

Did You Know...



News and trivia from our parish and the Catholic Church

- - contributed by the Christ Child Church Women's Club - -



Christ Child Catholic Church

Dedicated to Growth in Christ and to the Challenges of Loving Service

23230 Summit Road, Los Gatos, CA 95033 ••••• (408) 353-2210 ••••• www.christchild.org

Lent and Alcohol?

As we write these words, Lent 2021 is approaching. Many of us will "give up" something in honor of this tradition, Often it's booze, that stays on the shelf for 40 days.

But did you know that the early years actually saw an increase in liquor consumption during Lent? How could this be so?

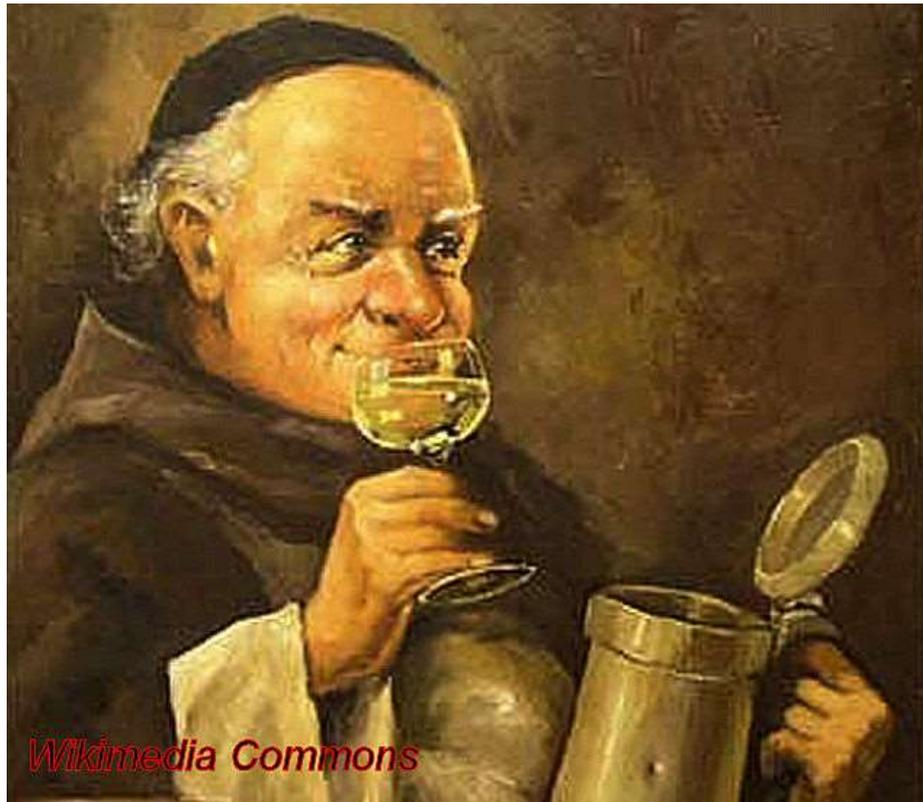
Like a lot of Catholic history, the practice of Lent is varied, complicated, and has changed over time. But one consistency, from the earliest days, is the concept and practice of fasting, in remembrance and honor of Jesus 40-day fast in the desert. But "fasting" has taken on widely different interpretations over the years, and might in fact be described as "personal abstinence".

The duration of the fast has also seen broad variations, but for sure the beginning years saw nearly full adherence to a full forty days.

Let that sink in for a moment... it takes a typical human being about three weeks of zero food intake to starve to death. So, barring Divine intervention for the masses, how would the world's Catholics survive a 40-day fast? Practically speaking, some mitigation had to occur. Small, intermittent meals were a useful stopgap of course, and the "rules" for such were developed.

But as it turns out, beer and wine also saw a substantial increase in consumption during Lent. How could that be?

Well, first of all, there was never any specific ban on these beverages. In fact, it was widely understood that beer and wine were safer than water to drink, in that they did not carry disease. Just as importantly, beer from those long-ago years was a much more stout, nutritious brew than today's more alcohol-intensive products. Thus the absence of "food" per se was to some extent taken up by the hidden-food content of the beers. (In fact, the early beers were only about 2% or less in alcohol content, not enough to even get much of a buzz.)



Now, in these modern times, the "official" Lent fasting has been throttled way back from foregone practices, with only modest diet restrictions for the 40 days, and a measly two days of "wimp" fasting (one meal).

Perhaps as a recognition of such modern leniency, there is the additional custom of "giving up for Lent" something near and dear to us. Each individual's choice is their own, but it's surprisingly common to find that the target for abstinence is booze. Now we know that this wasn't always so; but whether you've abandoned booze, or binge-watching TV series, or any other personal luxury, take a moment now and then to remember where and why it all originates.

While you struggle with the missing pleasantness, remind yourself of the real essence of this tradition, the many sacrifices made by Jesus on our behalf, and the nearly infinite Blessings we all live with each and every day.

Still Curious? See these links ---

<https://aleteia.org/2019/03/08/a-catholics-guide-to-drinking-during-lent/>
<https://www.businessinsider.com/lent-fasting-2018-2>

--- *Karin and Greg Ills*

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