

had been observed from time immemorial in the Church, are now yearning after their restoration, and combining together of their own motion to send out invitations to their fellow Christians to unite upon certain days and weeks for prayer or for devotion, the several topics being specified and arranged beforehand. Let us be thankful that the very thing which they are laboring to attain, we in our branch of the Catholic Church, are already privileged to enjoy.

But having this privilege, let us not be negligent in turning it to good account. God forbid that we should give cause to those who differ from us to speak reproachfully, by our allowing the observance of these seasons to sink down, as alas! has in some instances been the case, into a round of lifeless, superstitious ceremonies, and bodily exercises which profit us little.

If, on the contrary, we use them as not abusing them, and strive to spend these seasons in an earnest and evangelical spirit, our experience will be the same with that of countless generations of Christians who have gone before us—viz., that they are not only beneficial to our own souls and profitable to those around us, but also fruitful towards God in an increase of love and zeal.

Let me then submit a few practical suggestions as to how the season of Lent ought to be employed.

As to retirement from the world, this will mean a different thing to each different person. That we are all too fond of this present world, I suppose we shall readily admit; and also that the more we allow our minds to dwell upon our worldly plans and hopes, our failure and success, the more do such subjects seem to swallow up our thoughts and indispose us to think of those things which are unseen and eternal. And as Mary and Joseph lest the child Jesus while they were traveling with the multitude, and yet scarcely knew that they had lost Him, until they came quietly to dwell apart in their own tent in the silence of the evening, so is it with our enjoyment of the presence of Christ. Amid the bustle and tur-

moil of active life, we are too ready to forget our God and Saviour; and it is well for us when the Sabbath and other holy seasons come round to hush the noise and stop or moderate our hurried march. Thus in the silent hour of love and prayer, we miss the sacred presence of Christ and are led to seek Him sorrowing.

Let us make an effort, in God's strength, to struggle out of this mire of worldliness in which we are ready to sink up to our very lips. Let us snatch a few moments in the day to read and pray and fix our thoughts on God and Heaven. Let us endeavor to make better use of our Sundays, and so to fill them up with public and private worship and active religious employments, that this sinful world may not have standing-room in our hearts. Let us put ourselves out of our way, if needs be, to attend the week-day services, and swell the tide of prayer and praise which is at such a time rising up like a cloud of incense toward Heaven. Let us endeavor to cut off any superfluity of merely idle and ceremonious visits and thus gain more time and disposition to wait upon God.

As Christ withdrew into the wilderness and Noah entered into the ark, and Moses went up into the mount, so let us enter into our closet and shut the door.

Isaac's closet for meditation at eventide was in the open field, David's closet was his bedroom, our Lord's secret chamber was a house-top, Nathaniel's was a fig tree, Hezekiah's closet lay in the turning of his face toward the wall and praying unto God.

Fasting from food and abstinence from lawful indulgence become to a certain extent needful, and they in a measure grow easy to us, when we are in earnest about any absorbing pursuit. Children will sometimes leave their food in their eagerness to join their playmates. Why should it be thought strange that a Christian should, even by curtailing the time spent at the table, redeem a few moments for a profitable interview with his God? or that the child of God, when he

hears the bell calling his fellow Christians to prayer upon the week-day, should turn from the gay assembly, in the midst of whose laughter there is often heaviness, that he may go along with good Christian people to the house of God, with the voice of joy and praise, with a multitude that keep holyday?

But I would add that in this duty as in all others, we must keep our eye on the Lord Jesus Christ. We can do no good without Him; and no work will be well done that is not done for Him. All our doings without charity—true love to God and man—are nothing worth.

Penitence is but formality or mere remorse unless 'tis mixed in prayer and wrought in love.

If we fast or in any way deny ourselves without uniting our hearts to Christ and imitating Him and praying that He would put all our imperfect doings into the purifying censor of His merits and to communicate to them the unspeakable virtue of His own sacrifice, that so we may dwell in Him and He in us, then will all our fasting, penitence and prayer be worthless. We shall but beat the air, and plough the sand, and run and labor in vain.

Let me, then, entreat you as Christian people who have renounced the world, the flesh, and the devil, to make good use of all opportunities for improvement in holiness, and especially of the season of Lent upon which we are about to enter. Be careful so to order your engagements and your invitations that they may not interfere with the religious duties of the season. Who among us does not need to be more weaned from the world? to spend more time in devotion? and to put a stricter curb upon the appetites and passions of these sinful bodies?

Let us be thankful that at Lenten-tide an obstruction is for a little while thrown across that stream of worldliness which is ever carrying us away, and that additional opportunities for instruction and devotion are afforded, and let us use them for our own profit, the good of our neighbor and the glory of God.