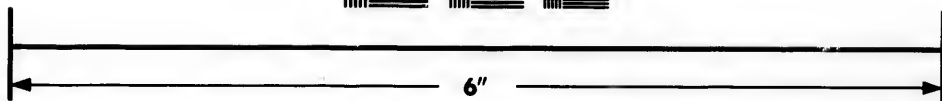
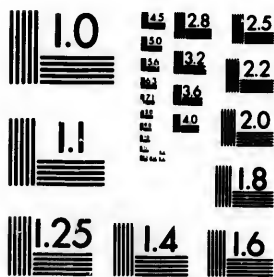


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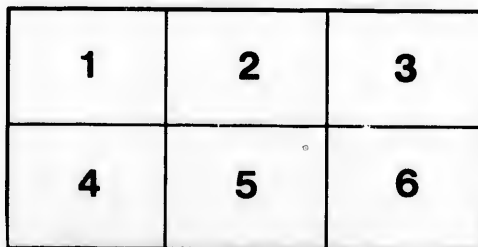
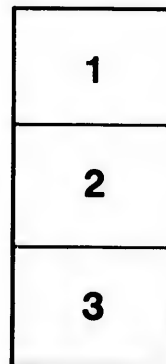
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LENTEN PASTORAL LETTER

OF THE

Rt. Rev. John Walsh, D. D.

BISHOP OF LONDON.

JOHN—by the Grace of God and the appointment of the Holy See, BISHOP OF LONDON,
*To the Clergy, Religious Communities and Faithful of our Diocese
Greeting and Benediction in the Lord.*

DEARLY BELOVED BRETHREN,

At the approach of this holy season of Lent, we deem it our duty to address you some words of instruction and edification. Our Blessed Lord has laid on the Bishops of His Church the burden of instructing the faithful committed to their charge in the great and saving truths of our holy religion. "Go teach all nations; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded." St. Matthew xxviii, 19-20.

It is the duty and the happiness of these "sowers" of the Gospel, to cast the divine seed of God's Word into the soil of human hearts, in the hope that, falling upon good ground, it may spring up and yield fruit a hundredfold—the fruit of Christian virtue and holiness of life here, and the rewards of eternal life hereafter.

Now there is no more fruitful source of instruction and edification than the study of the life and actions of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. "He is the way, the truth and the life; they that follow Him walk not in darkness." St. John xiv, 6. "He is the light of the world and the salt of the earth. There is no salvation in any other, for there is no other name

under heaven given to men whereby we may be saved." Acts iv, 12. He is the model and pattern which we must imitate in our lives and actions if we would be saved, "for," in the language of St. Paul, "whom God foreknew He also predestinated to be made conformable to the image of His Son." Romans viii, 29. The knowledge of Him is eternal life. He is our consolation, our hope, our happiness and our supreme good; "for what have we in heaven," said the Psalmist, "and besides Him what can we desire upon earth; He is the God of our heart and the God that is our portion forever."

The study of the life of Jesus was the constant occupation of the saints; it formed their character and gave them the supernatural courage and strength by which they overcame the world, the devil and the flesh. St. Paul was so pre-occupied with it that he professed to know nothing else—"for I judged not myself to know anything among you but Jesus Christ and Him crucified." 1st Corinthians, xi, 2. And again, "Furthermore, I count all things to be but loss for the excellent knowledge of Jesus Christ my Lord." Phillipians iii, 8. It was the knowledge of our Blessed Saviour that inflamed the heart of the great apostle with divine love and with the fire of apostolic zeal. He burned to impart this saving knowledge to mankind, and on his bended knees besought the eternal Father that He would communicate it to a perishing world, in order to save and to sanctify it—"For this cause I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom all paternity in heaven and earth is named, that he would grant you according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened by His spirit with might into the inward man; that Christ may dwell by faith in your hearts: that being rooted and founded in charity, you may be able to comprehend, with all the saints, what is the breadth, and length, and height, and depth: to know also the charity of Christ, which surpasseth all knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God." Ephesians iii, 14-19.

The more we study the character of our Saviour, the more

brightly its divine beauty will shine out upon us, the more vividly the grand characteristics that stamped his mission as divine will present themselves to view. And it is well to study attentively this heavenly picture, it is profitable to look now on the face of our Christ, and, Veronica-like, to catch the divine image and stamp it on our hearts. We live at a time when a heartless and a blasphemous philosophy is attempting to sap the foundations of Christian faith, and to rob the world of the blessings and consolations of the Christian religion. Hence, it is essential, in order to heal the bites of this fiery serpent of an anti-christian philosophy and an anti-christian spirit, or to save ourselves from their destructive influences, to look upon Him who was foreshadowed by the brazen serpent in the desert, even our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, who alone can save us from the spiritual dangers that surround us, and heals the wounds of the soul. But who can adequately describe the life and character of our Blessed Lord? or what pen can do them justice? It is said that a great painter once undertook to paint the likeness of our Saviour. He had made a long and patient and prayerful study of the subject, his heart and his mind were full of it, his soul was aglow with the fire of a holy inspiration and with the light of artistic genius, he seized at last his brush, with the purpose of transferring to canvass the divine lineaments of our Saviour's countenance; but, alas, his heart failed him, his hand trembled, and, casting down the brush in despair, he exclaimed that it was indeed impossible for mortal man to express on canvass the divine beauty, majesty, and sweetness of the face of Jesus. A kindred feeling may well lay hold of the writer who undertakes to describe the life of our Blessed Lord, and the characteristics that marked his mission on earth. However, as men, in order to see and admire the beauty and brilliancy of a diamond, will turn it now on one side, now on another, so by the aid of study and pious meditation, we may catch some glimpses of the heavenly perfection of our Lord's character, and may be able to convey some idea of the characteristics of His mission amongst mankind.

The constraining power that brought our Saviour down from heaven, was His infinite love for man. He had created man through love, He came to redeem him through love. When man fell by the original transgression he lost the justice and innocence in which he had been constituted, he lost the sonship of God and the heirship of heaven; he became an outcast from the face of his God, and the gates of heaven were closed against him: he became a ruin and a wreck, like some beautiful temple, overthrown by a sudden earthquake; his mind was darkened, his heart corrupted, his inclinations tended to evil as streams tend to the ocean, and he was condemned to the death, not only of the body, but to the everlasting death of the soul. Who can heal this wounded, blighted creature—*Quis medebitur ejus?* Who can undo these appalling evils? What mighty and beneficent power can lift up fallen man and restore him to his lost privileges? Who can atone to the justice of God for the sins of men, and reconcile the guilty creature to the offended Creator? What mighty arm can unbolt the gates of heaven, and open them once more for man's admission into eternal joys? We find the answer to these questions in the mystery of the Incarnation. Our Blessed Saviour came down from heaven and became man in order to redeem and save us. "He emptied Himself," says St. Paul, "and took upon Himself the form of a servant;" He stooped into the abyss of our nothingness in order to lift us up, and to make us once more the children of God and heirs of the kingdom of heaven. The fact of the Incarnation is a miracle of love far beyond the reach of human comprehension. The infinite condescension of God, implied in the Incarnation—the great and eternal God, infinitely perfect in all his attributes, all-powerful, all-holy, all-wise, and all just, stooping into the depths of our nothingness to save us; this is an abyss of mercy which the plummet-line of human reason can never fathom. Now we find that his whole life and conduct on earth were but the expression and manifestation of this

infinite love and mercy as revealed to us in the fact of the Incarnation.

When St. John was in prison for having denounced the public sins of Herod, he heard of the works of our Saviour, who had just entered on His public life, and sending His disciples to Jesus, he said to Him:—"Art thou He that was to come, or look we for another? And Jesus, making answer, said to them:—"Go and tell John what you have seen and heard. The blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead rise again, and the poor have the gospel preached unto them." Matthew xi, 2-5.

Our Blessed Saviour does not appeal in proof of His Messiahship to stupendous miracles that startle and terrify. He could have shown in a thousand ways the power that belonged to Him in heaven and on earth; His voice could have controlled all the elements, arrested the motions of the heavenly bodies, and suspended all the laws of nature. He could in this way have amply proved His divinity, and that He was indeed the Messiah that was to come to save a lost world. But He appeals rather to His works of tender mercy and compassion; He appeals to His beneficent and gracious manifestation of Almighty power in healing the ills that afflict humanity, in relieving the wretched of the crushing burden of their sorrows, in comforting the afflicted, in healing the broken of heart, and binding up their wounds. Psalm cxlvii, 3. "Go tell John what you have heard and seen:—the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead rise again, the poor have the gospel preached to them."

His whole life was marked by the most profound and active sympathy for the poor, the sick, the afflicted, the sorrow-stricken, and the care and sin-burdened men. His whole Sacred Heart went out to them in tender pity, and in practical and efficacious benevolence. For the poor He had a special affection and tenderness. When our Saviour came on earth, He found the poor crushed, ostracised, despised,

and abandoned. The civilization of the Pagan world was then at its highest; but it was a cold, heartless civilization; it was like a marble statue by Phidias, exquisitely beautiful and radiant with the halo of artistic genius, but yet hard, cold, unfeeling and pitiless. All its honour and favours were for the rich, the powerful, the learned and the brave. Honours were lavished on the poet, the orator, the sculptor, the successful statesman and the victorious general; but the poor, as we have said, were utterly despised and abandoned; they stood outside the sphere of charity and even of liberty. Our Blessed Lord, who was the way, the truth and the life, came to destroy error, to correct false notions, to teach men the true value of things and the true relationship of man to man, and to establish society on the basis of truth, justice and charity. He sympathized with the poor, and by practising and embracing poverty himself, he made it a sacred thing, and lifted it up in the estimation of mankind. When He condescended to come on earth for our salvation, He might have come clothed with great power and majesty and surrounded by His angels; He might have revealed His law amid the awful scenes that witnessed the revelation and promulgation of the decalogue; He might have spoken His heavenly doctrines in a voice of thunder, and bade the trembling nations to listen and obey. But far different was the plan adopted by our Saviour. He is born in the poverty of a stable, His cradle is a manger, His royal robes coarse swaddling clothes, his retinue an ox and an ass, his luxuries darkness and cold. He grows up in poverty and associates with the poor: he said that whilst the foxes had their holes, and the birds of the air their nests, the Son of Man had not whereon to lay his head. He made poverty one of the beatitudes, "blessed are the poor in spirit, for of such is the kingdom of heaven." He thus gave poverty a character of sacredness, exalted it in human estimation, made it an occasion of merit in the eyes of God, and reconciled the poor to their hard lot by lifting up their thoughts towards God's

eternal kingdom, which is the heritage of the poor, and in which they will be eternally rich. And lest, in the lapse of ages, his blessed example and teaching on this point might be forgotten and abandoned, and the poor be once again treated with contempt, neglect and cruelty, our Lord identifies himself with the poor, makes their cause his own, and declares that on the great accounting day our eternal lot will be decided by the manner in which we shall have followed his example, and obeyed and practiced his teachings in relation to the poor. "I was hungry, and ye gave me to eat; thirsty, and ye gave me to drink." And so, in every christian age, his true followers have esteemed poverty, have deemed it a holy thing, and have made it a duty and a happiness to be merciful and compassionate towards the poor, rendering their lot bearable and contributing towards their happiness. O! who can estimate the countless blessings bestowed on the poor, the lowly and the weak by this example and teaching of our Blessed Lord. The hungry have been fed, the naked clothed, the lonely and abandoned visited, the light of blessed hope has been made to shine in the darkness of the dungeon, the prison doors have opened to the captive, and the reign of blessed charity, with all its mercies and commiserations, has been inaugurated and perpetuated upon earth, making the "land that was desolate and impassable be glad, and the wilderness rejoice and flourish like a lily, making it bud forth and blossom, and rejoice with joy and praise." Isaias cxxxvi.

But our Blessed Lord not only practised poverty and rendered it sacred, but he also embraced labour and toil as the occupation of his private life, and gave them a dignity and a merit which they had never before enjoyed. At the time of the advent of our Saviour, labour had fallen into utter contempt, was a badge of degradation and considered as only fit for slaves. Working men were deprived of the rights of manhood, were robbed of their liberties and civil rights and were reduced to the position of slaves. Both in Greek and Roman civilization work had been made servile,

and working men slaves. At the time of Augustus Caesar, there were upwards of sixty millions of slaves in the vast empire over which he ruled. And those slaves were not men on whose brows an Indian or an African sun had burnt the brand of slavery; they were in blood and race the equals of their masters. In Roman law, a slave was not a person, but a thing; he had, of course, no civil or political rights, he had no power to receive a legacy, no power of civil action, and was entirely beyond the pale and protection of law; he had not even religious duties or hopes. He was in everything absolutely subject to his master's will, who had the power of life and death over him. Such is the frightful condition to which millions of working men were reduced in ancient civilization, when they were described by Seneca as having "fettered feet, bound hands, and branded faces."

Our divine Saviour became a working man, was a carpenter and the reputed son of a carpenter, and for years laboured and toiled with St. Joseph for his daily bread. He thus made labour sacred, he exalted it in human estimation, and gave it a dignity in the eyes of men and a power of merit in the eyes of God. In the christian system, labour having become ennobled by the action and example of Christ, the working man rose in the scale of human estimation, he ceased to be regarded a thing, and was looked upon as a man possessing human rights and liberties and duties. Men, whether free or bond, were taught the doctrines of equality before God, who was their common father; they were taught the doctrine of human and Christian brotherhood, that in the language of St. Paul—"in one spirit they were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Gentiles, whether *bond or free.*" 1 Corinthians xii, 13. "That they were all children of God by faith in Jesus Christ, that there was neither Jew nor Greek, neither bond nor free, but that they *were* all *one* in Christ Jesus." Galatians iii, 27-28. These blessed sounds broke with the power and magic of delightful music on the ears of the fettered slaves. Millions of human beings bowed

down under the intolerable burdens and unspeakable sorrows of slavery, lifted up their heads, raised their eyes towards heaven, and began to hope. Gradually, under the blessed and fruitful influence of the example and teachings of our Saviour, the fetters began to fall from the festering limbs of the slaves, men learned their rights and dignity as well as their responsibilities, labour was ennobled and sanctified, and the curse of slavery has disappeared from all christian lands, never to return. Who can estimate the value of this mighty result, this great moral revolution! What blessings has it not conferred upon mankind! What fountains of tears has it not dried up! What broken hearts has it not healed! What unspeakable sorrows has it not banished! What burdens of grief has it not lifted up from the heart and soul of man! With what hope, what joy, what sunshine of liberty and gladness has it not flooded the world, transforming it from a pen of slaves into a home of christian freemen.

Another characteristic of our Lord's earthly mission was his care and tenderness for the sick. His delight was to bring hope to the bed of the sick, to cheer their drooping spirits, to relieve their sufferings and heal their diseases. He cleansed the lepers of their most loathsome disease, and by his healing touch restored their putrid flesh to its original freshness and purity. By his merciful power the blind saw, the lame walked and the deaf heard. Fever, the bloody flux, palsy and the dropsy, every manner of disease that racks the poor body with pain, fills the mind with sad forebodings of death, and finally dries up the very fountains of life, all fled at his omnipotent command, or disappeared at his healing touch. They saw in him the author of all life, and vanished in confusion from his Holy presence. "And all that were sick, he healed," said St. Matthew, viii, 16-17, "that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaias the prophet, saying:— '*He took our infirmities and bore our diseases.*'" How beautiful is this characteristic of our Redeemer, and how fruitful it has been in lasting benefits for the sick and

the infirm in all the christian ages ! Those who have been sick know how dependent the sick are on the kindly offices of others, how they crave for sympathy and yearn for one word of hope. The example of our Lord, and its blessed influences, have soothed the agonies of the sick bed and lavished sweetest sympathies on the sufferers, and have shed upon them the blessed sunshine of hope. Under the potent creative power of his divine example, men and women have, in every Christian age, devoted themselves exclusively to the care of the sick, for Christ's dear sake, and hospitals have sprung up in every centre of population, like blessed Probaticas, for the care and comfort of the sick and suffering.

Then what shall we say of his profound sympathy for the sorrow-stricken and afflicted ? He knew that sorrow and suffering would be the portion of the great masses of mankind that in this valley of tears man would have to drink the chalice of sufferings to the bitter dregs. He therefore became a man of sorrows himself, in order to sanctify sorrow, and to make it holy and even expiatory of sin and its consequences, and in order, also, by the magic power of his example, to teach the sorrow-stricken, in every age, how to carry the burden of their grief, and how to do so in a manner submissive to the will of God, and pleasing to him. "We have seen him," said the Prophet, "and there was no comeliness that we should be desirous of him ; despised and the most abject of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with infirmity, and his look was as it were hidden and despised, whereupon we esteemed him not. Surely he hath borne our infirmities and carried our sorrows ; and we have thought him as a leper, and as one struck by God and afflicted ; but he was wounded for our iniquities and bruised for our sins ; the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and by his bruises we are healed." *Isaias liii.*" And, through the mouth of Jeremiah, he exclaims, "O ! all you who pass by the way, come and see if there be any sorrow like to my sorrow." *Lamentations i, 12.* He drank the cup of suffering and sorrow to the bitter dregs,

not only to expiate our sins, but also to sanctify our sorrows, and to teach us how to bear them.

Perhaps amid all the grand and beautiful characteristics of our Saviour's life, there is none more endearing to the human heart than his blessed compassion for the afflicted, the mourners and weepers. The instances of this trait in our Saviour's character, related in the gospel, speak to the heart with a sympathetic power which human language is impotent to command. We shall only refer to two of them. The first to which we wish to call your attention is the case of the widow of Naim. As our Redeemer, accompanied by his disciples, approached, on one occasion, this little town, he met the funeral of the only son of a widow, as it proceeded slowly and mournfully towards the cemetery. There were in that funeral procession the usual circumstances that mark such an occasion—the kind-hearted and sympathetic neighbours, the weeping relatives, the corpse stiff and cold in death, and there was the broken-hearted and widowed mother following the coffin in which her earthly joy and hope were enclosed. The sad spectacle was too much for the heart of Jesus; he was moved to deepest pity for this weeping, crushed and broken-hearted woman, and approaching her, he said, "O! woman, weep not." He then went to the bier and in a voice of command he said, "Young man, I say to thee arise." Death heard the voice of the author of life and obeyed; the young man awakened into life and went home with his mother, to be the comfort and the staff of her old age.

The second instance of our Saviour's touching sympathy for the bereaved and the sorrowing which we shall adduce, is that which relates to the raising of Lazarus from the tomb. A beloved brother, the guardian, prop and pride of two orphan sisters, is torn from the family circle by the cruel hand of death; he is taken away in the prime of manhood, in the midst of his usefulness, and at a time when his presence seemed essential to the well-being and comfort of his

sisters, and he is now four days dead and buried away in the silent tomb. His place is vacant at the family hearth, there is a sad void in the homestead that cannot be filled up, there is a beloved presence wanting; and grief bitter and overpowering, and sorrow speechless and inexpressible, because too great for utterance have filled the souls of the bereaved and broken-hearted sisters. Our Lord came to console them in their heart-anguish and agony, and the sisters rushed out to meet him, and in an outburst of passionate grief, and in those piteous accents that smite the heart, exclaimed, "O Lord, if thou hadst been here our brother would not have died. But now we know that whatever thou shalt ask of God, he will give it to thee." To their earnest pleading, to supplications, aided by the silent but irresistible eloquence of tears, our Lord replied in words of tenderest sympathy and hopefulness that can never be forgotten, and that have shone ever since like a rainbow of promise over christian tombs:—"Your brother shall rise again. I am the resurrection and the life; everyone that believeth in me, though he be dead, shall live, and everyone that liveth and believeth in me shall not taste death for ever." And Jesus, seeing the grief of the disconsolate sisters, groaned in spirit and wept, and going to the tomb wherein Lazarus was laid, he cried with a loud voice: "Lazarus, come forth." And presently, he that had been dead, came forth from the tomb, a living man, and went home with his sisters." John xi. How touchingly these instances of our Saviour's tender compassion speak to the bereaved and stricken heart! What rays of blessed hope have they not ministered to those who have been widowed or orphaned by death! But whilst they are calculated to console all weepers, they have a special significance for those whom death has bereaved of their dear ones. Henceforward, if christians mourn for the departed ones, they mourn not without hope. They know that Jesus is "the resurrection and the life," and that those who die in his holy church, and at friendship with him, will

one day rise again to live for ever in the Kingdom of God. Death, therefore, has not absolute dominion over their departed friends. These may sleep away for ages in their forgotten graves, but in the spring-time of the resurrection they will rise again in honour, in power and glory, to live with Christ in his eternal kingdom. This hope is laid up in the bosom of christian mourners, and in every age and clime, has served to reconcile them to the death of their nearest and most beloved. It is thus that our blessed Lord has sublimated and sanctified sorrow and suffering. He became himself a man of sorrows; he bore those sorrows without plaint or murmur, for "as a sheep before the shearers, so opened he not his mouth." In his agony in the garden, when his soul was sorrowful even unto death, he besought his heavenly father that the chalice might pass away from him, but he added, "nevertheless, let not my will, but Thine, be done." He has thus taught us, by his holy example, how to bear with patience and resignation the trials of life, and, by uniting them to his sufferings, how to make them expiatory and meritorious in the sight of his eternal Father. Thus, sorrow and suffering in the christian system, become a source of merit and of sanctification, and, though our hearts may break with uncontrollable grief, we may offer them to God, all wounded and bleeding though they be, and when thus offered, in union with the sorrows and the agonized heart of Jesus, they become most acceptable offerings in the sight of heaven. But the example of our Lord, on this point, has not only instructed us how to bear our own trials and crosses with patience, but it has also taught us to be kind and compassionate to those who are in sorrow and affliction. He has given us an example that, as he has done, so also we might do. And this blessed and merciful example has been followed during the whole life of his holy church. Wherever sorrows were to be comforted, wherever tears were to be dried, wherever pain was to be assuaged, wherever wounded and broken hearts were to be healed and bound up, there, men and women, consecrated to

Christ and animated by his spirit and example, were to be found as ministering angels, happy to suffer and to die if only they could bring comfort and consolation to the suffering and sorrowing members of the crucified Redeemer. God alone can tell how much this sad world owes, in this respect, to the teachings and example of its Saviour.

There is another class for which our Lord entertained a special compassion and mercy, namely, sinners. In a spiritual sense they are blind and deaf, and lame, and sick, and leprous. In the language of inspiration, they may consider themselves rich and made wealthy, and as having need of nothing; but they are wretched and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked." Apocalypse iii, 17. They are poor for they have lost their eternal inheritance. They are slaves for they have lost the liberty of the children of God, and are bound by the servitude of Satan. "Amen, I say to you," said Christ, "that whosoever committeth sin is the slave of sin." John viii, 34. They are spiritually dead, for they have lost the life of their souls. O! more wretched and more pitiable far than the blind, the lame and the deaf, are sinners who have lost the treasures of God's friendship, have forfeited their rights to heaven, and have wrecked their innocence and destroyed the very life of their souls. Our Lord came primarily for the salvation of sinners, to seek and save that which was lost. The primary object of his coming was not to heal the diseases and ailments of the body, but to heal the diseases and wounds of the soul; was not to restore the life of the body, but to restore the lost life of the soul. If, then, our Saviour wrought miracles for the healing of bodily diseases and the restoration of the dead to life, O! what miracles of mercy will he not work for the salvation and life of the imperishable soul, for the happiness, the endless bliss of this living image of God, this immortal being, the salvation of which is a greater work and a greater good than the creation of the material world, than the glory of the stars and all the beauties of the universe. Hence we

find that his whole life was one divine effort for the conversion and salvation of the sinner. This was so markedly the case that the Pharisees reproached him for it and stigmatised him as the friend of publicans and sinners. Whereupon our Lord replied: "Those that are well have not need of a physician, but those that are sick; going therefore, learn what this meaneth. I wish mercy and not sacrifice, for I am come to call, not the just, but sinners to repentance." (Luke xv. 12-13.)

He likens himself to the good shepherd who leaveth ninety-nine sheep in the desert and goes in search of the one that is lost, and declares "that there is joy in heaven before the angels of God upon one sinner that doth penance more than ninety-nine just who need not penance." (Luke xv. 7.) He is the father of the prodigal. A certain man, says our Lord, had two sons, and one was a prodigal, and the prodigal taking his share of the father's substance, went into a foreign country, and there wasted his fortune on riotous living. That country was scourged by a wasting amine and the prodigal was reduced to the necessity of feeding on the husks of swine. So far the prodigal was but the type and exemplification of the base ingratitude and deep degradation of the sinner. The poor prodigal entering into himself called to mind the home of his father, its pure and innocent joys and the plenty that abounded therein, and he said, "I will arise and go home to my father, and I will say to him, father, I have sinned against heaven and before thee; I am no more worthy to be called thy son, make me one of thy servants." And when the poor penitent returned, the father no longer remembered the injury that had been done him nor the base ingratitude of his erring son, but he received him with open arms and the heart of a father went out in pity and forgiveness to his poor returned child, all tattered and torn and travel-stained, but repentant, he restored him to the protection and the privileges of his home, and caused rejoicings to be made because his son that had been dead was come to life again, had been lost and was found." (Luke xv.) It is thus our Saviour treats

repentant sinners. No matter how base and black their ingratitude, no matter how numerous and enormous their offenses, though their sins were as red as scarlet and as deep as crimson, though they were as numberless as the leaves of Autumn, or as the sands of the sea-shore, the Father of the prodigal—Jesus Christ—will receive the returning and repentant sinners with open arms, and will restore them their lost privileges and the friendship of God. His precious blood will blot out their sins from the book of God's recollection, and the tide of his infinite mercies will rise above their wickedest transgressions and drown them in eternal oblivion.

It would be too tedious to dwell on other instances of our Saviour's mercy to sinners as related in the Gospel, such as the forgiveness of Magdalen and of the woman taken in adultery. We may well say with St. John, that if all that our Lord said and did and suffered for the salvation of sinners were written, the world itself would not be able to contain the books that should be written. (John xxi. 25.) We shall only call attention to the last dread scene on Calvary. We know that our Saviour is there offered up as a victim for our sins. The Lord, said the prophet, hath laid upon him the iniquity of us all. He was wounded for our iniquities and bruised for our sins; the chastisement of our peace was upon him and by his bruises we have been healed. Let us now ascend in spirit to the hill of Calvary to witness the scene that is there transpiring, to assist at the bloody but all-atoning sacrifice of Jesus on the Cross. He has already hung nearly three long hours on the ignominious gibbet, a spectacle to angels and to men. His life-blood is ebbing fast through the five wounds until the fountains of the heart are well nigh exhausted. An awful darkness is stealing over Calvary's hill and wrapping it in its pitchy folds; the graves are being stirred with a strange life, for the dead are awaking from their sleep of ages, startled into life by the divine tragedy, and are about to walk through the streets of the holy city. At this awful moment the Jews

cease not to mock and deride our dying Saviour and to scoff at his untold sorrows and abandonment. One would expect that our Lord in his justice would summon his angels to destroy those guilty wretches and rid the world of deicides, no longer worthy to live. But no; our blessed Saviour, summoning his remaining energies, and turning up towards heaven his eyes that were swimming in tears of agony and dim with the shadows of approaching death, made a last appeal for mercy, saying: "O Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." And bowing his head he expired. His last prayer offered up with his dying breath upon the cross was for pardon and forgiveness for the greatest sinners, the most guilty criminals that ever profaned God's creation.

One drop of the precious blood of Jesus shed upon the cross would have been sufficient to redeem a thousand guilty worlds, and yet he poured it all out to the very last drop to prove to us the infinitude of his love. His precious blood atoned fully to the justice of God for the sins of mankind, it blotted out the handwriting of death that was against us and purchased us with a great price. His blood was shed for all the children of men from fallen Adam down to the last that will be born of woman. It ascended in its redeeming effects up through the centuries to the beginning of time, and will descend in a tide of mercies to the consummation of the world. The victim, it is true, was offered only on Calvary, but the blood of that victim bathed the world in its saving tide, and washed the shores of all ages. It gave infinite honor and glory to God, made full atonement to the Divine justice, lifted up a fallen world and placed it once more on the plane of its immortal destinies; it redeemed mankind from the curse of the fall, liberated them from the bondage of Satan and restored them to the glorious freedom of the sons of God and to the heirship of the kingdom of heaven. We may, therefore, truly and in deepest gratitude say with the Church:

“O certe necessarium adæ peccatum quod Christi morte deletum est.” “O felix culpa quæ talem et tantum meruit habere Redemptorem.” “O truly necessary sin of Adam which the death of Christ has blotted out.” “O happy fault that merited such and so great a Redeemer.”

But here we must conclude.

Were we to speak with the tongues of men and of angels we could not convey an adequate idea of all the graces, mercies, and blessings conferred upon mankind by our Blessed Redeemer. We can only say with the Psalmist, that since His advent “the earth is filled with the mercy of the Lord.” Jesus is indeed our God and our all, the life of our life and the treasure of our hearts: the Sovereign truth and the Supreme good. He is the author and finisher of our faith, the immovable anchor of our hope, the divine object of our charity; He is our life, our sweetness, and our hope here, and will, we humbly trust, be our exceeding great reward hereafter. He is everything to us, “for it would have profited us nothing,” says the Church, “to be born if we had not been redeemed.” O let us give him the whole homage and service of our being; let us love him with our whole heart and soul, and mind, and strength. He is our God, let us adore and worship him in spirit and in truth; he is our Redeemer; let us never cease to thank and praise him, “for the Lamb that was slain is worthy to receive power and divinity, and strength, and honor, and glory, and benediction,” (Apoc. v. 11); he is our Father, let us give him the obedience of dutiful children. Let us give ourselves entirely to him as he has given himself entirely for us. Let us often say to him in all sincerity with St. Augustine, “O beauty ever ancient and always new, too late have I known thee, too late have I loved thee”; and with St. Paul, “who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or persecution, or the sword? . . . I am sure that neither death nor life, . . . nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God,

which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Rom. viii. 35-39.) There is but one thing, dearly beloved brethren, that can separate us from the love of Christ, and that is sin. This is the supreme evil, as God is the Supreme good. Between God and sin there is an infinite distance, an invincible contradiction, an absolute opposition. Sin is the great enemy of God and man, it has filled heaven with mourning, hell with wailings and lamentations, and the earth with untold miseries and calamities. It has brought pestilence, famine, sorrow and death into the world. It has caused all the afflictions that have fallen on mankind, all the sighs that have ever been heaved from the human bosom, all the tears that have ever fallen from the eyes of men, it has wrung tears even from the sacred eyes of Jesus himself, for if he wept over the grave of Lazarus and over the city of Jerusalem, it was because they symbolized souls ruined and lost by sin. It was sin which nailed Jesus to the cross and put him to an ignominious death. And so enormous is sin in its intrinsic malice, and so injurious to God, that St. Paul does not hesitate to say that they who commit it "crucify again the Son of God and make a mockery of him." (Hebrews, vi. 6.) Since, therefore, sin is the supreme evil, since it alone can separate us from Christ, and render all that he has done and suffered for us vain and fruitless, we should detest it with our whole heart and soul, we should sincerely repent of having ever committed it, and during our whole lives, but especially during the holy season of Lent we should do our utmost by sincere repentance and penitential works, and the worthy reception of the Sacrament of Penance, to repair the injury done to God by our sins, to obtain forgiveness of them, and to obtain the grace of serving our Lord and Master in holiness and justice all our days.

The conclusions to be drawn from all that we have said are briefly as follows :

1st. We should love our Lord Jesus Christ with our whole heart and soul, for he first loved us and delivered himself for us, and with St. Paul we should count all things as valueless

and vile, provided we gain Christ and abide in his love and friendship.

2nd. We should value the salvation of our immortal souls above all things, and as the great end and object of our existence here, since Christ so prized them as to lay down his life for them, and to purchase them even by the shedding of his precious blood : and in order to urge ourselves to labor every day for our salvation, we should frequently put to our hearts and consciences the momentous question of our Lord : "What doth it profit a man to gain the whole world if he lose his soul, or what exchange shall a man give for his soul." (Math. xvi. 28.)

3rd. Instructed by the teachings and example of our blessed Lord, we should embrace poverty, toil, sorrows and afflictions as coming from the hand of God. We should accept them with humble and patient resignation to the Divine will, and should make use of them, in union with the merits of Christ, as occasions of merit and means of sanctification, "for Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example that we should follow his steps." (1 Peter, ii. 21.)

4th. After the example of Christ we should be charitable to the poor, tender and compassionate towards the sorrowing and afflicted, kind and attentive to the sick, and forgiving and merciful to those who have injured us. "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy." "I was hungry and you gave me to eat, I was a stranger and you took me in, naked and you covered me, sick and you visited me." (Math. xv. 35.)

5th. We should detest and abhor sin with all the energy of our being, as it is the supreme evil, the great enemy of God and man, the cause of all the calamities that have scourged the earth, the fountain of all the bitter tears that have fallen drop by drop from the eyes of man, and the crucifier of the Son of God himself. We should heartily repent of our past sins and firmly resolve, with the assistance of God's grace, never again to fall into this dreadful evil. And

in order to avoid this evil of sin and to be able to do the good and to practise the virtues that God requires of us, we should make use of the means of grace that Christ in his mercy has instituted for this purpose, viz: fervent and constant prayer, the frequent and worthy reception of the Sacraments, and pious and regular attendance at the holy sacrifice of the Mass. We should also avoid the occasions of sin, for they who love danger shall perish in it.

May God in his mercy grant you the grace to practise these salutary lessons and to carry them out in your daily life and conduct. And we should make a special effort to do so during the holy season of Lent. During this time also those who are able should faithfully observe the solemn fast prescribed by the Church, and those who are not bound to fast should observe the precept of abstinence and chastise their bodies and mortify their flesh by other penitential works.

“Behold now is the acceptable time, and now is the day of salvation.” (2 Cor. vi. 2.) “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.” (Isaias lv. 7.) “Let us cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light; let us walk honestly as in the day, not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and impurities, not in contention and strife, but put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ.” (Romans, xiii. 14.) Yes, we must join the great fast from sin with the fast of Lent, in order that the latter may be really acceptable to our heavenly Father, and beneficial to our poor souls. For of what avail will it be to us if, whilst we fast in the body, our souls fast not from sin and vice? The fast from sin and wicked pleasures is the *perfect fast*, without which the corporal fast will be of little benefit. God rejected the fast of the Jews because on the days of their fasting they continued to offend him by their customary sins (Isaias lviii.), and will he be better satisfied with us if we, in pretending to fast, are guilty of the like inconsistency and folly? We must, therefore, fast from

all dishonesty, calumny and detraction; from immodest words and acts; from reading bad books and journals; from drunkenness and rioting; in fine, from every thought, word and action that would offend God and transgress his Divine law. And whilst fasting from all such wickedness, we must apply ourselves to good works and acts of mercy. "Is not this," saith the Lord, "the fast that I have chosen?" "Loose the bands of wickedness and break asunder every burden. Deal thy bread to the hungry, and bring the needy and harborless into thine house; when thou shalt see one naked, cover him, and despise not thine own flesh. Then shall thy light break forth as the morning, and thy health shall speedily arise, and thy justice shall go before thy face. Then shalt thou call and the Lord shall hear." (Isaias lviii.)

Let us, therefore, spend this holy and penitential season of Lent in accordance with the spirit and requirements of the Church. Let all perform their Easter duty by worthily receiving the Sacraments of Penance and the Blessed Eucharist, as we are commanded to do by the Church, under the gravest penalties. Let us sincerely repent of our sins, bewailing them in the bitterness of our souls; let our cry ascend daily to God for mercy and forgiveness, beseeching him to look upon the face of his Christ, and for the sake of his bitter passion and death to have compassion on us whom he has redeemed in his precious blood. Let family prayers and the Rosary be punctually said in every household; let the passion and death of Christ be the subject of frequent thought and reflection; and in this way we shall spend Lent in a manner pleasing to God, and fruitful in blessings to ourselves; and we shall emerge from the gloom of Lent into Easter joys, happy in the consciousness of having honestly endeavored to promote God's glory, and the salvation of our souls.

We request the Revd. Clergy to visit their flocks during this holy season, especially the lukewarm and the sinful, with the view of inducing them to give up the evil of their ways

and return to God and the observance of their religious duties. We also request the Revd. pastors to hold public devotions in their churches at least twice a week, said devotions to consist of the recitation of the Rosary, or the performance of the Way of the Cross, an appropriate instruction, and the Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament, which we authorize to be given on those occasions.

The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the charity of God, and the communication of the Holy Ghost be with you all. (11 Cor. xiii. 13.)

This pastoral shall be read in all the churches of the Diocese at the earliest convenience of the clergy.

Given at St. Peter's Palace, London, on this the Feast of St. Mathias, Apostle, 24th February, A.D., 1881.

† JOHN WALSH,

Bishop of London.

By order of His Lordship,
WILLIAM O'MAHONY, Secretary. }

The following are the Lenten regulations to be observed in this Diocese :—

1st. All days of Lent, Sundays excepted, are fasting days.

2nd. By a special dispensation from the Holy See, A.D. 1875, meat is allowed on Sundays at every meal, and at one meal on Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays, except the Saturday of Ember Week and Holy Saturday.

3rd. The use of flesh meat and fish at the same time is not allowed in Lent.

4th. The following persons are exempted from abstinence, viz. :—Children under seven years ; and from fasting, persons under twenty-one ; and from either or both, those who, on account of ill-health, advanced age, hard labors, or some other legitimate cause, cannot observe the law.

5th. Lard may be used in preparing fasting food during the season of Lent, as also on all days of abstinence throughout the year by those who cannot easily procure butter.

The season within which all who have attained the proper age are obliged to make the Paschal Communion, commences on Ash Wednesday and terminates on Trinity Sunday.

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