A Discourse for the 1st Sunday of Lent.

On Fasting and Abstinence.

Non in solo pane vivit homo.
Man liveth not by bread only St. Mat. Chap. 15.

Among the humiliating necessities of man in this vale of tears, one of the most principal is that of eating and drinking. For what is more base and object than to be obliged to seek for a corruptible nourishment in the entrails of the earth, from the depths of the water, and by depriving different species of Animals of Life? But how astonishing it is that this necessity which abuses us so much and makes us as it were level with in the rank of Beasts is become among sensual men and even too often among those who make profession of a spiritual life the object of their pleasures and of their most earnest desires. What then must that which ought to cause Christians to humble themselves and
lament their necessities, serve them as an amusement to win for them only occupation and study. Oh, sad and deplorable condition! I was necessary for God to set bounds to this insatiable appetite, and for the Church to exert her authority to prevent man from becoming a slave to his belly. Nothing and abstinence are the first that must be used to restrain this brutal passion; they are the means to stop this insatiable torrent. This I propose for your health entertainment. In the first part, I mean to show you what regards the practice of fasting and abstinence, and in the second, various duties which ought to engage me to observe in abstinence and fasting.

Abstinence and fasting are the deprivation of food. By abstinence, considered in itself, we understand the abstaining from flesh meat and those things that appertain thereto. It is unnecessary to enter into any further explanation on this head as I am pretty sure you know both the meaning of abstinence and the times when it is to be observed.

Hence I shall confine myself chiefly to the other subject viz. that of fasting, which is much more early understood as man is so prone to listen to the dictates of corrupt nature which teaches him so to mitigate it as almost if not wholly to destroy it.

To come then to the point, there are two different kinds of fasts. The one is called the natural fast which consists in taking nothing at all either by way of food or medicine or any other thing. This fast is required in all who approach the holy Eucharist, unless when it is received by way of Viaticum. The other is called the Ecclesiastical fast and is that of which I am speaking. This consists in taking nothing but one meal a day of such meat as are permitted and that not till about midday and a collation at night. This is a fast which the Church obliges all her children to observe under pain of mortal sin on certain days which are all but the Sundays excepted.
The Ember days and certain festivals are
under most sin for every transgression
that is to say every day that they omit
it unless they have lawful reasons to
dis pense them therein. This cannot be
called in question. The law is clear. The
Church has received that power and
authority from God himself. This not Catholic
can dispute. The question now is in what
manner we are to fulfill this obligation
who are exempt from it. We have
already shewed that the Ecclesiastical
fast consists in making but one meal
a day of each meat as are permitted and
that ought to be of unguaranteed food unless the
Church by reasons known to her presides
herein. Thus you are permitted to
dine at their meal on certain days.
This meal ought not to be made till after
middles and of even should make it a consid-
erate time before you would not satisfy
the precept. Besides this meal the Church
tolerates a collation or small refectory at
night, in which regard must be had both
as to the quantity and quality of the
food. As to the quantity one can
say.

Any first rule. Attention must be had to the
constitution and occupations. Hence
the best is to consider not how much may
be allowed as how little will suffice. As
to the quality, we are not to use very
eggs, cheese butter, milk. These might be
some allowance made to some poor
people who would have nothing but
rice to their bread for this they should
apply to their pastor as likewise in
all other doubts and difficulties.
Besides this a little of bread and a cup
of tea or such like is tolerated in the
morning.

Let us now examine the excuses
which people allege to dispense them
from fasting and endeavours to distinguish
the good and lawful ones from them that
are false and insufficient. Premature
principal ones, which are age, poverty,
poverty, and labors. The first excuse
which is alleged against the Lord’s fasting
is age, that persons are either to young
or to much advanced in years. As to young
people the Theologians agree that they are
not ordinarily obliged to fast before. They
have attained to the age of 21, are ordinarily
for the same Doctor teach that young
persons ought to exercise themselves more
or less, according to their strength. For example
one or two days a week, in order to accustom
themselves by degrees to the practice of
it, without however obliging them to it
under mortal sin. They add however that
if a young person be addicted to gluttony
or inordinacy, and that fasting be absolutely
necessary to overcome, he is then strictly
obliged thereto, because the most efficacious
means ought to be employed for his conversion;
as his salvation being above everything
else. As to people advanced in age, the
Camistos do not decide any thing particularly
so that it ought to be established as a
Doctrine that they are obliged there unto
as long as their strength will permit
them the practice of it.

The second excuse alleged to excuse
them from fasting is infirmity. Any
lawful excuse when sickness or infirmity
are such that they cannot observe the law
of fasting with considerable detriment
to their health. A weak person who should
fast through obstinacy and thereby put himself
in danger of death or of being a long time
ill, far from doing a work agreeable
to God would render himself guilty of
a considerable fault. But there are people
who do quite the reverse to the Saints;
mentioned in the Holy Gospel who insisted
that they might appear pale and disfigured;
then are led to appear so that they may
be looked upon as unable to fast, that
pretend to be ill when they are well. This
comes it is true, that find some inconveniency
from fasting but it is so slight as to be
insufficient to exempt them from it.
Some times their complaint is of such a
nature, that fasting as the best remedy
for it. Ah, my Brethren, how many people
will there not be condemned at the
Tribunal of the Divine justice for having
disregarded this law of God and ordinance
of His Church? They may deceive themselves
and impose upon man but they cannot
impose upon an omniscient God.
The third excuse against the law of fasting
is poverty. A poor person with ambition
with to make a sufficient meal at the
breakfast prescribed for the observation of
fasting nor God capable of supporting him
in the observance of fasting, he is not obliged to it; but if he have those circumstances, he is not exempt from the law of fasting unless he hath other reasons that may dispense with him.

Finally, the 7th reason brought against the law of fasting is labour. Upon which head we ought to distinguish two sorts of work. The first consists of labour and toil, and the second of constitutions. Labour may be incompatible with fasting in a weak person or not so in a strong one. There are violent labours and those that are not so. This supposed I say with the Caristos, that the general rule is this: when work is incompatible with fasting, that is when a person cannot do his work and partake of it, he is not exempt, but because the work is very hard or that the person is of a weakly constitution, there is a lawful excuse. But if in the contrary the work is not incompatible with fasting either because the work is not very heavy or because the person is very strong and healthy, then he is no means exempted from the obligation of fasting. And this every one ought to endeavour justice to himself, to act over the better guidance.

The great advantages which are reaped from fasting and abstinence are very powerful motives to engage us to practice them. They are temporal and corporeal, spiritual and eternal. I say in the first place that fasting and abstinence
Procure men many very considerable temporal advantages. If there is nothing that occasions more nobleness and infirmity, and causes the death of more people than gluttony and idleness, so there is nothing that contributes more to health and to the prolongation of life than temperance and sobriety. Experience excludes all doubt. And the reason is very plain, for it to great a quantity of food only seems to produce a great

of what they saw by abstinence, to save them in their future wants, and the flesh ought to employ what they gave Honour in alms, as St. Leo remarks.

There is a much greater advantage which St. Aetius speaks of regarding the spiritual life. Fasting pangs wicked spirits to death. Such bad thoughts it renders the understanding susceptible of the light of Heaven, which is the heart and soul of the whole man. There is no occasion for the

of His hangings, nor as gluttony at man at a great distance from God, attaches him to the earth and goments his passions, fasting on the contrary, softens and abstinence

from near to his Creator, detaches him

wholly spiritual, abides the arrows of his passions and brings him to the practice of all kinds of virtue. It follows likewise, that nothing is more conducive to the human conversion and getting more conducive to

the principal end of your fasting, since aversion may arise place there your principal intention in fasting should be the glory of God and the sanctification of your souls. However the dear may profit.
that which hath sanctified all the servants of God who have arrived at the haven of salve. And among those who have arrived at this degree of perfection, as many heroes of religion as many illustrious pastors and preachers who have been much prodigal of patience and love, a single one among them stood out and was not a fainting, abstinence, and mortification, to render himself victorious over the enemies of his salvation. What example is there in the Holy Scriptures? Of the admirable effects of the providence and power of God, who is able to receive from the throne of grace, the table of the law written by the hand of God himself. Else by a like fast, had the people of the Almighty in so much armor, not a single man could be capable of the Minions' thunders with the dreadful effects of God's anger. For if Job, the wise man, appeared in this world by the mouth of a revelation, the Jews escaped the greatest change by the same means. If there were one man in the land, who could not be burned by the Minions' thunders with the dreadful effects of God's anger, the wise man, the so-called Job, would have been the first to call to the Lord. And in fact, that concern, that burden, that woe, that pain, that sorrow, all the means of God's power and strength, that burden, that woe, that pain, that sorrow, were such that the Lord gave him strength and delivered him. And so, the wise man, the so-called Job, was delivered by the Lord. And if there were one man in the land, who could not be burned by the Minions' thunders with the dreadful effects of God's anger, the wise man, the so-called Job, would have been the first to call to the Lord. And in fact, that concern, that burden, that woe, that pain, that sorrow, all the means of God's power and strength, that burden, that woe, that pain, that sorrow, were such that the Lord gave him strength and delivered him.

for he says himself, that he did eat ashes as bread and mingled his drink with wormwood, and that he became acquainted with the grief and misery that his bones cleaved to his body. Jesus Christ, the Saviour of the world, would begin his teaching and prepare the way for the great work of his redemption by a most rigorous fast of 40 days, the memory of which is still honoured in this holy time. This is to set the example to his Church and thus the method of not being willing in some manner to mitigate her divine grace, the bath also in this prayer exercise and habit preserved. The prayer of the righteous man, one continues. The life of the righteous man, one continuous. The prayer of the righteous man, one continuous. The prayer of the righteous man, one continuous.

In every age and to all the true servants of God, all the true servants of God have been offered, all the true servants of God have been offered, all the true servants of God have been offered.
What a difference between the past at present and those of the Primitive Church! In the first ages of the Church Christianity, during that period, people ate but once a day and then not till towards night. Their food was fruits, roots, and bread, accepting those of a weak constitution were allowed some small fishes, but the larger ones were forbidden. Those who did not observe the fast stood not to run out of their homes lest they should escape like a penitential. But at present how can the observation of fasts be permitted? If we take our meal about Midday and to eat all sorts of meat, and very often on certain days, even the Church tolerates a relaxation as particularly when we need more or as occasion made before some little. It is also tolerated in the morning. With these mitigations are not those Christians who transgress so easily a law without just reasons extremely culpable.

Finally, the 20th motive to engage us to the observance of fasting is the third advantage that reaped from it, and which is of infinite benefit to all the other, that is, the eternal reward that fasting and almsgiving procure us. It is by fasting and almsgiving that the gates of Heaven will be opened. Those in the last moments of life by fasting it was shown against us, that fasting will merit for us a Heaven.
Joins with Christian virtues. This is also the aecy
able time in which we ought to understand the
spiritual cure of sinners of the change of their
life; they ought with great expedition to press
them selves for that purpose. They must then
now begin to prepare themselves to make a
good Confession, make a serious examen of
their conscience, they must abandon sin, break
off all from all criminal habits, quit the
immediate occasions of sin, reconcile them
selves with their enemies, restore the goods
of their neighbours, repair his honor and
reputation if they have lost or taken them away;
be instructed in the truths of religion and
the duties of their state if they are ignorant
of them; practice the duties incumbent to their
state of life, and the works of mercy corporal
and spiritual.

This is what is called observing the spiritual
fast, without which the corporal fast will have
nothing unto eternal life. With you, says St. Peter,
that your fast be agreeable to the Lord. It must
be universal, that is it must extend over the soul
the soul as well as the body, over all the passions
over all the senses, interior and exterior; how
make your mouth and stomach fast, let your eyes
fast also that they look not on any dishonourable
or let your tongue be fast by not uttering any word;
let your ears be fast by not hearing to detraction
or fanatic and dangerous discourse, let your hands be fast
not doing any works of miquity. Let your imagination
your mind and heart fast by attending from them all
good things. Two if you fast eat yet it is not the fast. What
the fast is the part which abstinence and or hunger and or fasting with
consolation for you may be styled. It is the least of the ascetical
urban it is the state of a poor that you have the happiness to find yourselves in, the state of a poor
spiritual resurrection, which may God in his infinite mercy grant.