

THE COMMANDMENTS OF THE CHURCH.

2nd Commandment: To keep the days of fasting and abstinence appointed by the Church.

1. *To fast* is to eat only one full meal (with, if required, a collation of about 8 oz.) and, unless dispensed, to use no flesh-meat. General custom allows also about 2 oz. of dry bread with a cup of tea or coffee in the morning, thus enabling many to fast, who could not otherwise do so. The full meal may be taken at midday and the collation in the evening, or *vice versa*. Fish and meat may not be eaten at one the same meal. Persons under 21 or over 60 years of age need not fast.

2. Within the British Empire the *fast days* are (1) all week-days in Lent; (2) Wednesdays and Friday in Advent; (3) the Ember days; (4) the Vigils or Eves of Pentecost, SS. Peter & Paul, the Assumption, All Saints and Christmas Day. In Scotland also St. Andrew's Eve. Usually a special Lenten Indult excepts Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays (not in Ember or Holy Week). A fast falling on a Sunday is observed on the preceding Saturday. In the United States Wednesdays in Advent and Eve of SS. Peter & Paul are not fast days.

3. *To abstain* is to avoid the use of flesh-meat, which includes suet. There are restrictions for certain days in Lent with regard also to eggs, milk, butter, cheese, lard and dripping, which are however usually subject from year to year to indulgences and general dispensations granted respectively by the Pope and the bishop of the diocese. Children under 7 years of age are not obliged to abstain.

4. *The days of abstinence* are (1) Sundays in Lent (general dispensation usually granted) and (2) all Fridays, except when Christmas Day falls on a Friday. In Scotland no one is obliged to abstain on two consecutive days.

5. The parish priest has authority to give dispensation from fasting or abstaining or both on account of sickness, great poverty, hard work,

travelling or other good reason. Persons dispensed only from the obligation of fasting must however abstain.

6. We are commanded to fast and abstain that so we may mortify the flesh and do satisfaction for our sins.

7. The fast of Lent has been instituted (1) to commemorate Christ's fast of forty days in the desert (2), as an expiation for our sins, (3) to prepare us by penance for the worthy celebration of Easter.

8. The advent fasts are intended as an expiation and a preparation for the great feast of Christmas.

9. The Ember Days fall at the beginning of the four seasons of the year. They have been made fasting days in order that we may (1) consecrate to God by penance each succeeding season of the year, (2) beg God to bless the produce of the earth, and (3) call down divine grace upon the ministers of religion, who are usually ordained at these four periods.

10. The fast ordained for the Vigils is to prepare us by mortification to celebrate those feasts worthily.

11. By abstaining on Friday we commemorate Our Lord's death and burial, which took place on that day and are reminded that we must do penance.

Explanation of the Plate.

12. *In the central picture* is depicted the temptation of Our Lord in the desert after His fast of forty days. « If thou be the Son of God », said the tempter, « command that these stones be made bread » Our Lord answered: « It is written: Not in bread alone doth man live, but in every word that proceedeth from the mouth of God. » (*Matt.* IV, 3-4).

13. *At the foot of the stairs representing Lent*, to the right of it, we see a priest placing ashes on the foreheads of the faithful on the first day of Lent with this ever necessary warning: « Remember, man, that thou art dust and unto dust thou wilt return. »

14. *In the four small pictures* representing the four Ember periods are depicted - in that of summer, an ordination of subdeacons; in that of autumn, an ordination of deacons; in that of winter, the laying on of

hands in the ordination of priests; and in that of spring, the consecration of their hands to fit them for the Holy Sacrifice.

15. The several circular and rectangular medallions represent the various Vigils.

16. *In the right-hand top corner* we see the aged Eleazer, who perished under the persecution of Antiochus. They tried to force swine's flesh into his mouth, but he preferred « a most glorious death » to « a hateful life » (*II Mach.* VI, 18-19).

17. *The picture above that of Temptation* shows a banquet at which meat is being served, although it is Friday; and *below that* a ball held in Lent. The dancers end by falling into the flames of hell which yawns at their feet.

18. *At the bottom on the left* Jonah is shown warning the people of Niniveh of the impending doom of their city, unless they do penance. (*Jonah* III).

19. *Opposite on the right* we see St. John the Baptist preaching penance to the Jews in order to prepare them for the salvation Our Lord was about to bring them. « Do penance », he cried, « for the Kingdom of heaven is at hand » (*Matt.* III, 2).
