

LENT

FASTING • PRAYER • ALMSGIVING

A meaningful Lent requires us to focus on a plan of action. Below are the general practices that the Catholic Church requires of us. Plus we encourage you to plan your own personal Lenten growth in devotion and discipleship.

As a general practice for all Catholics, the Church requires that we fast on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday. We are also asked to abstain from meat on Ash Wednesday and all Fridays of Lent.

Let us rejoice as we ascend these 40 days to the highlight of the greatest Catholic season of the year- EASTER.

Fasting and Abstinence

To foster the spirit of penance and of reparation for sin, to encourage self-denial, and to guide us in the footsteps of Jesus, Church law requires the observance of fast and abstinence (CCC 1249-1253).

1. Abstinence: *All persons who have already celebrated their 14th birthday are bound to abstain from meat on Ash Wednesday and all Fridays of Lent.*

2. Fasting: *Everyone, from the celebration of their 18th birthday to their 59th birthday, is bound to fast on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday. Voluntary fasting on other weekdays of Lent, especially on Wednesdays and Fridays, is highly recommended. Fasting is generally understood to mean eating one full meal each day. Two other partial meals, sufficient to maintain strength, may be taken; but together they should not equal another full meal. Eating between meals is not permitted, but liquids are allowed.*

Other forms of “fasting,” especially regarding alcoholic drink, needless television, video games, Internet use and social entertainment, is of true spiritual value and is strongly encouraged. When health or ability to work would be seriously affected, neither the law of fasting nor the law of abstinence obliges. If in doubt, one’s parish priest or confessor may be consulted.

Prayer

In order to deepen one’s love for Christ, Catholics are urged to read and pray over sacred Scripture; to study the Catechism of the Catholic Church; to participate in devotions offered by the parish; and to pray more fervently — individually, as families, and in common with others. The faithful are exhorted to pray the rosary, to make private visits to the Blessed Sacrament, and to pray especially for vocations to the priesthood and the religious life, for world peace.

Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation: *Lent is a privileged time for celebrating this sacrament. Parishes generally make readily available the Sacrament of Penance, including its communal celebration. (In this way, the social and ecclesial aspects of sin and reconciliation, as well as one’s personal reconciliation with God may be underscored. People should attend also to reconciliation in every aspect of human life — personal, familial, societal, and ecclesial. During the Lenten and Easter time, Catholics are reminded that they are obliged to celebrate the Sacrament of Penance at least once a year.*

The Stations of the Cross *are celebrated publicly in each parish on Fridays during the Lenten season. Parishioners are urged to participate.*

Almsgiving

The act of giving to the poor, in the most ancient tradition of the Church, is an expression of penance, a form of piety, a witness of fraternal charity and an expression of Lenten conversion. Therefore, all Catholics are urged to support generously the charitable works of the Church. People are also encouraged to assist the sick, the aged, the needy and the imprisoned in other ways. Fasting and abstinence together with works of charity help Catholics live in solidarity with the crucified Christ reflected in the image of our brothers and sisters who suffer.

In our Lenten pilgrimage of faith and ascent to the holy mountain of Easter, may God direct our steps to Him, and show us how to walk always in His way.