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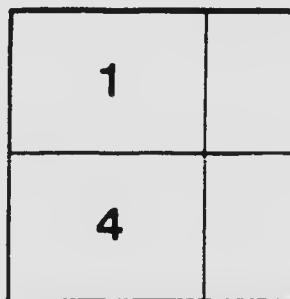
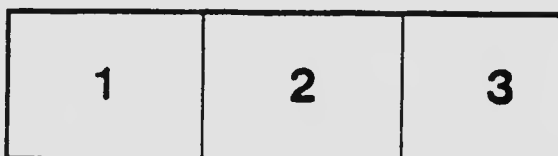
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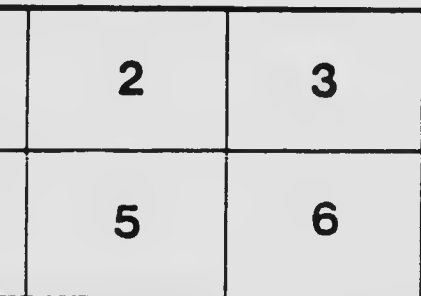
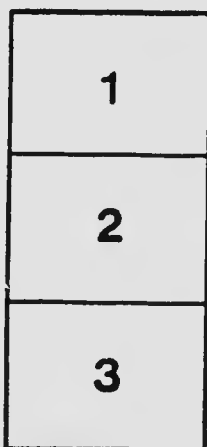
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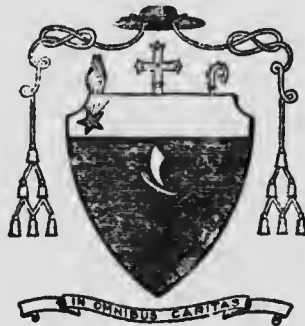
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PASTORAL LETTER
OF THE
Right Rev. E. A. LeBLANC, D.D.
Bishop of St. John
TO
The Clergy and Laity
OF HIS DIOCESE



SAINT JOHN, N. B.

THE SAINT JOHN GLOBE PUBLISHING COMPANY, LIMITED

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Edward,
By the Grace of God and Favor of
The Apostolic See,
Bishop of Saint John,
To the Clergy, Religious Orders and Laity
of the Diocese:
Health and Benediction in the Lord.

DEAR BRETHREN:

In the season of Lent, so close at hand, the Church calls upon us to redouble our efforts for the sanctification of our souls. She reminds us that the gates of mercy are now open, and that the treasures of heaven are at our disposal. Inviting us to "amend and do better for those things in which we have sinned," she assures us that our Divine Lord Whom we have offended, is, in this "acceptable time," in this "day of salvation," more ready than ever to receive all who return to Him with humble and contrite hearts.

Let us heed her voice and determine to spend this holy season as becomes her children. This may be our last Lent, our final call to grace and salvation.

If you look around your parish church, you will find places empty which this time a year ago were occupied by persons whom you knew, friends and neighbors whom you were wont to meet Sunday after Sunday and who have now passed to their account. Little did many of them realize that the Lent of 1914 was to be their last. Before the holy season comes round again, many who are listening to this message shall have likewise gone before God, and shall have heard from His lips the sentence that shall have decided their fate for eternity.

"A certain man had a fig-tree planted in his vineyard and he came seeking fruit on it and found none. And he said to the tiller of the vineyard: Behold these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig-tree and I find none. Cut it down, therefore, why doth it take up the ground?"— *Luke XIII.*, 6, 7.

God comes now seeking in our souls the fruits of true repentance. Let us beware lest in His disappointment at finding none, He may command us to be cut down and cast into the fire.

A very essential thing for retracing our steps during the season of Lent, and turning to God in newness of life, is a deep conviction of the awfulness of sin. The Apostle St. John, writing under the direct inspiration of the Holy Ghost, tells us that the world is seated in wickedness.— *1 John V.*, 19. One of the evil signs of the present day is the general dulling and hardening of the human conscience. People are losing their sense of the enormity of sin. The multitude of men think nothing of habitually violating one or all of God's commandments. Even many who make at least an outward profession of religion, who speak of virtue, morality and principles of honor, care nothing about committing crimes, any one of which, as the Scripture declares, is sufficient to exclude them from the kingdom of heaven. Esau sold his birthright for a mess of pottage, and there are thousands who would sell heaven for just as little, who would barter their soul's salvation for an hour of guilty enjoyment, for one act of profligacy or of secret vice. Brethren, sin always was and always will be offensive to the Almighty, and it behooves us to keep before our minds what faith teaches in regard to this matter, and to insist again and again that sin is not merely an evil but an infinite evil, and the only one of which we need stand in fear or that can do us permanent injury.

So essentially opposed is it to the sanctity of God that nothing can ever justify its commission. Even though a man could secure, by one sin, every possible advantage to himself or to society, or save himself, his family and friends from the loss of everything they hold most dear, no power on earth could sanction or permit its commission; nay, God himself could not allow such

a deviation from His eternal law. It would be setting the seal of approval on that which is evil, and it would be preferable to allow the world to sink in ruin rather than save it by even one venial sin against God. How immeasurable and vast, therefore, what a mysterious evil sin must be!

And this is what men commit with such little scruple! Assuredly there is a want of faith among God's creatures or they would not openly insult the Almighty; they would not rebel against His holy law. Who are we that we should directly violate that right and title which God possesses to our love and obedience; who are we that we should be guilty of such base ingratitude against the Lord?

Do we ever stop to think of the desperate consequences our sins entail? How the commission of even one deliberate mortal sin is sufficient to rob us of divine grace and friendship, to destroy the merit of all our good works, and to bring everlasting death and damnation on the soul. God is infinitely just and merciful. This is almost the first truth taught us by faith and by reason, and yet His justice is every day casting numbers of His creatures into hell because of mortal sin. The sinner deserts God of his own free will, and if he perseveres in his desertion to the end of his life, he has forever made his choice of apostacy from his Creator; and that choice is final, is irrevocable. There is a gulf, after death, between that soul and God which can never be bridged. The communion between that soul and God has been utterly broken down by the voluntary act of the soul itself, and the guilt of mortal sin will never be effaced, but will hold possession of its victim forever.

How easy it is to forget God and to sin! "The world is seated in wickedness," and dangers and temptations surround us on all sides. It only needs a tiny spark of temptation to set our passions ablaze and cause them to burst forth into a raging and destructive fire. At first, however, sin, especially sensual sin, creates a disgust and abhorrence in a hitherto innocent soul. At the beginning of a wicked career, there arises in the sinner a longing to throw off the weight of his increasing burden. He

is ready to cry out with King David: "My iniquities are gone over my head, and as a heavy burden are become heavy upon me."—*Psalms XXXVII.*, 5. But if he goes on grovelling in sin, if he continues to turn a deaf ear to the inspirations of grace, he becomes accustomed by degrees to his terrible state, and sinking lower and lower in crime, he ends by becoming completely hardened in evil and insensible to every call of God. Of obdurate sinners the Inspired Writer declares: "They leave the right way and walk by dark ways; they are glad when they have done evil and rejoice in most wicked things."—*Prov. II.*, 13, 14.

Brethren, the struggle against evil demands labor and energy. No man who has remained in sin for years, until transgressions of the deepest dye have become a habit, can reasonably expect to overcome them without much anxious toil and continued self-denial. Such a fight, in the beginning, requires courage and determination. But the fight must be made; on the issue depends eternity.

And no man, who has been so unfortunate as to become entangled in the proximate and voluntary occasion of sin, can entertain the slightest hope of recovering or retaining the grace of God unless he first abandon that which has been the cause of his ruin. Of this the Holy Ghost Himself assures us when He says: "He that loveth danger shall perish in it."—*Eccls. III.*, 27. In common warfare, he who flees before the enemy is accounted a coward, but when the interests of our souls are at stake, christian heroism is shown not by meeting the foe in open combat but by flight. The man who is not ready to practice this heroism will assuredly fall.

Furthermore, a certain amount of bodily mortification is a matter of vital necessity for us all. Sin comes from following the inclinations of corrupt nature and indulging its forbidden pleasure. The remedy of sin and its preventive are found in thwarting these disorderly cravings and retrenching even lawful pleasures. This we are taught by the words and conduct of all God's holy servants under the old law and the new; nay more, by the teaching and example of our Divine Lord Himself.

This doctrine of bodily mortification meets indeed with opposition from those who strive to tone down the Gospel severity, to smooth the road to heaven, to widen it beyond the bounds set by Christ, and to substitute the flowers of pleasure for the thorns of tribulation and suffering. Not such, brethren, be your spirit, else you follow not in the footsteps of your crucified Saviour.

It is by no means pleasant to deny ourselves what nature craves and to perform acts of mortification and penance. But surely no disciple of Christ expects to receive the promised crown, unless he denies himself and takes up his cross and follows his Divine Master. See what hardships the valiant soldier endures in defence of his country's honor or in pursuit of worldly fame! And shall we, soldiers of Christ, show ourselves faint-hearted and cowardly in the battle which we are pledged to wage against the enemies who would rob us of eternal honors? These enemies are the world, the flesh and the devil. The world spreads before us its deceptive pleasures and enticing gaieties, the flesh is ever begging the indulgence of the baser passions, whilst the devil, as St. Peter assures us, is always going about like a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour, never idle in his wicked work of picturing to the sons of men the fascinating but false attractions of sin. Now, we shall hope in vain to conquer these enemies of our salvation if we do not mortify our bodies and seek in prayer and union with God that supernatural strength by which alone the tempter can be overcome. These are the victorious arms which have always been used in the Christian warfare.

Dear brethren, begin at once a sincere repentance of past transgressions, and resolve, by the grace of God, to walk for the future in the path of His commandments. Lose no time, while the day of mercy lasts, to seek His pardon and to be reconciled with Him. Remember our Lord's words: "There shall be joy in heaven upon one sinner that doth penance, more than upon ninety-nine just who need not penance."—*Luke XV.*, 7. May God, in His infinite goodness, grant to each and all of us, for the sake of the sufferings and death of His Divine Son, that we

may so make our peace with Him here that we may be permitted to share His glory hereafter.

. . .

You are aware, beloved brethren, that the principal nations of Europe are still engaged in the most dreadful struggle hitherto recorded in the history of humanity. "The dread image of war," says our Holy Father, Benedict XV, "overshadows the world, and absorbs nearly every thought. The strongest and wealthiest nations are in conflict. What wonder, then, that furnished as they are with the latest weapons devised by military science, their struggle is causing enormous slaughter. There is no end to the ruin; no end to the deaths; each day sees the earth covered with dead and wounded. Who would think that the nations thus armed against each other are all descended from one ancestor, share the same nature, belong to the same family? Who could realize that they are brethren, children of the same Father in heaven? And while the mighty hosts are contending in the fury of combat, cities, families, individuals are being oppressed by those evils and miseries which follow at the heels of war; day by day, the numbers of widows and orphans increase; the paths of commerce are blocked, the fields are left untilled, the arts of industry are at a standstill; the rich are made poor, the poor still more destitute; all are made to mourn."

After depicting this appalling condition of affairs, the Holy Father goes on to indicate and describe more fully the underlying causes of the terrible conflict. These are: The lack of mutual love among men; the widespread disregard for authority; unjust quarrels among the various classes of society, material prosperity having become the absorbing object of human endeavor, as though there were nothing higher or better to be gained.

We must labor earnestly, therefore, says the Pontiff, by putting in practice christian principles, to remove such disorders from our midst, if indeed we have at heart the common welfare.

Out of all the evil in the world to-day, let us hope that good

may come. The war is undoubtedly a chastisement from God for the sins of men. Only by humbling ourselves under His mighty hand, acknowledging that we deserve His punishments, and by amending our evil ways, may we expect Him to heed our prayer to bestow the blessing of peace on suffering humanity.

. . .

We would again strongly recommend our people to abstain from intoxicating liquor at all times, particularly during the penitential season of Lent. There is no habit more easily contracted, or more difficult to eradicate when acquired, than that of drinking liquor; nor is there one more productive of dire consequences to the individual, to the family and to society. At the present time when, owing to the war, many find it difficult to secure employment, and others are working on short hours and money is scarce, it is doubly incumbent on the working classes not to squander in liquor, the earnings which they may sorely need for the maintenance of their wives and families.

Once more we recommend, wherever it can be done, that, at least twice a week, public services be held in the churches during Lent at such hours as the Reverend Clergy may judge most convenient. Pastors will urge their people to hear Mass daily as far as possible, and to assist at the other offices of the Church.

We admonish all the faithful under our charge of the grave obligation of complying with the Easter duty. The highest and holiest action a Christian is capable of performing is that of receiving the Body and Blood of his Lord. The time during which this communion must be made begins on Ash Wednesday, February 17th, and ends on Trinity Sunday, May 30th. Parents should see that their children who have attained the use of reason, comply with the Paschal precept.

In conclusion, dear brethren, we pray that the blessing of God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, may descend upon you and remain with you forever.

The Very Reverend John J. Walsh, pastor of Holy Trinity Church, has been appointed Vicar General in succession to the late Monsignor Chapman.

The Reverend Clergy will read this letter to their congregations on the first Sunday after its reception.

Given from our residence in St. John on the feast of our Lady of Lourdes, February 11th, 1915.

† E. A. LEBLANC,
Bishop of St. John.

W. M. DUKE,
Chancellor.

N. B.—The Regulations for Lent are as follows:

1. All the days of Lent, except Sundays, are days of fast and abstinence on one meal and a collation, and are of obligation for all persons of the age of twenty-one years and upwards, except those who are excused by hard labor, ill health or other legitimate reasons.

2. Those who are obliged to fast are allowed, by the custom of this country, to take, in the morning, a cup of tea or coffee with a little bread.

3. By dispensation from the Holy See, the use of flesh meat is permitted at every meal on Sundays, and once each day at the principal meal on Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays, except Ember Saturday and Saturday in Holy Week.

4. The use of lard or dripping is permitted in cooking fish and vegetables, not only during Lent but also on days of fast and abstinence throughout the year, except Ash Wednesday, Good Friday, and the Vigil of the Nativity of Our Lord.

5. It is not permitted, during Lent, to use fish and flesh meat at the same meal, not even on Sundays.



