



Why can't Catholics eat meat on Fridays in Lent?

When did the tradition start?

Have you ever accidentally eaten a piece of meat on a Friday in Lent and thought, "darn! I forgot it's Friday!"

It's not easy to avoid meat on Fridays in Lent. Not to mention, it is also inconvenient. Have you ever wondered why we have this rule in place?

Well, the rule used to be that Catholics couldn't eat meat on any Friday of the year. However, through the 1983 revised *Code of Canon Law*, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops were given authority to require American Catholics to abstain from meat on only Ash Wednesday, Good Friday, and Fridays during Lent.

It is important to note that Catholics are still urged to offer a sacrifice on all Fridays, but it does not need to be abstaining from meat.

Jesus suffered and died on a Friday, so Christians have always honored Jesus' sacrifice on Fridays in some form or capacity.

During Lent, we especially remember how Christ sacrificed his flesh for us. To offer penance for our sins on the day that Jesus died to save us from sin, we abstain from "flesh meat" which is meat from mammals and poultry, what the USCCB considers "land animals." The Latin word for meat is *carnis*, which has only applied to meat derived from land animal flesh.

So, how come we ARE allowed to eat fish on Fridays?

The USCCB explains how fish are cold-blooded animals and do not come from the land, so fish is not the same as *carnis* meat. Also, historically, meat was more expensive and eaten mainly at celebrations and festivities, while people ate fish on a daily basis. So, the Early Church was asking people to sacrifice something celebratory during Lent.

Whenever we have to say no to meat on Fridays, as hard as that can be, it is a great opportunity to reflect on the sacrifice Christ made for us and remember the purpose of Lent.

Some people choose to abstain from meat on Fridays all year round. While this practice is not required in the Church, it is a good opportunity to remember how Christ suffered and died for us on a weekly basis throughout the year.

If you're looking for some guidance on some healthy, meatless meals to eat on Fridays in Lent, check out [*From a Monastery Kitchen*](#), sold [here](#).