practised in all the arts of Satan, been carried, that it would seem almost impossible to confine it within bounds, and did we not rely on the promises of the Saviour who declared that he had built his Church on so solid a foundation, that the gates of hell should never prevail against it, we should be filled with most alarming apprehension lest beset on every side by such a host of enemies, assailed by so many and such formidable engines, the Church of God should, in these days, fall beneath their combined efforts. In order to disseminate error and impiety more easily and extensively they composed innumerable small books which veiling their poisons under the semblance of piety, deceive with incredible facility the simple and the incautious.

It is therefore to discharge, in part at least, a sacred duty of our pastoral office, Dearly Beloved and venerable co-operators in the Ministry of the Word, that we call at the approach of the Holy Season of Lent your most conscientious attention to the all considerations handed to us by the Fathers of the Council of Trent in their admirable Catechism for Pastors. Let us peruse them again and again, and go on following the sure and plain way pointed out therein. There we have at hand the whole matter of our doctrine, supernatural faith and good works, vivified by true charity. There we have at hand milk and more solid food according to the peculiar conditions of our people, their age, their capacity, their manners, &c. There we have at hand the pure springs of faith, the Divine Scriptures and the authorized traditions constantly received in the Church. There we have at hand a fair, clear and complete sketch of instructions reduced to four heads: the Apostles' Creed, the Sacraments, the Commandments, and the Lord's Prayer.

There we find particularly how nature and religion imposed on parents the sacred obligations of teaching their children and preserving them from dangers for their faith and morals: "Parents owe to their children to bring them up in the knowledge and in the practice of Religion, and to give them the best precepts for the regulation of their lives, that instructed in the truths of Religion and prepared to make these truths the guiding principles of their conduct through life, they may preserve inviolate their fidelity to God, and serve Him in holyness. This duty of parents is beautifully illustrated in the conduct of the parents of the just Tobias and of the chaste Susanna. The Pastor therefore will admonish parents to be to their children models of the virtues which it is their duty to inculcate, of justice, charity, modesty, temperance, and in a word, of every Christian virtue"; as it is our own duty to admonish all the Confessors of our Diocese to be very particular in the tribunal of penance about those most important obligations of parents, and to refuse them the absolution, when they do not promise to comply with them; because religious education by removing dangers, teaching and giving good example, is the basis of individual, domestic and social success and happiness in this world and in the world to come.

O merciful Lord, what a comfort it would be for our paternal heart, for our anxious mind, if we could be confident that every one of our beloved children in Christ is thoroughly instructed, according to his age, condition and capacity in the sound principles of our most Holy Religion, and regulates his life in compliance with the rules of our Common Mother, the true Church of God! Would it not be a most cheering prospect for Catholicity in this Province, the highest blessing of Heaven, to behold every member of this vast Diocese enlightened and steady in his faith, irreproachable in his language and manners, true to his religion, animated with that Divine Charity in which lies the fulfilling of the law? Thou alone, O Father of light and love, from whom every perfect gift comes down, thou alone canst shoot through these western and cold regions the brilliant and aident rays of eternal truth.

It is with this view, Dearly Beloved Brethren, to second with all our power, the interior operation of Divine Grace in your hearts with regard to your Religious instruction, that we present to your personal and reflection as the Standard of your Faith, as the principle of your life a summary of the principal truths of religion. There you will see the tenets to be believed, the virtues to be practised, the sins to be shunned; you will find that Prayer, the Sacraments and the Holy Sacrifice are the means equally efficacious and easy of leading a Christian life; you will know that the society in which men enjoy these invaluable treasures is the One, Holy, Catholic, Apostolic Church, the Church which links together in one Body the Saints in Heaven, on Earth, in the sojourn of Purgatory. This precious and correct abridgment of the Catholic doctrine which should be circulated as much as possible and religiously preserved in every house, we prescribe to be read every three months by the several missionaries in their respective congregations, and we desire to be gradually and intelligibly explained to all our beloved Diocesans.

As for the penitential works of this Holy Season, you shall conform, D. B. B. to the general rules of the Church, remaining however free to avail yourselves of the relaxation granted by the Indult dated the 7th July 1844; the whole according to the prescriptions and directions of this Ecclesiastical province, as follows:

"During the Holy time of Lent you are obliged to fast every day (Sundays excepted), from Ash-Wednesday to Easter Sunday. This is the general law of the Church to her children twenty-one years of age. But she dispenses with it, old people, nurses and pregnant women, the infirm and valetudinarians, such as are obliged to make long and painful journeys and voyages, and all who are not able to discharge the duties of their vocation, without a great inconvenience. Let every one doubting whether he is lawfully dispensed with the law, consult his own Pastor, or some prudent adviser. You are bound to abstain from the use of flesh meat, 1st. On Ash-Wednesday and the three succeeding days. 2nd. On the Wednesdays, Fridays and Saturdays of the five first weeks of Lent. 3rd. On Palm Sunday and the six other days of the Holy Week. The same Indult allows the use of flesh meat on every other Sunday of Lent, as well as on the Mondays, Tuesdays and Thursdays of the five first weeks; but on these same week days flesh-meat may be used at the one meal only, and no fish at the same time."

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.

† ARMD F. M. Bishop of Toronto.