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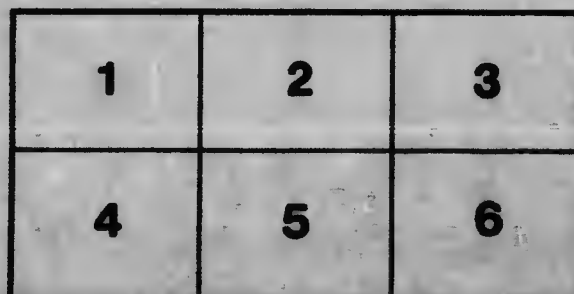
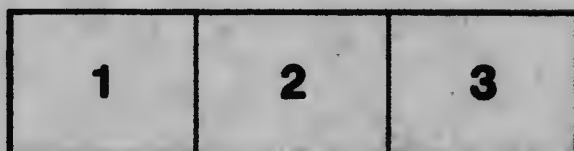
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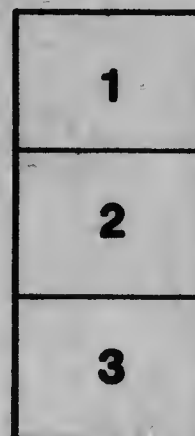
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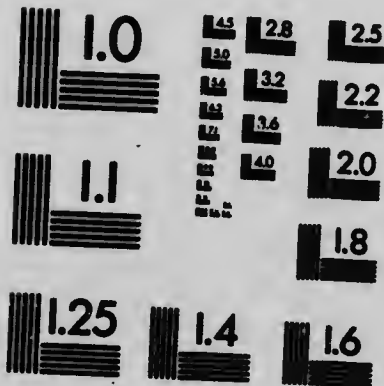
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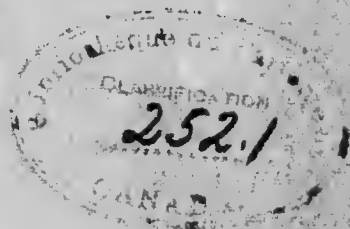
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ADDRESSED TO

The Clergy and Laity of the
Diocese of Halifax

BY

The Most Rev. Edward J. McCarthy,
Archbishop of Halifax.



HALIFAX PRINTING Co., 161 HOLLIS ST.
1909.

**Edward, by the Grace of God and favor of the Apostolic
See, Archbishop of Halifax :**

**To the Clergy, Religious Orders, and Laity of the
Diocese: Health and Benediction in the Lord.**

DEARLY BELOVED :—

The Lenten observance upon which we are now entering had its origin in the desire of our Christian forefathers to imitate as closely as possible the example set them by our Saviour Jesus Christ. For if He, being without sin of any kind, did nevertheless impose upon Himself this manner of bodily penance, it evidently behooves us with much greater reason to atone by voluntary mortification and by the sacrifice of our natural inclinations for our manifold violations of God's holy law. To the mind of the Christian, therefore, the recurrence of this season means, above all else, a following in the footsteps of the Master: "If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, take up his cross daily and follow Me."—(St. Luke, IX, 23.)

As, in regard to all the other teachings and practices of Christ, the opinions of men have varied, so the ordinance of the Church in this particular matter of an annual fast, has been both commended and censured. If some have protested against the restrictions which Lent implies, others have been no less earnest in declaring that body and mind alike do profit by this abstinence and by the spirit of self-control which it develops. If protest even now is occasionally heard against

the rigours of ecclesiastical law, it is also admitted that no more effectual means could have been devised for checking that tendency to excess which is the unfortunate characteristic of modern life. And those, finally, who looking beyond the outward observance discern the essential nature of the spiritual life, will and do place upon themselves continually, a part at least of the salutary restraint which the Church now enjoins.

But there is a deeper significance underlying this Lenten precept. Whatever be the judgment of men as to the value of abstinence, we can never forget that Lent is for us Catholic Christians, an enactment of the Catholic Church. It comes home to us in a very practical way as a law to be observed. We know that it is not a despotic law, that ample provision is made for every one who, on any reasonable account, may seek to be dispensed. But we also realize that Lent is an essential part of that wise legislation which the Church has put forth in all ages for the betterment of mankind. Consequently, in observing the regulations of this holy season, we but conform, in this special instance, to the prescription of an authority which we recognize as having the right to order our living and direct it toward the attainment of life's ultimate purpose.

It is well, therefore, in this season of prayer and reflection, to center our thought upon the legislative power of the Catholic Church, to recall its origin and sanction in the words of Christ our Saviour, and to consider the manifold benefits which the exercise of that authority has bestowed upon all the peoples of earth. In the midst of ceaseless discussion concerning everything that makes for the common weal, we, as Catholics,

can never lose sight of those wholesome measures whereby the Church has advanced the cause of humanity and of civilization.

“Whatsoever you shall bind on earth, shall be bound also in heaven; and whatsoever you shall loose on earth, shall be loosed also in heaven” (St. Matthew, XVIII, 18.) In these words of Our Lord, we read the constitution of His Church as a law-making body. Until they were spoken, the legislative power of men went no farther than the bounds of temporal justice and utility. All law in the pagan world was directed toward the welfare of the State, of the family as forming a part of the State, and of the individual as a member, either actual or prospective, of the State. The Jews, it is true, as God’s favoured people, had received explicit ordinances that covered all the details of their private and public life, of religious ceremonial and of their dealings with the gentile races by which they were surrounded. But not until Christ conferred upon His Apostles the power of binding and loosing was there so clear an endorsement, on the part of God, of laws intended for man. In this comprehensive authorization, there is no mention of details; there is simply the right to make laws, to enforce them or to dispense from them—yet always with the assurance that what the Church shall do here on earth, will be ratified in Heaven. Weak as men may be and unwise as their counsels so often are, the promise of Christ is plain beyond all doubt and cavil; the enactments of His Church will never be reversed in the Eternal Tribunal where He is the Judge of the quick and the dead.

Our Lord did not mean that the Church should condemn the things that had been wisely enacted by the

great and prudent lawgivers of earlier days. He himself had spent His life under the rule of pagan Rome; He had ordered His followers to render unto Caesar the thing that are Caesar's, and in observing every point of the Law which had been given to the Jewish people, He was most careful. Even the bitterness of His declared enemies could not turn Him aside from the fulfilment of that which was prescribed and which they represented. The Scribes and Pharisees, He said, had sat upon the chair of Moses; and worthless as they might personally be, their official character demanded recognition. No one ever drew in such unambiguous terms the distinction between the individual and the high office with which that individual was entrusted.

So the Church had learned, from the words and deeds of Her Founder, the great lesson of reverence for law. So she took over from the pagan world whatever was wholesome for the conduct of the Christian people. If the principles of Roman legislation have survived to this day for the just and prudent government of mankind, this is mainly due to the temperate judgment of the Catholic Church. It is often said, and truly, that she handed on the treasures of classic learning; it should not be forgotten that she embodied in her own legislation the most valuable elements of the law which ruled the ancient world.

The Church, nevertheless, had a higher mission than that of Lycurgus or Caesar. She had to convince the world that a better law had been given to men, a law that called not merely for external obedience but especially for the obedience of the mind and will. Paganism and its rulers might be satisfied so long as

men in their outward conduct complied with the prescriptions of authority. But Christianity meant something deeper. It meant that the individual in yielding his will should look chiefly to the principle at stake; and that the Christian should look beyond men to the expression of God's holy Will. The spirit quickeneth; the letter killeth. By thus insisting on an inward and heartfelt respect for law, the Church has immeasurably strengthened the just and salutary enactments of human wisdom.

At the same time, it should be noted, the Church has ever watched carefully over the legislative acts of secular power. Under the name of the law the governments of this world, not once but many times over, have laid upon their subjects unbearable burdens. The whole record of history saddens us with the account of the oppression of the weak by the strong. Ambition, prejudice and class-hatred have repeatedly usurped the functions of justice. Worse than all, it has come to pass that in the name of religion, men have legislated against the Church itself which Christ founded. For the victims of this injustice there was no appeal to any human arbitration; yet they found in the Church not merely an advocate, but also a determined opponent of oppression in all its forms. Churchmen indeed might be weak; they might yield to the promises or the threats of men in high places; but the Church as such had a principle to safeguard; and the world is better off to-day because of her appeal to eternal justice.

"The justice of the Lord remaineth forever." We look back over the history of mankind and see how the concepts of the human mind have changed in regard to the most fundamental relations of social and political

life. Schemes of government and law, plans for the reorganization of society, special enactments to remedy special ills and evils—all these pass before our eyes in a calm survey of legislative history. But when we come to look for a standard, for something abiding and penetrating, the only organization to which we can hopefully turn is the Catholic Church. In the name of advancing civilization, the nations of the earth have made laws and repealed them, overturned thrones and flung aside constitutions, derided authority and put might in the place of right for the enforcement of their claims. At times, indeed, it has seemed that the concepts of justice, of public service and of civic duty had been replaced in the thought and endeavour of men by a spirit of selfishness which recognized no obligation and at best yielded to authority only outward compliance. As against such tendencies the Church has steadfastly maintained those principles of authority, and of respect for law without which no social organization is possible. She has taught men that all righteous power is from God, and that we owe a responsibility not merely to our fellow-men and to society, but to Him who is the sovereign arbiter of the individual, the nation and mankind at large.

By thus keeping alive the spirit of reverence for constituted authority, the Church has undoubtedly rendered great service to the state in its various forms. For the security of government lies not so much in armament as in the spirit of obedience. So far now as this spirit is preserved and strengthened by ecclesiastical enactments, religion is the surest safeguard of society; and conversely it is plain that no form of religion which discards the principle of authority can consistently bind its adherents to fidelity in observing the

laws that are framed by men. If in those things which concern our duty towards God, we are to select the precepts that suit our individual liking, and thus in a sense become a law unto ourselves, it is hardly to be expected that in dealing with our fellowmen and acting as members of human society we will readily sacrifice our own judgment and desire for the sake of the common weal.

It is true that the spread of knowledge is an important means for securing obedience to law. Enlightenment and learning should certainly have as their natural result a deeper insight into the structure and functions of society and a willingness, or rather a determination, to uphold that authority on which society is based. But in truth such is not invariably the case. Education is by no means an infallible guarantee against those impulses and tendencies which issue in lawless deeds; nor is the criminal in every instance deficient in cunning and knowledge. Rather do the records of justice show that intelligence, naturally of a high order and still further sharpened by cultivation, is often employed in evading the law, or even in openly violating its gravest prescriptions. Hence the untiring efforts of legislative power to check those selfish tendencies which would place the individual welfare above the general good. Hence, too, the numerous attempts at reform initiated by private zeal and carried out with varying measures of success. Praiseworthy as the motives may be in which such endeavors originate, it is none the less clear that they cannot fully attain their purpose, unless there be in the heart of each man a deep-seated sense of his own responsibility, and a sincere respect for the authority that gives to all law its sanctity and validity.

In other words, mere intellectual education without a corresponding development of the moral faculty, is apt to prove a danger rather than a benefit to society and to the state.

The need of such moral training is the more imperative in proportion as our political institutions secure to each citizen a larger enjoyment of freedom and a safer exercise of his individual rights. Where, under despotic rule, the subject has but to obey without discretion the mandate of a sovereign power, external conditions or motives of a purely utilitarian character may compel his observance. But the case is different when the maintenance of order and the practice of all civic virtues are entrusted to the reasonableness and goodwill of each member of the community. Under these circumstances it is obviously needful that the individual citizen should not only look with respect upon the State as an institution which protects him, but should also express in his law-abiding conduct a reverence for the authority which underlies all specific enactments.

The Catholic Church, from the beginning has consistently taught, as she now teaches, that religion is not simply a profession of belief, nor an affair of emotion and impulse. It is essentially a fulfilment of law. Faith itself is not purely an intellectual function; it involves the action of the will; indeed, as the Apostle declares: "Faith without works is dead." On this principle the Church insists that each of her members shall be trained from his earliest years in the spirit of obedience no less than in the letter of her salutary precepts. This is the inner meaning of her organization, of her hierarchy, of the supremacy of the Holy See, of the decrees that issue from her councils, of the decisions

that are handed down from her sacred tribunals. She thus presents to our larger view the spectacle of a world-wide authority whose wise government, passing out from its central source in the Apostolic See, permeates all degrees of jurisdiction and obedience from the Sovereign Pontiff to the humblest of the faithful. Along with unity of faith there is unity of observance, of discipline, of practice—not a rigid uniformity in detail, but a vitalizing and uplifting unity which preserves the essentials of doctrine and precepts amid all legitimate variations in customs and rites, in privilege and rule.

It has been truly said that life manifests itself by its power of adoption to its environment. The living being does not receive passively and yield helplessly to the influences which it encounters; it gives, on the contrary, an active response which is all the more energetic and fruitful as the vital principle whence it proceeds is vigorous and sound. Nor is it otherwise with the Church. As the living, visible body of Christ, actuated by His spirit and purpose, she tempers her legislation in accordance with the varying needs of mankind, without ever yielding in the least those fundamental teachings of faith and morality which Christ entrusted to her care. For in all modifications of her law, in every adjustment of her practice to new conditions, in every allowance that she makes for the changes that occur in humanity's course, she has in view a single sovereign aim—the salvation of souls in conformity with the plan of redemption through faith in Jesus Christ and obedience to His will. So it comes to pass that while men are carried hither and thither by theories and conjectures regarding life and duty, the basis of morality and its sanctions, the origin of authority and its

value, Catholicism speaks out as of old in clear, unmistakable terms the truth once uttered by St. Paul: "Let every soul be subject to higher powers: for there is no power but from God: and those that are, are ordained of God." (ROMANS, XIII: 1).

We are not constrained, dearly beloved, by any outward force to obey the laws of the Church any more than we are irresistably driven to observe the laws of God. It is a free, voluntary service that God requires of us. But our obligation is none the less binding, nor is the final issue less important for the welfare of our souls. As Catholics, we have reason to be thankful that ample guidance for our conduct is provided in the Church's legislation. We, at all events, are not justified in hesitating as to the duties we shall perform or the laws that shall govern our lives, once the Church has pointed out with authority the path we are to follow. Life is made up, not of speculation, but of action; and only that action counts for our eternal interests which is in conformity with the Will of God as manifested to us through the Church.

Yet there rests upon us a final obligation, over and above the duty we owe as children of the church. The very security which we enjoy following in her guidance entails the larger duty of showing forth in our lives the perfect form of Christian observance. Of those who unfortunately are separated from us in belief many are earnestly seeking some sure sign and evidence of the way that leads to Christ, while many more are looking to see what manner of life and conversation we hold who walk in the light of Christ's revelation. The apostolate of example is laid upon each of us in

order that we may draw all men to the observance of His holy law. It will evidently avail us little if, while contending for the truth of our Catholic belief and exhorting others to righteousness, we do not realize in ourselves, so far as human frailty permits, the ideal of holiness which our Saviour held up to us when he said—"Be you therefore perfect as also your heavenly Father is perfect." (St. Matthew, V, 48). Now this perfection is not to be looked for in some far-off extraordinary way, but in the regular discharge of our duties as faithful children of the Church. Nor is it to be attained by trust in our own strength so much as in humble reliance upon the Grace of God. Through His divine assistance offered to us, more especially in this Lenten season, we may confidently hope with the Apostle to do all things in Him who strengthens us. Thus being doers of the law, and not hearers only, we shall indeed strive manfully for our own sanctification; and we shall, furthermore, obey the Word of Him who said: "So let your light shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven." (ST. MATTHEW, V, 16.)

The Grace of our Lord be with you all, dear brethren.

This Pastoral Letter shall be read in every church of the Diocese on the first Sunday after its reception that the Pastor shall officiate therein.

✠ E. McCARTHY,
Archbishop of Halifax.

M. PUJOS DE COUDRAY,
Pro. Secretary.

HALIFAX, February 12th, 1909.

