

PRAYER, FASTING, ALMSGIVING

Prayer, fasting and almsgiving, like three legs of a tripod, make up the traditional practices of Lent. Prayer nourishes our spirits. Fasting disciplines our bodies, helps us seek the Lord with greater intensity and puts us in solidarity with those who suffer. And works of charity enlarge our hearts as we commit ourselves to the good of others.

PRAYER

All of the synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke) tell us that Jesus was led by the Holy Spirit into the desert where he fasted and prayed for 40 days. As disciples, we seek to follow St. Paul's call to "pray always." Lent is a time when we concentrate our prayer on the double meaning of this season: conversion from our sinful ways and renewal of our baptismal promises.

Participating in the Eucharist and praying over the Scripture readings, on a weekly or even a daily basis, are helpful ways of prayerfully entering into the season. Private prayer, family prayer and communal prayer all work together to deepen our prayer life, not only during this season, but also all year long.

Suggestions for Prayer

- Participate in **daily Mass**.
- Participate in our **Friday Lenten Series: Soup Supper, Stations of the Cross and Adoration/Evening Prayer**.
- Attend the **Taizé Prayer Service** on Monday, February 23 and March 23 at 7:30 p.m. in the church.
- **Adoration** every Friday from 7:30 a.m. to 12:15 p.m.
- Attend the **Lent Journey**
- **Pray** as a family; start meals with prayers or pray the rosary.

• **Pray** for one of our RCIA candidates and students preparing for the sacraments of initiation.

• **Receive the sacrament of Reconciliation.**

FASTING

Fasting is an integral part of Lent. Traditionally it has included reducing the amount of food we eat and abstaining from meat.

But why do we fast? Not because our bodies and appetites are something evil that need to be punished, but to allow our physical hunger to remind us of our spiritual hunger, our need for God. Our Lenten fasting is modeled on Jesus' 40-day fast in the desert. Just as he fasted in preparation for his baptism in the Jordan and his public ministry, we fast to remind ourselves of our baptismal commitment and need for renewal. Fasting can take many forms. While we usually fast by eating less, we can also fast from other things, whether they are enjoyable activities or bad habits.

Although fasting can have many beneficial physical effects, it's not the same thing as dieting. The purpose of dieting is to improve the health and beauty of our bodies. The purpose of fasting is to turn our attention to both God and others. Fasting reminds us not only of our dependence on God, but also of the needs of the hungry and the poor. By fasting, we place ourselves in solidarity with suffering people everywhere.

Suggestions for Fasting

- Watch less television and spend the time as a family, write a letter to someone or visit a sick person.
- Lent is a good time to think about our addictions and dependencies, whether to eating, smoking, alcohol,

coffee or shopping. What can you do to break your dependency on any of these substances or actions?

- Focus on a bad habit you have such as being overly critical, gossiping or harboring resentments. Place yourself in God's care and try to give it up for Lent.
- Feed the hungry.
- Decide as a family or group on some food or beverage that you will all give up together for Lent.

ALMSGIVING

Both in our own country and around the world, the gulf between rich and poor seems ever to be widening. As it gets tougher to make ends meet, we sometimes feel resentful or jealous of others who have more. At the same time, we feel guilty about what we have. This cycle of envy and guilt is useless. Lent is a good time to break out of it by cultivating a spirit of gratitude for what we have. Our most precious commodities--health, friendship, love and the beauty of creation--are pure gifts from God. Without these our material possessions are worthless. Gratitude for what we have prompts us to do something for those in need, not out of guilt, but out of compassion. Compassion and generosity towards others involve giving not only from our surplus, but also from our substance.

Suggestions for Almsgiving and Works of Service

- **Donate to the St. Vincent de Paul** for parishioner emergencies.
- Bring food or money saved by fasting to the **Love Truck**.