

PASTORAL LETTER

ADDRESSED TO

The Clergy and Laity

OF THE

DIOCESE OF ST. JOHN

BY THE

Right Reverend T. CASEY, D.D.

Bishop of St. John



ST. JOHN, N. B.

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By the Grace of God and Favour of the Apostolic See,

Bishop of Saint John,

TO THE CLERGY, RELIGIOUS ORDERS AND LAITY OF THE
DIOCESE :

HEALTH AND BENEDICTION IN THE LORD.

DEARLY BELOVED:

With the approach of the Lenten season, we will again be exhorted by Holy Church to "rise from sleep," "to bring forth fruits worthy of penance." There can be no such fruit unless we take up the work in the spirit of our Lord, realizing what Saint Paul said: "And they that are Christ's, have crucified their flesh, with the vices and concupiscences."—*Galat. V. 24*. To be truly Christian, therefore, we must deny ourselves and mortify our passions; and, with the recurrence of the penitential season, we must arouse ourselves to greater earnestness in this salutary practice.

There are many vices, or rather demons through the vices, against which we must not cease to fight, if we would save our souls. How far-reaching, for instance, is the mischief caused by Pride! Once it has taken possession of the soul, it so corrupts a man that he will no longer recognize God's presence in the world, or hear His voice, or obey His Law. That man goes on blindly to his ruin. The victims of Impurity are just as numerous, and as surely doomed. They seek and find passing contentment in carnal pleasures, which destroy their spiritual powers and stifle all divine aspirations. There is Sloth, too, or spiritual laziness, which lulls men into a destructive sleep, making them believe that the world is sweet and pleasant, and that religion is harsh and impossible. So numerous are the vices, or

demons, that we can scarcely name them; yet we must fight them, or perish. Three others deserve notice, for they are prevalent and far-reaching in modern times. They are subtle, but destructive; insidious, scarcely allowing their victims to suspect their presence: they are Hatred, Dishonesty, and Love of Money. These must be crucified, if we wish to be Christ's; but they can be subdued only by a fierce and prolonged struggle. The fight will be serious and unceasing; there can be no truce, no surrender, without grave risk of everlasting perdition.

There is still another, which, in various ways, differs from the rest, and which, therefore, at times demands fuller consideration. It is less innate, less inherent to our nature than the rest; it may, nevertheless, be a fruitful mother to them all. Right on through history, it has demanded the attention of moralists; just now, it has all the world concerned, and no place more earnestly than our American continent. In the Councils of the State as well as of the Church, it calls for deliberation as to the means for its suppression. Every one knows it,—for we speak of Drunkenness. The states and provinces of the whole continent are grappling with the evil, and with gratifying success; the Councils and Synods of the universal Church are deliberating to devise the most efficacious means of reforming and saving its unfortunate slaves. What the Irish Bishops, once assembled in Synod at Maynooth, said of their children at home, may be affirmed, with equal truth, of many other nations, and not least perhaps of our own country: "To drunkenness we may refer, as to the baneful cause, almost all the crime by which the country is degraded, and nearly all the poverty from which it suffers. Drunkenness has wrecked more homes once happy than ever fell beneath the crowbar in the worst days of eviction; it has filled more graves and made more widows and orphans than did the famine; it has broken more hearts, blighted more homes and rent asunder family ties more ruthlessly than the enforced exile to which their misery has condemned emigrants."

Too often, it may be, we are so familiar with the scenes and effects of this vice, that we do not reflect on their terrible reality. It is worth while to pause a little now, to bring the gravity of

the matter home to us. The subject is not pleasant, but it demands consideration.

Man was created after the three Divine Persons of the Blessed Trinity had taken counsel together: "A little less than the angels," God created him. Look at the man passing through the grades of drunken revelry. With his first drink, his thirst is slaked, nature is satisfied; with the second, comes a joviality which for him is at least questionable; with the third, comes a delight which is not free from passion; while with the fourth and the following drinks, come drunkenness, madness, and insanity. During the early stages, the Christian is fast vanishing; vulgarity becomes wit, and obscenity, humour; drunken stupor soon overwhelms him; the man is gone, a worse than the brute lies in his place. What a spectacle to his fellow-men! What to the angels, a little less than whom he was created! To the Saints, the just made perfect in the land of the living! To Him who died to raise fallen humanity! The Son of God assumed human nature to redeem it, to raise it to the Divine; this man has degraded it below the nature of beasts. He has no intelligence left, his freedom of will is gone; there is no evidence that he has a soul: it is dead—more, buried in his miserable flesh. It was a pagan who wrote: 'Drunkenness knocks down the man, and nails him to the sensual intermixtures of his body.' And too often he has a wife, a family. What misery is theirs! Hunger, rags, cold—we stop. "Adam where art thou," demanded the Lord God of the first guilty man after his fall. God knew where Adam was. It was the divine image effaced by sin, the life of grace destroyed, that He sought. What would He say to the drunkard, as pictured lying before us? "Render an account of thy talents; thy intelligence, thy will, thy Baptism! They are destroyed."

No other sin makes a man so helpless before Heaven. However abandoned by grace, however sunk in crime of any other nature, a sinner has intelligence left by which he can turn to God in prayer, a will by which to repent of his folly. The drunkard has neither intelligence nor will left, by which to pray or repent. Is the picture exaggerated? No, there can be no

exaggeration of such degradation. He is more obnoxious than the madman, more contemptible than the demoniac. These are objects of pity, for they are afflicted through perhaps no fault of their own; the drunkard deserves but scorn, for he has debased his very manhood. He has brought the curse of God upon his home, he has closed the gates of Heaven against himself. Are we too severe? Listen to Saint Paul. Make no mistake, says the inspired Apostle: "Neither fornicators, nor idolators, nor thieves, nor drunkards shall possess the Kingdom of Heaven." — 1 *Cor.* VI. 9, 10. Here we have the drunkard classed with the worst of criminals — idolators, adulterers, thieves — and the gates of Heaven closed against him; and that by the Apostle of the Gentiles.

Let us see further what the Bible says about the drunkard, for the inspired Word can make no mistake. The wise man tells us that the woes of Heaven, that is, the curse of God, fall thick and fast upon him: "Who hath woe? Whose father hath woe? Who hath contentions? Who falls into pits? Who hath wounds without cause? Who hath redness of eyes? Surely they that pass their time in wine, and study to drink up their cups." — *Prov.* XXIII. 29, 30. And *Isaias* speaks to the same purpose: "Woe to you that rise up early in the morning to follow drunkenness, and to drink till the evening, to be inflamed with wine. Woe to you that are mighty to drink wine, and are stout men at drunkenness. Woe to the crown of pride, to the drunkards of Ephraim. The crown of pride of the drunkards of Ephraim shall be trodden under foot." — *Isaias* V. 11, 22; XXVIII. 1, 3.

No words of ours can add anything to such fearful denunciations of inspired penmen. Compared with other sins, it ranks with the worst; we may say, that its enormity is increased by the fact that it may become the mother of any or all of them. Indeed, we can scarcely consider drunkenness alone, for it is always followed by an unholy brood of crimes. In itself, it is but the starting point on the way to perdition. In its wake, follow idleness, carelessness, evil company, profanity, debauchery, gambling, destruction of property, ruin of family, disease, death

in abandonment and impenitence. These are a few of the many vices that follow in the drunkard's course. We are convinced of this truth, appalled at its narration. We wonder not that the Apostle of the Gentiles saw, in the light of inspiration, the gates of Heaven closed against him.

"I have not gone that far," we are prepared to hear addressed to us on all sides. We answer: You have not come to such excesses, Heaven forbid it! You have not yet run the full course of the drunkard; but you have made a beginning; the habit of drink is growing; your haste to excuse it shows how insidiously it is growing. Any or all of these excesses are yawning before you. No drunkard ever makes and keeps the promise, "I will go so far, but no further," unless accident or death come to make his downward progress impossible.

That this pestilential vice is widespread around us, we have but to open our eyes and look. Nearly any day on the streets, the eye and the ear may be sadly regaled by the sight and profanity of "one more unfortunate." The prison statistics and the penitentiary records throughout the Dominion, are afflicting testimonies to the ravages on the moral and social order of the Commonwealth. The well-being of the individual, of the family, of the public, is at stake. It is everyone's duty to be interested. The evil, though still vigorous and bent on its destructive course, may yet be conquered, if we can secure the good will and hearty co-operation of the great multitude not yet reduced to miserable slavery.

It is for this reason that we make the call to arms, as we would if some destructive epidemic were breaking out over the country. Such a passing visitation would not destroy as many as we know to be falling under the scourge of intemperance. We find an eminent statesman declaring, that this is an evil more to be feared than the three historic foes of humanity — war, famine and pestilence.

Nor are all those of the household of the faith, by any means, free from the meshes of this scourge,— to the scandal of those around us, and to the affliction of their Mother, the Church. There are some who call themselves Catholics — and are such

only in name — who drag that hallowed name into the mire of iniquity, swelling the prison rolls by their drunken excesses. Their families suffer, their friends weep, the Church blushes: the malediction of Heaven awaits them.

This is no time to tone down truth until it becomes falsehood. Let us look the evil in the face. What is it that fills many homes with misery and wretchedness, that leaves the children hungry and ragged, that makes the streets resound with profanity and worse, that makes the prejudiced fling prison statistics at us, that makes the scornful point at us, and, awful to think, destroys immortal souls for which our Saviour died, sending them before their Judge with the brand of hell upon their brow,— what is it? It is the mad passion for the intoxicating cup.

Now, what are we to do? How lift the cloud that sadly envelopes so many souls for whom the Precious Blood was freely shed? There are many, thank God, who are free from the vice we deplore; but we are not thereby without care for our less fortunate brothers. We must not say to God, as did wicked Cain, "Am I my brother's keeper?" Let us rather admit with Saint Paul: "Yourselves have learned of God to love one another."—*I. Thess. IV. 9.* Again, therefore, we ask, what are we to do?

Among the very first principles of religion, we remember that we were strongly impressed with the necessity of avoiding the occasions of sin; and this principle is founded on the word of God: "He that loveth danger shall perish in it."—*Eccles. III. 27.* This principle can be applied to no one with more truth and justice, than to the man or woman who is conscious of weakness in regard to drink. For such a one, certain places, persons or actions that are perfectly harmless to others, are deadly sin. For a man with the drink craving, there is absolutely no remedy, unless he shun as a pestilence the presence both of liquors and drinkers. World-wide experience illustrates the truth of what the Holy Ghost said about loving the danger; and such a man can no more enter a bar-room with safety, than he can place his neck on the rails before the onrushing train. He can no more take a drink with a friend without fear of

drunkenness, than he can swallow a deadly poison without danger of death. The drink that may be without sin in another, is a real crime in him. As he hopes for salvation, he can only attain it by shunning, as he would a rattlesnake, the places and the persons that are to him the occasions of temptation. We may declare with assurance that, no matter how safe one may consider himself, everyone is obliged to strict temperance even in the lawful use of stimulants, to avoid visiting bar-rooms without necessity, to shun the companionship of drinkers. In these is a real danger; and the Spirit of God, who never speaks without a purpose, has warned us: "He that loveth danger shall perish in it."

Not less guilty before God, than the unfortunate himself, is the false friend or the bar-keeper who places temptation in his way. He who offers to treat one whom he knows to have a weakness for drink, or the dealer who sells to such a one, is as guilty before high heaven as Cain who killed his brother. Here we might well appeal to all Christians, never to put temptation in the way of a neighbour by offering to treat him to intoxicating drink. The vast armies swelling and increasing the ranks of drunkards throughout the world, are largely formed by sociability. Only the few crave for drink by nature, and these would easily overcome the beginnings, were they not led on by experienced hands. Scarcely any ever learn alone to go to excess. The young see their elders drink, and are but too prone to imitation. In too many places, there is the public house every few paces along the street. Thus, temptations are multiplied for the young, the poor, the miserable, and the working man. Within these shops, everything is inviting to the wretched and the unfortunate,—there is light, warmth, joviality, alcohol in various forms, that will throw a passing forgetfulness over their troubles; though this is but too often followed by the deadly consequences of drunkenness.

So deplorable and so widespread, as we have seen, are these consequences in our country, that it is the duty of all to make efforts and sacrifices to this end,—that temptations may be lessened and that the weak and tempted may be helped and

rescued. Hence, we look with favour and benediction on the efforts, whether made by Church or State, to confine liquor-stores to that number which is strictly necessary to the legitimate wants of the community; and to see that those who are granted licenses, observe the law regulating the traffic and the principles of Christian morality. Otherwise, the license itself becomes a crime and a cruelty; since it is used without charity or justice, and for the ruin and desolation of individuals and families. Such licenses, far from bringing profit to the municipality, gravely injure it; for they promote the sale of alcoholic liquors, whose abuse impoverishes the people and desolates their homes.

If not in itself a sin to sell wine or spirits, the business is dangerous to such an extent that only the great profits accruing can make men unmindful of their risk of perdition. The bar-keeper is constantly handling a real poison, and he must exercise great prudence as a truly conscientious man, to prevent that poison from bringing death to the bodies and damnation to the souls of his patrons. This is a fact that no one questions. Hence the greatness of the temptation to the man who is in haste to get rich, even though it cost the life and salvation of his clients. Nay, so seared may his conscience become, that he may even wish these to be more numerous and more prodigal, that he may make the more money.

Now:—Some weighty, but perfectly non-personal questions;—questions that can, only through double glasses, be construed as objectionable by any honourable man.

Is there a liquor-dealer worthy of general esteem, one perfectly respectable in all his relations, one who fears not the anger of God, or the reprobation of wives and mothers? Is there one who has properly obtained a license and conducts his business to meet a legitimate want of the public; who is himself perfectly sober; who does not adulterate his goods or sell them to any one likely to abuse them; who permits no disorder, as blasphemy or indecent language, in his store; who seeks not to evade the law; who incites no one to drink, least of all the young; who never sells to minors; in a word, who is obedient to the civil law and to the principles of Christian charity and justice? Such

a man is a liquor-dealer worthy of respect, and one who has no cause from his business to fear the judgments of God or the reproaches of the public.

But there are others. There are others, who do not follow these wise rules, or act according to these Christian principles. Sad experiences and distressing statistics, are the proofs. We leave it to you to note them, and to form your own opinion of them. To themselves, we would say: it is worth while to examine your conscience in the light of eternity, so soon to open before you. What will your criminal profits avail you, as balanced against your debts to God offended, to individuals destroyed, families desolated, society outraged? Would you save your souls? Get out of a business, in which you are damning yourselves by damning your neighbours.

In fine, to win in this arduous campaign against our vices, the grace of God is necessary. For this we must have recourse to Prayer and the holy Sacraments. God loves us with an infinite love, and desires nothing more ardently than our eternal welfare. He has appointed prayer and the sacraments as infallible means of securing His grace. In the approach of Lent, behold "the acceptable time, the days of salvation," mentioned by Saint Paul. Behold the divinely appointed means of victory in the great warfare with "the vices and concupiscences,"—fly the occasions of sin, be instant in prayer, devoutly frequent the sacraments. Thus will the Christian and social virtues of self-denial and sobriety, with honesty, purity and charity, grow and flourish, to your own peace of mind, to the happiness of your family and to the well-being of Society.

You will receive in the near future the Pastoral Letter of the Fathers of the First Plenary Council of Quebec. The letter will explain the duties of the Catholic in private, domestic and social life. It is to be read in parts to the faithful; and suitable comment may be made by the Pastors.

The regulations for Lent will be the same as last year.

Prayer and self-denial should be generously practiced during the Holy Season, especially in avoiding the occasions of sin, unnecessary amusements and the use of liquor.

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The grace of our Lord Jesus be with you all, Brethren.

This pastoral shall be read in every Church in the Diocese on the first Sunday after its reception that the Pastor officiates therein.



†T. CASEY,
Bishop of Saint John.

A. W. MEAHAN,
Secretary.

Given at St. John, Feast of the Purification, February 2, 1910.

