

DEVOTIONAL DOCTRINAL LITURGICAL

THE LENTEN SEASON.

The Church clothes herself in penitential garb and asks her children to unite with her in considering the passion and death of our Lord and Savior. To the wilds and the solitude of the desert she leads us in spirit and asks us there to behold our beloved Lord fasting forty days and nights in preparation for His passion and death.

Holy Church would have us enter into our Divine Lord's thoughts and there see revealed His love for every one of us by the atonement He makes in our behalf and the infinite graces He lays up to save us. She bids us realize that as long as we call upon Him to save us by the application in the holy sacraments of the infinite merits of His passion, He will hear our call.

Our Lord's life on earth was indeed a hidden life. For thirty years He lived in the obscurity of Nazareth, and even in His three years' public life, we read of Him more in the hamlet than the city; on the mountain, in the desert, and by the sea. And so He climaxed this spirit of seclusion and retirement by His forty days' preparation for His suffering and death.

Did He not do all this to teach us and get us to imitate Him? He needed no solitude to bind Him to His Father, for He never was separated from Him. He did all this for example, that we who know and meet the evils and see the dangers of unrestraint might the more readily practice mortification of spirit and betake ourselves at least from time to time to seclusion and solitude.

Lent is the time that most favors this. It is a time set apart by the Church for prayer and fasting—for restraint, recollection and piety. The good Catholic conforms, everyone who desires to save his soul responds and so marked and general is the observance of this season that the outside world cannot but notice it and be influenced by it. It is a time of grace and blessing. So the Church proclaims it, and applying the words of St. Paul, that it is "the acceptable time, the day of salvation," bids all the faithful to pass the season in a truly holy and self-denying manner.

Let us, then, respond to the call and always make a good Lent. Its days should be full with mortification of every kind; appetites, senses must all be restrained, lest they lead us to ruin. And while we take our eyes off the things around us, we can look into things unseen; live more in faith and things of the soul than in the idle speculations of the mind and the gross indulgence of the body; live more in the future than in the present; live more in death than in life. And while we thus will be mortifying the bodily man, the spiritual in us will rise to a purer life and to closer union with God, in preparation for the joys of eternity. Let Lent be well passed, and it will be a great means of passing well our whole year afterwards.

And while we are denying the body, cannot we refresh and satiate our soul, if we will, at the banquet of the Holy Table? Let us do so often, that we be nourished and made strong with this bread of life, to ever conquer our temptations and be always united with God and be ever ready to meet Him.

During Lent Holy Mother Church bids her children pause and consider in a serious way how they stand with God. That they may do this the better she sets apart the Lenten season as a time of special devotion. She opens it in the most solemn way by recalling the lowly origin of man's body that he may regulate the unruly passions of his lower nature and bring them into subjection to the soul. "Remember," she says to him, "O man, that thou art dust and into dust shalt thou return." The body upon which you bestow so much thought and care is of little importance in comparison with the immortal soul of which you are heedless. Yet your eternity of happiness or unhappiness depends upon the state of the soul. Do not neglect the body, but do pay some attention to the soul; let it share your solicitude, if it does not engross it.

How necessary this warning of the Church is will appear plain to anyone who weighs in a balance the minutes devoted to the welfare of the soul and of the body. So light is the amount in the soul's scale that it is scarcely appreciable, some ten or fifteen minutes would represent the average, while in the body's scale minutes count up to hours. Yet we claim to be reasonable beings. Judge us by our actions, and do we prove ourselves worthy of the claim? Again, let us test ourselves by our aspirations, and how do we stand? Does the desire of Heaven find a place in our minds and hearts at all? Earth and its vanities are so engrossing that they fill both mind and heart, and even when death approaches and the glamour of the world should have lessened, man still clings to earth and what it has to offer, and it requires an effort to turn the thoughts of the dying man to Heaven and its real enduring joys.

No wonder, then, the Church, fulfilling her duty as the representative of God, endeavors to make man think seriously of his origin and his destiny. No wonder she bids him consider the superior claim of the soul over the body. For the body comes from the dust and shall return to the dust, but the soul comes from the hand of God and is destined to return to Him.

In a true Catholic spirit, then, let us enter on the holy season of Lent. Let the lesson of the ashes placed on our brow on Ash Wednesday be impressed on our hearts. If we cannot observe a rigid fast or even abstinence throughout, but avail ourselves of the dispensations granted by Mother Church to those of her children who by reason of health or work have a right to them, let us at least make up for it by some special act of mortification or devotion. For mortification for men it might be the giving up of all intoxicating drinks in honor of the Sacred Thirst, or foregoing the use of tobacco; for women, the eating of sweets and dainties. For devotion, for both men and women, the best practice would be attendance at week-day mass, the special Lenten services of their church, the stations of the cross, a visit to the Blessed Sacrament, the recitation of the beads or some other suitable prayers. Lent thus spent would indeed be profitable, and a worthy preparation for a joyful Easter and the Paschal communion.

So a good Lent means a good life for another year at least, for this is its purpose, to bring about a better life for everyone. It is a time of reflection and resolution, but, above all, it is a season of grace and strength and blessing which, if corresponded with, renews spiritual life within us, and makes us burn with the love of God and the desire to live for Him alone in the exercise of our faculties and powers. On all sides we see in Lent most edifying examples given us by every grade of society. The tender maiden, the strong mechanic, the ordinary laborer, the banker, the physician, the lawyer, the high-born lady, the steady housewife, the servant maid, the teacher, all are represented by numbers more or less of their class piously passing the Lenten season through the keeping of its fast and observance of its public devotions and exercises. It is a most consoling sight to the clergy, and many a "God bless you" is evoked by them on the good, holy people by their fathers in Christ. Let Lent always mark an era in the sanctification of all.

—From "Seedlings," by Bishop Colton.

HUMAN RESPECT.

By human respect is meant the fear of displeasing the wicked, the fear of being ridiculed and laughed at, of being despised and disliked in our endeavor to serve God faithfully and to save our soul. It is an act of cowardice, which prompts the person who allows it to get the better of him, to offend his God and to run the risk of losing his own soul, rather than incur the chance of being scoffed at by those who are the enemies of God, or of being pointed at as being singular and narrow-minded, because he does not think, speak and act as they do.

Our Blessed Lord has said: "He that is not with Me is against Me; and he that gathereth not with Me, scattereth." (Luke xi., 23.) Our Divine Master wishes us to understand from these words that he who has not the will and the courage to declare himself openly as His disciple is not worthy to be called a disciple, and that he will be looked upon as an enemy rather than as a friend.

If we examine our lives we shall see how often human respect has been the cause of our offending Almighty God. We have but to look around us in this world and we shall see how much the devil makes use of human respect to induce people to commit sin and to neglect the good which they ought to perform.

In addition to avoiding sin, we must also perform good works in order that we may acquire merit during our short stay in this world. We must, therefore, be careful to avoid these obstacles which may make us careless in the performance of this duty. Human respect is one of these obstacles. There are those, perhaps, who will stay away from Mass on Sunday because they think that others may pass remarks upon their clothes, although these clothes are such that are deemed quite good enough to go to places of amusement and so on. They are afraid of their neighbors' remarks, and so out of human respect they will stay away from Holy Mass. Others who have ample time on their hands will not go to Mass on week-days for fear of being pointed at as would-be saints. Others again are afraid of kneeling down to say their prayers or to say their grace before and after meals when in company of those who make light of such things. We even come across some who, when they accompany those who are not of their faith to a Catholic church, are almost timid to genuflect and give due reverence to Our Divine Lord in the Blessed Sacrament.

Let us then renounce all human respect. Let us serve and love God fearlessly, in spite of what the world may say or think of us. And if we have to suffer something sometimes in order to do what is right, let us esteem ourselves happy remembering the words of Holy Writ: "The just shall live for evermore, and their reward is with the Lord and the care of them with the Most High. Therefore shall they receive a kingdom of glory and a crown of beauty at the hand of the Lord." (Wisdom v., 16-17.)

—From a pastoral of the Bishop of Menasha.

SECOND SUNDAY IN LENT.

Epistle: Brethren, We pray and beseech you in the Lord Jesus, that as you have received of us, how you ought to walk, and to please God, so also you would walk, that you may abound the more.

Gospel: And as he was yet speaking, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them; and lo, a voice out of the cloud, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him.

A SAINT FOR THE WEEK.

ST. THOMAS AQUINAS.

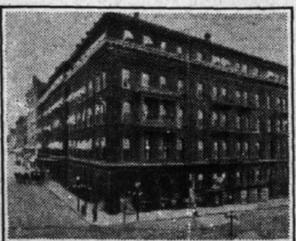
St. Thomas was born of noble parents at Aquino in Italy, in the year 1226. At the age of nineteen he received the Dominican habit at Naples, where he was studying. Seized by his brothers on his way to Paris, he was held captive for two years in their castle at Rocca-Secca; but neither the caresses of his mothers and sisters nor the threats and stratagems of his brothers could shake him in his vocation. While St. Thomas was in confinement at Rocca-Secca, his brothers endeavored to entrap him into sin, but the attempt only ended in the triumph of his purity. Snatching from the hearth a burning brand, the Saint drove from his chamber the wretched creature whom they had there concealed. Then making a cross upon the wall, he knelt down to pray, and forthwith, being rapt in ecstasy, an angel girded him with a cord, in token of the gift of perpetual chastity which God had given him. The pain caused by the girdle was so sharp that St. Thomas uttered a piercing cry, which brought his guards into the room. But he never told this grace to any one save only to F. Raynald, his confessor, a little while before his death.

Having at length escaped, he went to Cologne to study under Blessed Albert the Great, and after that to Paris, where he taught Philosophy and Theology for many years. The Church has ever held his numerous writings in the highest esteem as a treasure-house of sacred doctrine; while in naming him the Angelic Doctor she has indicated that his science is more divine than human. In him the rarest gifts of intellect were combined with the tenderest piety. Prayer, he said, had taught him more than study. His singular devotion to the Blessed Sacrament shines forth in the office and hymns for Corpus Christi which he composed. To the words miraculously uttered by a crucifix at Naples, "Well hast thou written concerning Me, Thomas; what shall I give thee as reward?" he replied, "Nought save Thyself, O Lord." He died at Fossa-Nuova, in 1274, on his way to the General Council of Lyons, to which Pope Gregory X had summoned him.

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THE PARISH PRIEST OF ISLANDMORE.

I.—In the Parish.

Father Michael was parish priest of all the wild district along the coast, and of the islands outside in the ocean. Of these islands one was much larger than the others; and in this had he been born. His father was a poor man like all the islanders; and Father Michael got his college education free, because he chanced to be of the same name as one of the "wild Geese" who had established a bourse in the famous College of Salamanca, in Spain. Failing blood-relations, this bourse was to go, for the time being, to any young Irish student of the name. And so Father Michael got through college, and made good use of his time there. He was doctor both of theology and philosophy; and to look at him you would never think it. In stature he was small like his father; and was everything but distingue in appearance or carriage. There was nevertheless an attraction in the simplicity of his manner; and when you entered his little thatched residence, and were ushered into the one apartment that served for dining-room, sleeping-room, reception-room and library; and to your astonishment saw a fine copy of Suarez side by side with the Salamancaenses and A Lapide on the shelves, you began to think you were in no ordinary man's company.

He had one ambition; it was to build a church on the island where he was born. It was not so much a personal ambition, as a longing that had haunted him from childhood, to serve the island; and this desire he had inherited. It happened thus. From childhood he had seen the dangers that the poor islanders yearly, and monthly, and weekly ran, by night as well as by day, to receive the blessings of the rites of their Church. From his earliest days he had heard his father, longing, with the longing almost of an aged Simeon, to see a church there, and to see a priest there. And the father, good man, left in his last will and testament, "the half-acre at the corner of the borean free, gratis, as long as grass is green, and water runs, for a chapel of the Holy Souls, and the \$100 fortune I got at my eldest son's marriage as my offering to help to build it."

It is no wonder, therefore, that it lay like a treble sacred desire in the depths of the priest's heart. And day by day in his own uninteresting routine—if indeed the common life of any priest can be devoid of interest or of event—he saw the ceaseless dangers to which the poor people were exposed, and to which they sacrilegiously and unhesitatingly exposed themselves. They came to Mass on a Sunday, and wind and tide maybe dangerous as they came to the mainland, or as they returned. They came to the Sacraments; and the like danger threatened. They came with a sick call; and it was the same. He therefore desired with desire to see a church built there.

But there was, superadded to all this, something that he would not let the ground know. He was getting into years. Nature has made a law, that the child after playing during the day will long for its mother's arms in the evening; and the child observes that law. A similar law has nature made for the toddler or totterer of second childhood; and the second child, no less than the first, bows his head after the burden and heat of the day, and longs for rest.

It is not every frame can bear up against the irregular, the necessarily irregular life demanded of the priest. That is true of almost of every priest who has the work of the confessional or the work of the parish, peremptorily calling upon him for continual attendance. But Father Michael had both; and unaided had "to work a parish," that was a dozen or fifteen miles in length, and almost as many in breadth. And the Big Island lay at the farthest extremity of this "stragglesome" parish. If only there was a church there, he would get permission to resign his parish, and serve that, and spend the remainder of his days where he had spent the beginning, saying Mass in the church, reading his Breviary among the limestone rocks, and by the majestic waves.

Now, don't tell it; that was his great secret; that was the darling wish of his heart. Oh, if he saw the walls raised, and the roof laid upon them, and an altar erected! Oh, if he did!

When strangers would come to the place, he would talk of it, as if it was a thing that merely was up in the clouds. And when he came across someone with architectural knowledge, he would say, that "a friend" had some notion of building a church there; and he would endeavor to worm out of him a conjecture as to the probable cost. And talking to some of the priests he would say how happy it would be for the poor islanders if they had a church there; but he spoke as if he himself had no personal interest in the matter at all.

He thought that, with exceptional tact and wisdom, he had concealed his secret. Poor man, everybody knew it; but he thought they did not. And so one day it seemed to him that it was Providence had inspired the Bishop to say to him: "Father Michael, I wish someone would, for charity to God and for compassion on the poor islanders, build a church on this island. I would make him parish priest of it."

"With your permission, may I try, my Lord?"

"Oh, God bless you, Father Michael; I shall be so happy."

"Have I your Lordship's leave and all faculties?"

"Oh, all leave and faculties, and my blessing along with them."

II.—In America.

Father Michael at once made his preparations to go across to America, the Eldorado of the Irish race. But the first thing he did, a thing characteristic of him, was to ask for prayers on all sides. He knew a few convents of nuns, not many, for he was not acquainted with the big world; these he interested in his mission. The people of his own parish, and especially of the Big Island, he bound by promise to recite in their homes the Rosary of the Blessed Virgin Mary for the Holy Souls every night. His undertaking he placed under the protection of St. Joseph and the Poor Souls; and having got a new dark frieze riding-coat, he set out in joy.

Immediately on landing in New York he was interviewed by a friendly paper; and the next morning's issue had a long account of his life and his labors, beginning with Salamanca and its honors, and ending with his parish and its necessities. There were sketches of the Big Island with the tempestuous waves breaking against it, and a fair representation of the priest himself with his kindly face and weather-beaten hat, and papers and magazines bulging in volumes from the two side pockets of his riding coat. The letterpress and sketches would have interested the greatest stranger.

The morning paper, however, like "the certain man that went down to Jericho, fell among robbers."

"I want a dollar for charity," cried one of the robbers to his leader, and he held the paper in his hand.

"A dollar for charity! Give 'Snipe' a dollar for charity!" laughed the rest.

"Yes, a dollar for charity!" insisted "Snipe."

"A dollar for charity! What charity?" they cried.

"For this charity! There is money in that bloke," he said, pointing with his finger to the priest's photo in the paper.

"How? Isn't it the way that bloke is looking for money?" they asked, chaffing.

"Give me the money and one hour, and I'll show you there's money in him," said "Snipe."

"Give him the money," they cried, "give him the money."

He got the dollar, and went to find Father Michael. A few had already called on the priest.

"God bless you, Father; welcome from the old sod," said "Snipe."

"Are you Irish?" said Father Michael.

"From the heart of Tipperary, your Reverence. My mother was Lanigan, bred and born be the Rock of Cashel; and my father was one of the Ryans of Aherlow. And there's a dollar for your Reverence."

"God bless you for your kindness. Are you married, have you children?" enquired the priest.

"Troth, then, I am married, your Reverence, and no less than a baker's dozen of the craters do be shoutin' for bread."

"It is not fair for me to take this from you. I could not take it from you," he cried solemnly. "My conscience would not allow me. God bless you, my good man, keep your money."

"Oh, begannies, conscience or no conscience, I darn't go home to the woman, your Reverence. But I'll tell you, Father, the woman said, if you'd give her your autograph, she'd have it framed; and we'll hang it up, please God, next to the picture of the Holy Family."

The priest took a clean sheet of paper; wrote his name and address in Ireland and America, and having put the date, gave it to him.

"She told me, too, your Reverence, to caution you again some of them banks. She said to tell you there was only one of them safe," and he mentioned the name.

"This is the very one that a priest in the city, a friend of mine, has advised me."

"Good day, your Reverence, and may you have luck."

"God bless you, my friend, and I wish you and your wife and your numerous family every happiness and joy."

As he went along the street, "Snipe" kept repeating the words of the priest, imitating them, mimicking them, but all the time repeating them, and making sure that he had the accent and tone of the voice exactly.

"I told you there was money in that bloke," said he, laying the autograph before his companions. "I got the blessings for myself and my woman and my thirteen little children, shouting for bread. Oh, but he's a bloke!"

"Your woman, 'Snipe,' and your thirteen children," and they laughed and laughed.

"Now, this is business," said "Snipe." "Cut me out an antediluvian riding-coat like that," he said to their tailor-in-ordinary, "with a hat like this, a riding-coat, a Roman collar, and I'm ready," and he sat down to copy and recopy the autograph till he reproduced it perfectly.

The real Father Michael was hard at work day by day. It was not at all so easy a thing "to collect," as his enthusiasm had imagined. Many said that the thing was overdone. Others said that they could not be sure of the genuineness of the affair. He produced testimonials, but it was answered that these could be forged. Even priests and religious felt that they themselves, on account of their own pressing needs, had been asking too often of people, who had not over much of this world's wealth, and they were therefore slow in allowing a stranger to beg in their parishes, and slower still to recommend his cause to their people.

(Continued on page 6.)

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