



*A Letter From
The Archbishop
of Canterbury,
John Whitgift
December 27th
1596*

After his hartie commendacions to yo^r. Almightie & Everlasting mercie
have p^rovoked god mightly to plague yo^r. with this dearthe & scarcitye.
It is to be thought by now have byn more forcible threats to yo^r.
expressed and by off^r in dyett and by wastfull consuming of yo^r.
good creatures: For supplye of yo^r. scarcitye towards the
poorer sort, The Comend^r ma^r hath by praye shewed a most p^rivate
by care and gracious tender affection not only by raising the
markette to be duly stored and great store of graine to be provided
from foraine parts freely without paying any custome but also
as a most vertuous and goodly soveraigne daily studye to qualifie
the necessitye by taking away the cause of it. Therefore for redress
of that abuse and prevention of further punishment by like scarcitye
her mat^r hath strongly commaunded me to signify by my Letters that
it is her highnes express pleasure and absolute commaundment
that publike prayers according to the booke of comon prayer
in our said parish church and chapels be on all needes dayes
and fridays hereafter devoutly used and diligently frequented
that such as be of better abilitie doe in the feare of god use a greater
moderation then heretofore in their dyett but namely that by now
of what degree soever any fleshe be dressed or eaten on
such dayes as by Law stand already prohibited otherwise
as by reason of infirmities be lawfully heretofore licensed and
that not only on fridays and other dayes by Law already appoint
ted for fasting dayes, no Suppers at all be provided or taken
for any houses or private households, but also that every one be
by grievous weakness, do absteyne from Supper altogether
on eacy wednesday at night to the intent that what is by force
of that make and at other meales by abstinence
all superfluous faune fruitfully spent may possibly be set
for the wealthier sort be charitably converted to the reliefe
comfort of the poore and needy. So doe notice hereof man
take according to for mat^r gracious expectation at the hand
of all such dutifull Subjects as be respectives of her Royall
commaundment in this behalf. You must also give speciall
order that the collections for the poore in every parish bee
manfully made. And in respect of the great want charitably
by yo^r. may be of good abilitie increased and duly and
reasonably bestowed for the succor of the most distressed. It is
also further required by her mat^r that yo^r. do not have

A LETTER, WRITTEN BY THE ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY

JOHN WHITGIFT, DATED DEC. 27th 1596.

After my hearty commendations to you, amongst our sins whereby we have provoked God justly to plague us with this dearth and scarcity it is thought that none have been more forceable thereunto than our excess and riot in diet and the wasteful consuming of His good creatures; for the supply of which scarcity towards the poorer sort, the Queen's Majesty hath every way showed a most princely care and gracious tender affection, not only by causing the market to be duly served and great store of grain to be provided from foreign parts freely, without paying any custom, but also as a most virtuous and godly Sovereign daily studieth to qualify the mischief by taking away the cause of it: THEREFORE for redress of that abuse and prevention of further punishment by like scarcity Her Majesty' hath straitly commanded me to signify by my letters that it is Her Highness' express pleasure and absolute commandment that public prayers according to the Book of Common Prayer in every several parish church and chapel be on all Wednesdays and Fridays hereafter devoutly used and diligently frequented that such as be of better ability do in the fear of God use a greater moderation than heretofore in their diet but namely that by none of what degree soever any flesh be dressed or eaten on such days as by law stand already prohibited other than such as by reason of infirmity thereunto licensed and that not only on Fridays and other days by Law already appointed for fast days no supper at all be provided or taken for themselves or their households but also that everyone not letted by grievous weakness do abstain from supper altogether on each Wednesday at night to the intent that what is by forebearing of that meal and at other meals by abstinence from all superfluous fare fruitfully spared may presently especially by the wealthier sort be charitably converted to the relief and comfort of the poor and needy, so as notice may be taken according to Her Majesty's gracious expectation at the hand of all such dutiful subjects as be respective of Her Royal commandment in this behalf. You must also give special order that the collections for the poor in every parish be carefully made. And in respect of the great want charitably by those who be of good ability increased and duly and seasonably bestowed for the succour of the most distressed. It is also further required by Her Majesty that those that have households do not for sparing discharge any of their household to shift for themselves nor themselves to sojourn from their habitation. And likewise the example of ecclesiastical persons may induce men as well as their teaching in this behalf. All such as have benefices must be enjoined to reside in their livings, to keep hospitality, and relieve their neighbours. and such as have pluralities in conscience ought to do the like by their farmers and such as rent the livings at their hands. But there must be a very watchful eye carried by the ministers and churchwardens in every parish or by such charitable discreet men as they shall nominate and appoint unto all inns, taverns, and victualling houses how both the keepers of them with their household and also their guests and resorts to their houses do observe Her Majesty's commandment. Now for the better publishing of Her Highness' gracious pleasure in the premisses you must take precise order that every minister in my diocese of Canterbury do diligently recommend the observations of them unto the people in their several churches and also from time to time in their Sermons and exhortations earnestly and pithily exhort and stir every of them to fervent prayer both public and private, to abstinence, fasting, true humiliation,

to forebear all excess to relieve the poor and needy by good housekeeping, and by setting them on work and by other deeds of alms and brotherly compassion. And considering the most gracious and princely care Her Majesty hath for their relief and that all good means should be used for the health and succour of them in these times of dearth the people must be duly taught to endure this scarcity with patience, and especially to beware how they give ear to any persuasions or practices of discontented and idle brains to move them to repine and swerve from the humble duty of good subjects to the further offence of God and discontentment of Her Majesty that hath so tender a care of their welfare. And for that Her Majesty would be informed how duly these orders shall be observed as her special care is they should, you must therefore procure a Certificate to be made unto you monthly by every the ministers and churchwardens containing as well the names of disobedient relinquents in any the premisses of those well disposed persons who have a dutiful regard and charitable compassion for the relief of the poor to the intent that once every quarter the said Certificate being transmitted over to me I may certify Her Majesty's gracious expectations touching the success and fruit arising of these godly orders, but you must foresee and give special direction that the prescript of these letters be in every several parish observed without calling or suffering persons of every parish to assemble themselves as some heretofore offensively of their own heads have attempted under cover of general fasts and thus I commend you to God's holy protection.

From Lambeth

the xxvii of December 1596

Your very loving friend

Jo: Cantuar

Whereas I have been moved by
the parishioners of Betersden that
with my consent and good liking
they might build and set up such
and so many necessary seats and
forms within the great chancel of the
said parish as shall be thought fit
for those who shall repair there to
receiue of the communion and hearing
of diuine seroice. This is to signify
to the said parishioners that by this
presents I do fully and absolutely grant
as much as in ~~this~~ ^{this is} my ~~full~~ ^{free} consent
unto these motions for the erection of
the said seats and forms at their
will and pleasure. dated from my
house at Canterbury this 15th of May
1602

Sir William Lovelace