

**LENTEN PASTORAL**

**DIOCESE OF AUCKLAND**

His Lordship the Right Rev. Dr. Lenihan, Bishop of Auckland, has issued the following Lenten Pastoral, under date, February 25 :—

Next Sunday, the first of the six which come during Lent, is one of the most solemn throughout the year. It has the same privilege as Passion and Palm Sundays—that is, it never gives place to any feast, not even to that of the patron, titular saint, or dedication of the church. In the ancient calendars it is called *Invocabit*, from the first word of the Introit of the Mass. In the middle ages it was called *Brand Sunday*, because the young people, who had misconducted themselves during the carnival, were obliged to show themselves to-day, at the church, with a torch in their hands, as a kind of public satisfaction for their riot and excess.

Lent solemnly opens on that day. The four preceding days were added since the time of St. Gregory the Great, in order to make up forty days of fasting. Neither can we look upon Ash Wednesday as the solemn opening of the season, for the faithful are not bound to hear Mass on that day. The Holy Church, seeing her children now assembled together, speaks to them, in her office of Matins, these eloquent and noble words of St. Leo the Great: 'Having to announce to you, dearly beloved, the most sacred and chief fast, how can I more more appropriately begin, than with the words of the Apostle, in whom Christ Himself spoke, and by saying to you what has just been read: Behold! Now is the acceptable time; behold! now is the day of salvation. For although there be no time, which is not replete with divine gifts, and we may always, by God's grace, have access to His mercy—yet ought we all to redouble our efforts to make spiritual progress and be animated with unusual confidence, now that the anniversary of the day of our redemption is approaching, inviting us to devote ourselves to every good work, that we may celebrate with purity of body and mind,

**The Incomparable Mystery of Our Lord's Passion.**

'It is true that our devotion and reverence towards so great a mystery should be kept up during the whole year, and we ourselves be, at all times, in the eyes of God, the same as we are bound to be at the Easter Solemnity. But this is an effort which only few among us have the courage to sustain. The weakness of the flesh induces us to relent our austerities; the various occupations of every day life take up our thoughts; and thus, even the virtuous find their hearts clogged by this world's dust. Hence it is, that our Lord has most providentially given us these forty days, whose holy exercises should be to us a remedy, whereby to regain our purity of soul. The good works and the holy fastings of this season were instituted as an atonement and obliteration of the sins we commit during the rest of the year.

'Now, therefore, that we are about to enter upon these days, which are so full of mystery, and were instituted for the holy purpose of purifying both our soul and body, let us, dearly beloved, be careful to do as the Apostle bids us, and cleanse ourselves from all defilement of the flesh and the spirit: that thus the combat between the two substances being made less fierce, the soul, which, when she herself is subject to God, ought to be the ruler of the body, will recover her own dignity and position. Let us also avoid giving offence to any man, so that there be none to blame or speak evil things of us. For we deserve the harsh remarks of insiders, and we provoke the tongues of the wicked to blaspheme religion, when we, who fast, lead unholy lives.

'For our fast does not consist in the mere abstaining from food; nor is it of much use to deny food to our body unless we restrain the soul from sin.'

**Each Sunday of Lent Offers**

to our consideration a passage from the Gospel, which is in keeping with the sentiments wherewith the Church would have us be filled. On Sunday next she brings before us the temptation of our Lord in the desert. What light and encouragement there is for us in this instruction!

We acknowledge ourselves to be sinners; we are engaged, at this very time, in doing penance for the sins we have committed; but, how was it that we fell into sin? The devil tempted us. We did not reject the temptation; then we yielded to the suggestion, and the sin was committed. This is the history of our past; and such it would, also, be for the future, were we not to profit by the lesson given us by our Redeemer.

When the Apostle speaks of the wonderful mercy shown us by our Divine Saviour, Who vouchsafed to make Himself like us in all things, save in sin, he justly lays stress on his temptations. He, Who was very God, humbled Himself even so low as this, to prove how tenderly He compassionated us. Here, then, we have the Saint of Saints allowing the wicked spirit to approach Him, in order that we might learn from His example how we are to gain victory under temptation. Satan has had his eye upon Jesus; he is troubled at beholding such matchless virtue. The wonderful circumstances of his birth—the shepherds called by angels to His crib, and the Magi guided by the star; the Infant's escape from Herod's plot; the testimony rendered to this new Prophet by John the Baptist—all these things which seem so out of keeping with the thirty years spent in obscurity at Nazareth, are a mystery to the infernal serpent, and fill him with apprehension.

**The Ineffable Mystery of the Incarnation**

has been accomplished unknown to him; he never once suspects that the humble Virgin Mary is she who was foretold by the Prophet Isaias as having to bring forth the Emmanuel; but he is aware that the time is come, that the last week spoken of to Daniel has begun its course, and that the very pagans are looking towards Judea for a deliverer. He is afraid of this Jesus; He resolved to speak with Him, and elicit from him some expression which will show him whether He be the Son of God or not; he will tempt Him to some imperfection, or sin, which, should He commit, will prove that the object of so much fear is, after all, but a mortal man.

The enemy of God and men was, of course, disappointed. He approached Jesus; but all efforts only turn to his own confusion. Our Redeemer, with all the self possession and easy majesty of a God-man, repels the attacks of Satan; but He reveals not his heavenly origin. The wicked spirit retires, without having made any discovery beyond this,—that Jesus is a Prophet, faithful to God. Later on, when he sees the Son of God treated with contempt, calumniated and persecuted, when he finds that his own attempts to have Him put to death, are so successful,—his pride and his blindness will be at their height; and not till Jesus expires on the Cross, will he learn, that his victim was not merely Man, but Man and God. Then will he discover, how all his plots against Jesus have but served to manifest, in all their beauty, the Mercy and Justice of God—His Mercy, because He saved mankind; and His Justice, because He broke the power of hell for ever.

**These Were the Designs of Divine Providence**

in permitting the wicked spirit to defile, by his presence, the retreat of Jesus, and speak to Him, and lay his hands upon Him. But, let us consider the triple temptation in all its circumstances; for our Redeemer only suffered it in order that He might instruct and encourage us. We have three enemies to fight against; our soul has three dangers; for as the Beloved disciple says: All that is in the world, is the concupiscence of the flesh, and the concupiscence of the eyes, and the pride of life! By the concupiscence of the flesh, is meant the love of sensual things, which covets whatever is agreeable to the flesh, and, when not curbed, draws the soul into unlawful pleasures. Concupiscence of the eyes expresses the love of the goods of this world, such as riches, and possessions; these dazzle the eye, and then seduce the heart. Pride of life is that confidence in ourselves, which leads us to be vain and presumptuous, and makes us forget that all we have—our life and every good gift—we have from God.

Not one of our sins but what comes from one of these three sources; not one of our temptations but what aims at making us accept the concupiscence of the flesh, or the concupiscence of the eyes, or the pride of life. Our Saviour, then, Who would be our model in all things, deigned to subject Himself to these three temptations.

First of all, Satan tempts Him in what regards the Flesh—He suggests to Him to satisfy the cravings of hunger by working a miracle, and changing the stones into bread. If Jesus consent, and shows an eagerness in giving this indulgence to His body, the tempter will conclude that He is but a frail, mortal, subject to concupiscence like other men. When he tempts us, who have inherited evil concupiscence from Adam, his suggestions go further than this; he endeavors to defile the soul by the body. But the sovereign holiness of the Incarnate Word could never permit Satan to use upon Him the power which he has received of tempting man in his outward senses. The lesson, therefore, which the Son of God here gives us,

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