

ous penalties of disobedience. To fast on other days may be a remedy, an atonement, and a preventive of sin; not to fast in Lent, would be itself a crime which would deserve the severest punishment (7). The imperative duty of mortification so often neglected when we are left to our own decision, can now no longer be evaded. The Church compels us, by a happy necessity, to atone for our former negligence, to repair the consequences of our past sins, to crucify our flesh with all its vices and concupiscences, and, in that mortified and guilty flesh, to fill up those things which are wanting of the passion of Christ (8). We are no longer left to our own discretion. The Church, the interpreter of the Divine Justice, takes into her own maternal hands, as it were, the avenging scourge, and chastens us for our sins; whilst at the same time she commands to our wavering lips that painful, but salutary remedy, that unfailing antidote, that heavenly potion, composed of 'the bitternesses' of our Lord's Passion, which, if left to ourselves, there is too much reason to fear, we would reject with aversion. Now, she calls upon us, in virtue of our allegiance to her Divine Founder, to consecrate the first-fruits, the tithe of the year, to God (9); and as we owe all our years to 'the king of ages immortal and invisible,' to dedicate the tenth of this year, in a more solemn manner, to Him, for whom, and in whom, all things live, (10). And, as the principal object of the Lenten Fast is the destruction of sin, and the purification of the heart, so, Dearly Beloved Brethren, whilst you diminish your corporal food, abstain from the iniquities of the world, and from carnal desires which war against the soul (11). This is the great, and perfect Fast, which will find favour in the sight of heaven (12). This is the Fast, which will heal all diseases, banish all demons, expel evil thoughts, and create within you a clean heart (13). For what will it profit you to become pale from fasting, if you be livid from hatred or from envy? Of what avail, to abstain from flesh which was created for food, if by calumny and detraction you tear asunder the limbs of your brethren whom you are commanded to love? Why torture the body with the pangs of hunger, if you shamefully pander to its sensual desires? (14) The Fast which the Lord has chosen, and which alone will be acceptable to Him is to "LOSE THE

BANDS OF WICKEDNESS. . . to deal your bread to the hungry, and to bring the needy and the harbourless into your house; which you shall see one naked to cover him, and to despise not your own flesh. Then shall your light break forth as the morning, and your health shall speedily arise, and your justice shall go before your face, and the glory of the Lord shall gather you up. Then you shall call, and the Lord will hear; then you shall cry, and He will say:—'Hera Fam.' (15).

Commence, therefore, Dearly Beloved Brethren, this Quadragesimal Fast, by an entire and solemn renunciation of sin. Avoid its dangerous occasions, and repair its destructive effects. Emancipate yourselves, without delay, from the bondage of Satan, and break asunder the chains of death. Let no sacrifice be considered too great, where your immortal souls are concerned. Cut off the hand, pluck out the eye, remove the beam, which are occasions of sin to yourselves, and of scandal to your neighbour. Delay not to be converted to the Lord. Begin now in earnest, as if hitherto you had made no progress in the service of God. Let 'this change' be the mighty work 'of the right hand of the Most High,' (16) so that each one may be able to cry out, in gratitude and delight, to his Father who is in Heaven: 'Thou hast broken my chains, O Lord! To thee I will sacrifice a victim of praise' (17)—that 'acceptable sacrifice of justice' (18) which the penitent sinner offers to God in the punishment which he inflicts upon himself for his ingratitude to the best of Fathers (19).

Fast, therefore, because you have sinned; fast that you may not sin again; fast that all your petitions may be heard before the throne of mercy, and that the Divine 'Ear' may 'listen to the preparation of your heart' (20).

Having explained them on former similar occasions, we deem it unnecessary at present to descant at length on the advantages of Holy Fasting, by which, as the Church herself tells us, our vices are subdued, our minds lifted up from earth to heaven, our souls adorned with virtue, and enriched with its glorious rewards (21). Let it suffice to say, in the language of one of the Fathers, who, both by word and example, most eloquently enforced the salutary doctrines of penance:—By fasting legislators are made wise. Fasting is the best guardian of the soul, the secure companion of the body, the armour and support of the strong, the training exercise of him who wrestles in the struggle for salvation. Fasting banishes temptations, promotes piety, dwells with sobriety, and produces temperance. It is strength in war, and repose in peace. Fasting sanctifies the

(7) Aliis diebus jejunare remedium, in quadragesima non jejunare peccatum; alio tempore qui jejunat accipiet indulgentiam, isto qui non jejunat, sentiet poenam.—S. Augustine *Serm.* 171 de *Discretia*.
(8) Coloss. i. 24. (9) Quasi anni nostri decimus dies dampna.—S. Gregor. *Mor. Hom.* 16 in *Evangel.* (10) Tob. xii. 10. Acta xvii. 28.
(11) 1 Pet. ii. 11. (12) Jejunium magnum et generale est abstinere ab iniquitatibus sæculi, quod est perfectius jejunium.—S. Aug. *Lib. de Eccl. Dogm. Tract* 17 in *Joannem*.
(13) Viles quid facit Jejunium. Morbos sanat, demones fugat, pravæ cogitationis expellit, cor mundum efficit.—S. Illianus *Lib. de 2 de Virg.*
(14) Quid prodest pallidum esse jejunio, si odio, et invidia livens? Quid prodest abstinerere a carnibus ad edendum creatis, et malignis oblectamentis Italiani membra lacerare? Cur corpus sine discrucibus, cum tamper peccando llandis i.—S. August. *Lib. de Eccl. Dogm.*

(15) Isaias lviii. 6, 9. (16) Ps. lxxvi. 11. (17) Ps. cxv. 110.
(18) Ps. l. 24. (19) 'Sacrificium justitie' fit per Penitentiam, cum peccator seipsum unicum, maculat Deo.—S. Aug. in *Ps.* 50.
(20) Ps. x. 17. (21) Qui corporali jejunio vitæ compamis, mentem elevat, virtutibus largitur et premia.—*Præf. Quadrage.*