



March 5, 1876

How to Substitute Fasting to Sanctify Lent

My dear daughters,

It is fitting that we have been read the rule on mortification as we enter Lent. It follows from our occupations, from work to the fatigues of teaching, that few among us can observe the entirety of Lent. There is nothing to be done about this. We cannot fast, but we must make up for it with other practices, for, after all, Lent is always *the favorable day, the day of salvation*.¹ Let each of you therefore seek within yourselves what you can do to replace the fasts you do not observe, the prescriptions of the Church that you do not fully follow.

In the past, Bishop de la Bouillerie advised us to make the Way of the Cross more frequently, to draw more often from the treasure of our Lord's sufferings so that, in a closer union with Jesus Crucified, in a more tender compassion, in a greater devotion to His sufferings, we might find what is lacking in our own penance.

I would add that we could impose many small deprivations on ourselves without harming our health. To that end, I would like each of you to write a short note and submit it to her who guides you, asking for her advice on what you can and should do in this regard.

I suggest a rather mild form of self-denial: the voluntary deprivation of sugar at lunch. This can be done as a substitute for fasting. I am not saying that it is necessary—for some, it could be detrimental to their health—but I am saying that it is possible. Another excellent form of self-denial is to always maintain impeccable posture, to avoid touching your face, and to allow yourself no sloppiness.

In short, consider the small things in which each of you can make your Lenten penance consist of. Here, refrain from speaking. There, suppress a small curiosity, a small natural pleasure. Take greater care to maintain religious modesty in all things. Bear all setbacks patiently. Endure all difficulties of temperament and character without complaining. I assure you, my dear daughters, that if, during this Lent, all complaining were suppressed, it would be more beneficial to the soul than if we were to abstain from the broth and the little meat we eat in the evening.

Therefore, consider what you can do to offer God a small tribute of mortifications and sacrifices, so that, through more continual prayer and a closer union with Our Lord, this Lent may be for all

¹ 2 Cor. 6:2

of you *a favorable day, and a day of salvation*. But do not decide it without advice, because undoubtedly many would overstep the mark.