171 Fasting (*Jejunium*)

A lean bird[[1]](#endnote-1) more easily escapes the hawk and flies higher, thus it is concerning the one fasting. But it is on the contrary concerning the fat bird and the thick man. In the figure of which Elias fasting escaped the persecution of Jezebel, that is, the temptation of the flesh, 3 Kings 19[:1-8] and arrived at Horeb, that is, up to contemplation.

Again, fasting is like a concavity in a viola which makes a melody. Wherefore it is said of Moses that he made a concave altar, Exod. 37[:27], because the penitent heart ought not be filled with delights.

Again,[[2]](#endnote-2) in fasting four matters are rejected: when fasting avoid faults, gape at rumors, spare the purse, or be a servant to gluttony.

Concerning the first, Isai. 58[:5]: “Is this such a fast as I have chosen?” Wherefore Augustine,[[3]](#endnote-3) he who abstains from food and does not cease to do evil things imitates the demons in their carnal food. Nothing is present except iniquity which is never absent. To this Gregory says in his *Collecta*,[[4]](#endnote-4) he who abstains from nourishments in following justice fasts from faults.

¶ Concerning the second,[[5]](#endnote-5) Matt. 6[:16]: “And when you fast, be not as the hypocrites.” For such a one from this takes seven enemies. He feeds a double enemy, namely, the world and the devil, [Matt. 12:45].

¶ Concerning the third,[[6]](#endnote-6) Eccle. 6[:2]: “A man to whom God has given riches, and substance, … yet God does not give him power to eat thereof, but a stranger shall eat it up.”

Concerning the fourth,[[7]](#endnote-7) Isai. 58[:4]: “Do not fast as you have done until this day.” And this may be in three ways that if anyone fasts and afterwards may eat better, or if in the time of fasting he seeks more delicious foods, or extends the time of eating, or if before fasting or after he would eat for that reason.

Again,[[8]](#endnote-8) for three reasons fasting is commended. If it happens for the satisfaction of sin and then it is required that it take place outside of mortal sin. Otherwise it offers to God a dead cadaver when however, the Apostle persuades us to offer “your bodies a living sacrifice,” Rom. 12[:1].

The second[[9]](#endnote-9) fasting and the better is to gain the love of God, Matt. 6[:17]: “But you, when you fast anoint your head” with oil, namely of compassion, “and wash your face,” namely, with the water of contrition.

¶ The third[[10]](#endnote-10) fasting and the best when one fasts outside in the body, and in the inside he prays in the mind, according to Isidore,[[11]](#endnote-11) this is against those who do not wish to do anything good when they fast except to be idle and play at dice so thus they do not feel the fasting. Wherefore Boethius,[[12]](#endnote-12) for avoiding idleness it is ridiculous to follow leisure times. The first fasting of these is signified by the fasting of Moses, Exod. 34[:28]. The second is figured by the fasting of Elias, 3 Kings 21[:9-28]. The third is designated by the fasting of Christ, Matt. 4[:2].

¶ Again, fasting is commended in many places by authority, that is, by God imposing that upon Adam when he spoke [Gen. 2:17] “of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, you shall not eat” from that place because in paradise it was set up from that time because in the beginning before all other things it was commanded out of those matters it could be collected how much is the authority and usefulness of fasting. For according to Moses [Exod. 30:33] every soul which has not tested itself in the day of fasting “he shall be cut off from his people.” Certainly, fasting is strong for placating wrath as is evident in Daniel [6:11-22] praying for the turning away of divine offense.

Again, namely for asking pardon as is evident in exemption.

¶ Again, namely for avoiding the penalty as is evident in Esther [4:16] fasting and praying God for the revocation of the impious sentence.

Again, namely for preserving cleanliness as is evident in Daniel [1:12-15] and his companions with only water and pulse having fatter faces.

¶ Again, namely for pursuing a victory as is evident concerning Judith [15:4] against Holofernes as we see when one part of the army has been debilitated the other part prevails, so when the flesh has been debilitated the spirit prevails, John 12[:25]: “He that hates his life in this world,” that is, his animal life in vices, etc., “keeps it unto life eternal.”

Again, namely fasting for asking grace just as is evident in the day of Pentecost when the Spirit descended upon the fasting apostles.

Again, fasting namely for the contrition of sinners here the sick one fasts or goes back to health, Joel. 2[:12]: “Be converted to me with all your heart, in fasting.” Behold here that contrition and not return to the vomit is required, for Eccli. 34[:30]: “He that washes himself after touching the dead, if he touches him again, what doth his washing avail?”

The second fasting namely for the satisfaction of the penitents, Tob. 12[:8]: “Prayer is good with fasting.” And it will be best if a third is added, namely alms in what is subtracted from the belly is given to the poor, Isai. 58[:6-7]: “Is not this rather the fast that I have chosen?” etc., up to “Deal your bread to the hungry.” But alas because some eat so much, once when they fast what can suffice for two others, they give to God one and hold back two obols.

¶ In the third place, namely for the obtaining of requests, so the physician selects fasting that he might obtain help, Judith 4[:11]: “Know that the Lord will hear your prayers, if you continue with perseverance in fasting and prayers.”

¶ Again, namely for the subjection of the avaricious, Psal. [34:13]: “I humbled my soul with fasting.” Wherefore the verse: Luxury is rare when not even good pasta is dear.[[13]](#endnote-13)

¶ However there is a triple solemn fasting instituted by the Church, namely in the four seasons, in lent, in the vigils of the saints of which for some certain times, certain reasons, certain days, and certain causes was instituted.

¶ First, however fasting takes place for three reasons four times in the year. For these three, namely, for following the commandment, for destroying sin, and for expressing the mystery. Certainly in the law it was commanded concerning the paying of first fruits which was extended to our time that just as there are four seasons of the year and in each season three months, so we fast four times in the year, and for each time three days for the praised of the Trinity and these four times are taken from the Old Testament where the prophet says [Zach. 8:19]: “The fast of the fourth month, and the fast of the fifth, and the fast of the seventh, and the fast of the tenth shall be to the house” of Israel turned into festival days. Hence is the reason we fast in March, in June, in September, and in December.

Again, in the second place, first fasting is done to destroy sin just as in four ways we sin in threes. So, four times we fast in threes. For we sin against the Father through inability, against the Son through ignorance, and against the Holy Spirit through malice.[[14]](#endnote-14)

Again, we sin in heart, word, deed, and habit.

In the third place, the first fasting is performed to express the mystery because just as a number ascend from unity to unity if the three are multiplied four times. So, the soul ascends from virtue into virtue if the four does fasting three times each, for example, let the first multiplication be such that one makes three, thrice three makes nine, thrice nine makes twenty-seven, thrice twenty-seven makes eighty-one. Behold how it ascend from unity to unity by signifying that through such fasting the soul ascends from perfection to perfection, from virtue to virtue, until the God of gods is seen in Sion [Psal. 83:8]. And this multiplication fits well for the mind on account of its four states, namely, creation, vegetation, operation, and resolution.[[15]](#endnote-15)

¶ The second fasting which is lent is held for three reasons once in the year, namely for forty days, namely, because of a triple example, because of the divine precept, and because of the number of the sacraments.

Concerning the first, before the law Moses thus fasted, under the law Elias, and after the law Christ. For there is the number of forty *Sanctus* in scripture.

About which see below in the chapter [306] Forty (*Quadraginta*).

Second, we fast forty days because it was commanded in the law that out of all things, a tenth would be given and for our time it was extended. However, just as in the solar year dividing 365 days and the tenth part of the quarter so however the number forty is completed when the tenth of the ten is added because from the precept of the law the minors are returned to the high priest. So, the church tithing the days of the year to Christ truly and the highest priest for thirty-seven days adds also the half to complete the forty.[[16]](#endnote-16)

Third, we fast in lent on account of the sacrament. For the forty is the superabundant part and from its parts gathered ascends to fifty whose parts are seven, namely, twenty, ten, eight, five, four, two, one, which added together return fifty and fifty leads to quiet and remission. In the same way jubilee comes from the Quadragesima fast and ascends to eternal rest. However, there are seven parts of spiritual fasting, namely, to abstain from the seven capital vices just as the other vices flow from fountains.

The third fasting in the vigils of the saints is indicated from three causes. For in the law it was commanded that in the major solemnities those going up to Jerusalem would offer something and not show up empty. And we, going up to church offer something as a fast of first fruits as far as the months, fasting of tithes as far as the year, and a fasting of offerings as far as the day.[[17]](#endnote-17)

1. Cf. William de Lancea, *Diaetae salutis* 2.6 (8:271a): Est etiam jejunium sicut agilitas in avicula Nam sicut avis macilenta est agilis ad fugiendum ad volatum sublimem sic mens jejunantis et abstinentis est habilis ad accipitrem id est hostis tentatio nem ad sublimem volatum contemplationis. ...

Unde in istorum Elias *jejunavit quadraginta die bus et quadraginta noctibus,* ut scilicet persecu tionem Jezabel evaderet et ad montem Dei Horeb celeriter perveniret ut legitur in libris *Regum.* Elias in figura signat animam ho abstinentis persecutio Jezabel designat tentationem carnis et mons Dei Horeb significat sublimitatem contemplationis. Est etiam je sicut concavitas in viela nam sicut viela nisi esset concava et chordæ superexten sæ non esset sonosa sic homo nisi vacuus abstinentiam et extensis per rigidam penitentiam non reddit sonorosam divinæ laudis. Unde in figura hujus dixit Dominus quod faceret altare concavum non soli sed inane. Concavum allare est cor penitentis ubi debet immolari sacrificium contriet sacrificium laudis quod quidem non debet esse solidum id est deliciis plenum sed inane et concavum id est pænitentia et attenuatum [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. Cf. William de Lancea, *Diaetae salutis* 3.6 (8:271b): Idem nota quod quatuor in jejunio reprobantur, scilicet cum jejunans vacat culpæ, cum jejunans inhiat famæ; cum jejunans bursæ, et cum jejunans servit gulæ. Est reprobandum in jejunio cum jejunans peccato Qui enim jejunat a cibo et non net a peccato similis est diabolo cui esca est et malitia semper inest ut dicit Isidorus De hoc jejunio dicitur: *Hoc est jejunium quod elegi: Dissolve colligationes impietatis solve fustentationis ciculos deprimentes* [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. Augustine, cf. Bede, *Sententiarum* 44.8 (PL 83:652): Jejunia cum bonis operibus Deo acceptabilia sunt. Qui autem a cibis abstinent, et prave agunt, daemones imitantur, quibus esca non est, et nequitia semper est. Ille enim bene abstinet a cibis, qui et a malitiae actibus, et a mundi jejunat ambitionibus. [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. Gregory, *Liber Sacramentorum* Feria II in Hebdoma Secunda (PL 78:63): Praesta, quaesumus, omnipotens Deus, ut familia tua (220) quae se, affligendo carne, ab alimentis abstinet, sectando justitiam a culpa jejunet. [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. Cf. William de Lancea, *Diaetae salutis* 3.6 (8:272a): nam qui propter humanam laudem de hoc quod sub uni hosti pascit duplicem hostem quod unico adversario scilicet carni subtra hitur per jejunium de hoc pascit alios duos diabolum et mundum Tale erat jeju nium Pharisæorum de quibus dicitur *Cum jejunatis nolite fieri sicut hypocritæ tristes ex terminant enim facies suas* *ut appareant hominibus jejunantes* etc. [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
6. Cf. William de Lancea, *Diaetae salutis* 3.6 (8:272a): Tale jejunium Sapiens infelicissimum dicens *Vir cui Deus divitias substantiam et honorem et nihil de est animæ suæ ex omnibus quæ desiderat nec tri buit ei Deus potestatem ut comedat ex eo sed homo extraneus vorabit illud hoc vanitas et est.* [↑](#endnote-ref-6)
7. Cf. William de Lancea, *Diaetae salutis* 3.6 (8:272a): Quidam enim sunt qui ideo je junant ut postea melius comedant tales nihil faciunt nisi quod solemnitatem Dei sui ventris præveniunt vigilia jejunii de testabilis Sunt etiam alii qui tempore jejunii quærunt magis delicata cibaria et tunc volunt comedere splendidius et lautius et tantum una vice comedunt quantum in duabus quando non jejunant.... De tali jejunio potest in telligi illud *Nolite jejunare sicut ad hanc diem.* [↑](#endnote-ref-7)
8. Cf. William de Lancea, *Diaetae salutis* 3.6 (8:272b): Bonum igitur dicitur quando quis jam post mortem peccati per contritioscilicet nem et confessionem resurrexit et in charitate existit et jejunat pro peccatis quæ fecit si aujejunatis tem charitatem non habet bonum amittit quod habet quia dicitur 5 Si tradidero corpus meum ita ut ardeam charitatem autem non habeam nide hil mihi prodest et offert quasi cadaver morut tuum Deo qui jejunat in peccato mortali cum debeamus Deo offerre *corpora nostra hostias viventes* ut dicit Apostolus *ad Romanos*. [↑](#endnote-ref-8)
9. Cf. William de Lancea, *Diaetae salutis* 3.6 (8:272b): Melius vero jejunium vocatur quod ad Dei honolum rem et sanctorum suorum gratis et cum devocat tione celebratur De quo intelligitur illud Tu autem cum jejunas unge caput tuum scilicet oleo unctuosæ compassionis *et faciem tuam lava* aqua lacrymosæ contritionis ut dicit Glossa [↑](#endnote-ref-9)
10. Cf. William de Lancea, *Diaetae salutis* 3.6 (8:272b): Optimum jejunium dicitur quanquando do homo exterior jejunat et homo interior orat ut dicit Isidorus et quando qui jejunat ex una parte jejunando macerat corpus et ex altera parte bona agere non cessat conaliud tra aliquos qui nihil possunt facere cum jescilicet junant imo tunc ludunt ad scacos ut jejunium non sentiant et sic otiando otium vitant contra hoc quod dicit Boetius quod pro otio vitando otia sectari ridiculosum est Jejunium bonum significatur per jejunium Mosyi ut habetur in *Exodo*; jejunium melius significatur per jejunium Eliae, sicut dicitur in libris *Regum*; jejunium optimum significatur per jejunium Christi, but habetur in *Matthaeo*. [↑](#endnote-ref-10)
11. Isidore, *Sententiae* 2.44.1 (PL 83:651): Hoc est perfectum et rationabile jejunium, quando noster homo exterior jejunat, interior orat. Facilius per jejunium oratio penetrat coelum. Tunc enim homo, spiritualis effectus, angelis conjungitur, Deoque liberius copulatur. [↑](#endnote-ref-11)
12. Boethius, cf. Bonaventure, *Diaetae Salutis* 2.6 (Opera omnia 8.272b): quod dicit Boetius, quod pro otio vitando, lotia sectari ridiculosum est. [↑](#endnote-ref-12)
13. Cf. Thesaurus Adagioram Latinomm. Lateinischer Sprichwörterschatz. (Stuttgart: Verlag von Eduard Fischhaber, 1866), 190. # 1727. Luxuria^ raro non bene pasta caro. Gärtner p/t09. Dem Hungrigen vergeht das Tanzen, [↑](#endnote-ref-13)
14. Cf. Innocent III, *Sermo* 11. *In die cinerum seu capite ieiunii* (PL 217:360): Primo modo peccamus in Patrem, peccamus in Filium, peccamus in Spiritum sanctum. In Patrem peccamus per impotentiam et fragilitatem, in Filium peccamus, per ignorantiam et simplicitatem; in Spiritum sanctum peccamus, per duritiam et malignitatem. [↑](#endnote-ref-14)
15. Cf. Innocent III, Sermo 11. In *die cinerum seu capite ieiunii* sermo (PL 217:361): Ad exprimendum mysterium agitur hoc jejunium, quia sicut numerus ascendit [Col.0361B] ab unitate ad unitatem, si quater fiat multiplicatio ad ternarium: sic anima conscendit de virtute in virtutem, si quater agat jejunium per ternarium. Fiat ergo prima multiplicatio ter unum, tria; fiat secunda, ter tria, novem; fiat tertia multiplicatio, ter novem, viginti septem; fiat quarta multiplicatio, ter viginti septem, octoginta unum. Ecce per talem multiplicationem, numerus ab unitate ascendit ad unitatem, significans quod per tale jejunium anima conscendit «de virtute in virtutem, donec videat Deum deorum in Sion (Psal. XXXVIII).» Haec autem multiplicatio bene competit animae propter quatuor sui status, quibus quatuor istae multiplicationes conveniunt. Primus est status creationis, secundus est status vegetationis; tertius est status [Col.0361C] operationis, quartus est status resolutionis. Primo statui convenit prima multiplicatio, quae ab unico profluit in ternarium; quoniam in statu creationis, anima suscipit et unitatem essentiae, et ternarium potentiarum, id est vim irascibilem, vim concupiscibilem et vim rationabilem. Secundo statui convenit secunda multiplicatio, quae a ternario ascendit ad novenarium; quoniam in statu vegetationis, anima suscipit officium regendi corpus humanum, quod secundum naturalem contemperantiam influit et defluit per novem foramina, id est per duos oculos, duas aures, duas nares, unum os, et duos inferiores meatus. [↑](#endnote-ref-15)
16. Cf. Innocent III, *Sermo* 11. *In die cinerum seu capite ieiunii* (PL 217:362-363): Propter praeceptum vero jejunamus quadraginta diebus, quia Deus in lege praecepit, ut ex omnibus decimae persolvantur, quod praeceptum usque ad tempus extenditur. Habet enim annus solaris trecentos sexaginta quinque dies et quadrantem; quorum decimae sunt triginta sex dies et dimidius, et decima pars quadrantis. Ut autem quadragenarius numerus compleatur dierum, additur decima decimae, quam ex praecepto legis minores levitae, summo sacerdoti reddebant (Exod. XXII). Ecclesia quoque decimam temporis decimans Christo, qui est pontifex futurorum bonorum, sacerdos in aeternum [Col.0363A] secundum ordinem Melchisedech (Heb. V, Psal CIX), de triginta et quinque diebus accepit pro decima decimae tres dies, et dimidium ad complendum quadragenarium. [↑](#endnote-ref-16)
17. Cf. Innocent III, Sermo 11. In *die cinerum seu capite ieiunii* (PL 217:363): Tertium quoque jejunium, [Col.0363C] quod agitur in festivitatum vigilia, tribus de causis indicitur. Sed ut compendiose pertranseam, id solum ad praesens notandum est, quod Deus in lege praecepit (Deut. XVI), ut in praecipuis solemnitatibus omnes in Hierusalem ascenderent ad orandum; nec apparerent in conspectu Domini vacui, sed offerrent. Nos igitur in praecipuis solemnitatibus ascendentes Hierusalem, id est in Ecclesiam ad orandum, ne appareamus in conspectu Domini vacui, et praeter alias oblationes etiam jejunium dierum offerimus. [↑](#endnote-ref-17)