

Fasting Tips for Lent

I found a great article by Eric Sammons on the truly great Catholic website, *OnePeterFive*, called *To Love Fasting*. I hope you will go and read it for yourselves, but here I will give you some of the highlights: Fasting has always been an essential part of Catholic devotion, something that is necessary for growing in virtue, fighting temptation and obtaining eternal salvation. After all, our Lord did not say “if you fast” but “when you fast.” Jesus also said, “when the Bridegroom (Jesus) is taken away from them (His disciples), then they will fast (Mt. 9:15). Jesus expects us to fast.

Our Catholic forbearers were much more strict in fasting than we are today, especially during the season of Lent. Until quite recently, all Catholics were required to abstain from meat every weekday of Lent and to abstain from meat on Wednesdays, Fridays and Saturdays. That may sound impossible to us, unless you consider the average diet and meal schedule of an average Catholic in those days. Back then, most people ate no more than two meals a day and meat was harder to come by—most people couldn’t afford to eat it more than a couple times a week. We eat three meals a day and with plenty of snacking in between. Nor did our Catholic forbearers consume the vast amounts of carbs and sugar that we modern Americans are accustomed to. Carbohydrates and sugars stimulate the body to eat more frequently; whereas proteins and fats stay with us longer and keep us from getting hungry.

Fasting tip #1: Cut back on carbs and sugars and eat more proteins and fats. Yes, it will make fasting easier, and that’s o.k. Fasting does not mean ‘feeling hungry’ but ‘not eating’ for set periods of time. **Fasting tip #2: Fasting and prayer go together.** Fasting without prayer is really just dieting. However much you decide to fast in addition to the obligatory Ash Wednesday and Good Friday, make sure that you establish a minimum amount of prayer that you will commit to. Saint John Cassian taught that gluttony was the first vice that had to be conquered before we could work on other vices. We see this typified in the children of Israel coming out of Egypt (slavery to sin) and into the Promised Land (heaven). The main vice of Egypt was gluttony, as we see the people of Israel in the desert longing for their ‘flesh pots’ and all the savory foods they enjoyed there.

As we are making our way from slavery to sin to heaven, the first thing we need to leave behind to even begin the journey, is gluttony. Before we can work on our anger, our envy, greed, lust and pride; we must conquer gluttony. And that’s what fasting is for. That’s what Lent is for! Go and read the whole article for yourself; you’ll be glad you did. onepeterfive.com: *To Love Fasting* by Eric Sammons.

Pax,

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