Worcester F 80 Distinctiones

87 Fasting is commended many ways (*Ieiunium multipliciter commendatur*)

Fasting is commended in many ways because by authority, that is, by God either from his powerlessness when he said, [Gen. 2:17]: “But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, you shall not eat.” From the place because it was instituted in paradise. From that time because in the beginning before all the other precepts, from which it can be gathered how much authority and utility there is for fasting. For according to Moses [Exod. 30:33], every soul which he has not afflicted in the day of judgment “he shall be cut off from his people.”

¶ Fasting however is a triple solemn remedy from ecclesiastical edict. First in observance of the four times. Second in abstinence of Lent. Third in the vigil of festivals, of which in any event it was instituted for certain reasons, certain times, certain days, and certain causes. First[[1]](#endnote-1) therefore fasting happened for three causes four times in the year for three reasons, namely, for following up the commandment, for destroying sin, and to represent the mystery. In the law certainly it was commanded to pay first fruits which also was extended to our time. Because just as there are four times of the year, and in each time three months, so we fast four times in the year, and each time three days for the praise of the trinity and these four parts of time are summed up in the Old Testament, as 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

/fol. 242va/

into feast days. Hence it is that we fast in March, June, September, and December. In March certainly because then the world was made and redeemed. In June the law was given, and the sanctuary was instituted, and the precursor of the Savior was born. In September, the expiation was made, and the propitiation was procured, and the mother of the redeemer was born. In December, the temple was cleansed and dedicated, and the only begotten of the Creator was born. Again,[[2]](#endnote-2) the first fasting was done for destroying sin just as in the four ways we sin in the three parts. So, four times under the three parts we fast. For we sin against the Father through impotency, against the Son through ignorance, and against the Holy Spirit through malice.

¶ Again we sin triply, namely, in transgressing the law of nature, scripture and grace. In a third way we sin triply with the heart, the mouth, and the deed. Which is signified through three deaths, namely, in the house, in the gate, and in the tomb. In the fourth[[3]](#endnote-3) way sin is distinguished in original and actual, which is double, namely, venial and mortal. These are the serpent, the woman, and the man. The serpent is concupiscence suggesting originally, the woman is sensuality consenting venially, and man is reason, that is, consenting mortally.

¶ Again these are those four farthings, about the last of which the Lord said, “You shall not go out from thence till you repay the last farthing,” that is, until he pays in penalty what he committed in fault, triply committed.

¶ Again three to represent the mystery. This first fasting is done because just as the number ascends from unity into unity, so four is multiplied three times. As the soul mounts from virtue into virtue, so the four fastings do through the three parts. Therefore, let the first multiplication be three times one, three. Let the second multiplication be three times three, nine. Let the third be three times nine, twenty-seven. Let the fourth be three times twenty-seven, eighty-one. Behold what happens through such multiplication, the number ascends from unity to unity, signifying that through such fasting the soul ascends, [Psal. 83:8]: “They shall go from virtue to virtue, until the God of gods shall be seen in Sion.”

¶ And well this multiplication of the number fits to the soul on account of its four states, namely, creation, vegetative, operational, and resolution. For the first multiplication leaping from the unity in three fits to the state of creation in which the soul received the unity of essence and the potency of the three, namely, the irascible, the concupiscible, and the rational.

¶ The second state of the soul fits the second multiplication from the three ascending to the nine because in

/fol. 242vb/

the vegetative state the soul received the office of ruling the human body. Because according to the natural intermixture of inflow and outflow through nine openings, that is, through two eyes, two nostrils, two ears, one mouth, and two lower shameful parts.

¶ The third state of the soul fits to the third multiplication which ascends from nine to twenty-seven. Because in the state of operation the soul exerts visible and bodily actions, which through the twenty-seven is designated as congruous, because it is the number of the solid figure and it has a triple dimension to the likeness of the body, namely, length, breadth, and diameter.

¶ The fourth state fits the fourth multiplication which after the eighty returns to the unity, because in the state of resolution the soul after the variety of the present life, returns to the first things of nature. For [Wis. 9:15]: “For the corruptible body is a load upon the soul.” For through eighty is accepted as the terminus of present life, with the saying of the prophet, [Psal. 89:10]: “But if in the strong they be fourscore years, and what is more of them is labor and sorrow. Behold therefore by which reasons we fast four times.

¶ The second fasting which is done in Lenten abstinence for three reasons once in the year, is celebrated for forty days, namely, on account of the example of the three parts, on account of the divine precept, and on account of the number of the sacraments.

¶ Concerning the first[[4]](#endnote-4) on account of the example we fast forty days because Moses, Elias, and Christ fasted so many days, namely, before the law, under the law, and after the law, that is, in the beginning of the law, in the middle, and in the end. It is before that the number forty was sanctified in scripture. For God rained forty days and forty nights, the waters of the deluge. And the scouts of Moses explored the promised land for forty days. And Israel was nourished with manna forty years in the desert, and Jonas predicted the overthrow of Nineveh within the space of forty days and Christ after his resurrection remained on earth forty days and was in the womb of his mother for forty weeks, and he was in the tomb for forty hours.

¶ Secund,[[5]](#endnote-5) we fast for forty days on account of the divine precept. For the precept was in the law, so that tithes would be given from all, which was extended for a time. However, there are in the solar year three hundred sixty five days with a fourth, of which the tenth are thirty-six days with the fourth half day, and the tenth part of the fourth. However, in order that the forty days be a completed number ten

/fol. 243ra/

are added to ten, which out of the precept of the law they give to the minor Levites, and the high priests. So, the church tithing the days of the year to Christ the high priest for thirty-five days and a half adds the tenth to the tenth in three days, to complete the forty.

¶ Third on account of the sacrament we fast for forty days. Because the number forty is very abundant, and from its parts the aggregate ascends to fifty. Its parts are seven, namely, twenty, ten, eight, five, four, two, and one, which when gathered yield fifty. Fifty, however, is quietness and remission, as if a jubilee thus introduces through its similitude from Lenten fasting (*jejunium*) and ascends to an eternal repose.

¶ There are another[[6]](#endnote-6) seven parts of spiritual fasting, namely, to abstain from the seven capital vices, from which like fountains the other vices flow.

¶ Third fasting on the vigils of solemnities is introduced for three causes. For the precept was in the law that those ascending to Jerusalem on the major solemnities offer something and not appear empty. And we certainly ascending to the church offer a fasting of first fruits for the months of fasting, tithes for the soul of fasting, and oblation for the day.

¶ Fasting is triply commended. One because it is done for the satisfaction of sin, but then it is required that one be without mortal sin. Otherwise, one offers a dead body to God, when however the Apostle persuades us to “present your bodies a living sacrifice,” Rom. 12[:1].

¶ A second fasting and better is done to enrich our love for God, about which Matt. 6[:17]: “But you, when you fast anoint your head,” with oil, namely the oil of compassion, “and wash your face,” with the water of compassion.

¶ The third fasting and the best is when one fasts externally in the body and interiorly prays in the mind, according to Isidore,[[7]](#endnote-7) this is against those who can do nothing of good when they fast, unless they are idle and play with others so that thus they do not feel the fasting. Wherefore Boethius[[8]](#endnote-8) for avoiding idleness they follow idleness, it is ridiculous. The first fasting and the good is figured by the fasting of Moses, Exod. 34[:28]. The second fasting and better is figured by the fasting of Elias, 3 Kings. 21[9-28]. The third fasting and the best is figured by the fasting of Christ, Matt. 4[:2]. In fasting four matters are proved, since fasting empties faults, since it examines hunger, since it spares the purse, since it serves gluttony.

/fol. 243rb/

Concerning the first, Isai. 58[:5]: “Is this such a fast as I have chosen.” Concerning the second, Matt. 6[:16]: “When you fast, be not as the hypocrites.” For such a one for this that she subtracts one enemy feeds a double enemy, namely, the world and the devil. Concerning the third, Eccle. 6[:2]: “A man to whom God has given riches,” etc., “yet God does not give him power to eat thereof.” Concerning the fourth, Isai. 58[:4]: “Do not fast as you have done until this day.” And let this be in three ways. One way is that if one fasts and afterwards he may eat better, or if during the time of fasting he seeks out more delicious things, or if one the preceding day or the day following the fast he may eat more.

1. Innocent III, *Sermones de tempore,* sermo 11, *In die cinerum seu capite ieiunii*, (PL 217:360):  Primum ergo jejunium est, quod agitur in quatuor Temporum observantia, tribus de causis quater in anno fit sub trinario: videlicet, ad prosequendum imperium agitur, ad delendum peccatum, et ad exprimendum mysterium. Ad prosequendum imperium agitur hoc jejunium, quia praeceptum est legis, quod ante legem legitur observatum (Exod. XXII), ut ex omnibus Deo primitiae persolvantur. Hoc autem praeceptum etiam ad tempus extenditur, ut sicut quatuor sunt anni tempora, et in quolibet tempore sunt tres menses, ita nos pro primitiis quatuor vicibus jejunemus in anno, et in qualibet vice tribus diebus ad gloriam Trinitatis. Hoc quadripartitum jejunium principium habuit ex Veteri Testamento, sicut legitur **[Col. 0360B]**in propheta: «Jejunium quarti, et jejunium quinti, et jejunium septimi, et jejunium decimi, domui Israel vertetur in dies festos (Zach. VIII).» Nunc autem convenientius jejunatur, in Martio scilicet, et in Junio, in Septembri et Decembri. In Martio namque fuit mundus conditus et redemptus: «Et Verbum caro factum est, et habitavit in nobis (Joan. I).» In Junio lex fuit condita, et sanctuarium institutum, et praecursor natus est Salvatoris. In Septembri expiatio facta fuit, et propitiatio impetrata, et mater orta est Redemptoris. In Decembri mundatum fuit templum et dedicatum, et natus est unigenitus Creatoris. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. Innocent III, *Sermones de tempore,* sermo 11, *In die cinerum seu capite ieiunii*, (PL 217:360-361): Ad delendum peccatum agitur hoc jejunium; ut **[Col. 0360C]**sicut quatuor modis peccamus sub ternario, ita quatuor vicibus sub ternario jejunemus. 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. Patri namque appropriatur potentia, Filio sapientia, Spiritui sancto benignitas; quibus contraria sunt impotentia, ignorantia et malignitas. Hinc Veritas inquit in Evangelio: «Qui peccat in Patrem, remittetur ei; qui in Filium, remittetur ei; qui in Spiritum sanctum, non remittetur ei, neque in hoc saeculo, neque in futuro (Matth. XXII).» **[Col. 0360D]**Secundo modo peccamus transgrediendo legem naturae, transgrediendo legem Scripturae, et transgrediendo legem gratiae. Hoc est triplex illud silentium, de quo legitur: «Dum medium silentium tenerent omnia, et nox in suo cursu medium iter perageret, omnipotens sermo tuus, Domine, de coelis a regalibus sedibus venit (Sap. XVIII).» Primum namque silentium incoepit, quando Cain interfecit Abel (Gen. IV); secundum incoepit, quando sedit populus manducare et bibere, et surrexerunt ludere (Exod. XXXIII); tertium erit vel forte jam est, quoniam superabundavit iniquitas, et refriguit charitas multorum (Matth. XXIV). Tertio modo peccamus in corde, peccamus in ore, peccamus in opere. Hi sunt tres mortui, quos **[Col. 0361A]**Dominus suscitavit, in domo, in porta, in monumento. Mors in domo est, peccatum in cogitatione; mors in porta est, peccatum in locutione; mors in monumento est, peccatum in actione. [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. Innocent III, *Sermones de tempore,* sermo 11, *In die cinerum seu capite ieiunii*, (PL 217:361-362): Quarto modo peccatum distinguitur in peccatum originale, in peccatum veniale, et in peccatum mortale. Hi sunt, serpens, mulier et vir. Serpens, id est concupiscentia, suggerit originaliter; mulier, id est sensualitas, comedit venialiter; vir, id est ratio, consentit mortaliter. Isti sunt quatuor quadrantes, de quorum ultimo Dominus dicit: «Non exiet hinc, donec reddat novissimum quadrantem (Matth. V.), id est donec solvat in poena quod commisit in culpa. 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. Tertio statui convenit tertia multiplicatio, quae a novem ad viginti ascendit; **[Col. 0361D]**quoniam in statu operationis anima visibiles et corporales actiones exercet, quae per viginti septem congrue designantur, qui numerus est solidus. Et habet triplicem dimensionem, ad similitudinem hominis, id est ad longitudinem et latitudinem et spissitudinem. Quarto statui convenit quarta multiplicatio, quae post octoginta redit ad unitatem; quoniam in statu resolutionis anima post varietatem vitae praesentis, revertitur ad puritatem naturae. Nam «corpus quod corrumpitur, aggravat animam (Sap. VI).» Per octoginta namque terminus vitae praesentis accipitur, dicente Propheta: «Si in potentatibus octoginta anni, et amplius eorum, labor et dolor (Psal. LXXXIX).» Ecce quibus rationibus Quatuor Tempora jejunamus. **[Col. 0362A]**Secundum vero jejunium, quod agitur in quadragesimalium abstinentia, tribus de causis semel in anno, sub quadragenario celebratur. Propter trinum exemplum, propter divinum praeceptum, et propter numeri sacramentum. [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. Innocent III, *Sermones de tempore,* sermo 11, *In die cinerum seu capite ieiunii*, (PL 217:362): Propter exemplum ergo jejunamus quadraginta diebus, quia Christus, Moyses, et Elias totidem jejunaverunt, ante legem, sub lege, post legem. Hoc est in principio legis, in medio et in fine. Ante legem Moyses jejunavit, qui accepturus legem ascendit in montem, et fuit ibi cum Domino quadraginta diebus, panem non comedens, et aquam non bibens (Exod. XXXVI). Sub lege jejunavit Elias, qui in fortitudine cibi unius panis ambulavit per desertum quadraginta diebus, usque ad montem **[Col. 0362B]**Dei Oreb (III Reg. XIX). Post legem jejunavit Christus, qui statim post baptismum assumptus est a spiritu in desertum, et jejunavit ibi quadraginta diebus et quadraginta noctibus, et postea esuriit (Matth. IV). Hinc forte apparuerunt discipulis Moyses et Elias in transfiguratione loquentes cum Christo (Matth. XVII). Quadragenarius enim numerus sanctus est in Scripturis (Gen. VII). Nam Deus in diluvio XL diebus et XL noctibus aquas effudit abyssi (Num. XIII). Nuntii Moysi XL diebus terram exploraverunt promissam Israeli (Exod. XVI). Israel XL annis angelorum pane nutritus est in deserto. Jonas subversionis Ninive XL dierum spatio prophetavit (Jon. III). Christus quoque post resurrectionem quadraginta   
   **[Col. 0362C]**diebus remansit in terris (Act. I). [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. Innocent III, *Sermones de tempore,* 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. …

   Propter sacramentum quoque jejunamus XL diebus. Et quadragenarius numerus est superabundans, et ex suis partibus aggregatus ascendit ad quinquagenarium. Cujus partes aggregatae sunt septem, vicenarius, denarius, octonarius, quinarius, quaternarius, binarius, et unitas, quae aggregatae reddunt quinquagenarium. **[Col. 0363B]**Quinquagenarius autem quietem et remissionem significat, propter quinquagenarium jubilaeum in quo debita remittebantur, et omnia quiescebant (Levit. XXV). Jejunamus ergo XL diebus, per hoc significantes, quia sicut quadragenarius numerus ex suis partibus aggregatis pertingit ad quinquagenarium, ita quadragesimale jejunium cum suis partibus congregatis perducit ad quietem et remissionem aeternam. [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
6. Innocent III, *Sermones de tempore,* sermo 11, *In die cinerum seu capite ieiunii*, (PL 217:363-364): Sunt enim septem partes spiritualis jejunii, videlicet, a septem capitalibus vitiis abstinere, a quibus tanquam a septem fontibus caetera vitia oriuntur. His ergo per jejunium arefactis, caeteri vitiorum rivuli desiccantur. Ecce quibus rationibus Quadragesimam jejunamus. 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. Primum ergo jejunium, est jejunium primitiarum, secundum est jejunium decimarum, tertium est jejunium oblationum. In primo jejunio, primitias mensium Deo reddimus; in secundo jejunio,   
   **[Col. 0363D]**decimam anni persolvimus; in tertio vero jejunio, dierum oblationes Deo tribuimus. [↑](#endnote-ref-6)
7. Isidore, *The Etymologies* 6.19.64 (Barney p. 150a): Moreover, he who wishes for his prayer to fly to God should make two wings for it, fasting and almsgiving, and it will ascend swiftly and be clearly heard. [↑](#endnote-ref-7)
8. Boethius, quoted in Bonaventure, rather William de Lancea, *Diaetae Salutis* 2.6 (Opera omnia 8.272b): quod dicit Boetius, quod pro otio vitando, otia sectari ridiculosum est. [↑](#endnote-ref-8)