

## LENT PREPARATION CHECKLIST

### FASTING

Fasting consists of one normal meal and two smaller meals that, when combined, do not exceed the one normal meal. There is no snacking between meals. Fasting is binding from adulthood (18) through age 59 (Can. §1252). Expectant mothers and the sick are not bound to fast. When health or ability to work would be *seriously* affected, fasting is not required.

*Fasting is obligatory on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday. These days are also days of abstinence (Can. §1251; see below).*

In addition to these days, I will fast on:

- All Wednesdays of Lent (the day the Lord was betrayed).
- All Fridays of Lent (the day of the Lord's Passion).
- All Saturdays of Lent (the day the Lord passed in the tomb).
- Any combination of two or all three of these days during Lent.
- Ember Days: February 24<sup>th</sup>, 26<sup>th</sup>, and 27<sup>th</sup> ("Ember Days, of ancient origin, were days of fasting for the special sanctification of the four seasons and for obtaining God's blessing on the clergy." Ember Fridays were days of fast and abstinence; Ember Wednesdays and Saturdays were days of fast and partial abstinence [see below]. -TAN Books)

### ABSTINENCE

Abstinence is the elimination of all flesh meat, broths made from meat and meat by-products. It is *not required* that one eat fish on days of abstinence, but it is permissible. Abstinence is binding from age 14 (formerly age seven) until death.

*Abstinence is obligatory on Ash Wednesday and Fridays of Lent. Abstinence is also required on every non-Lenten Friday of the year, except for solemnities (Can. §1251); however, the US bishops conference obtained permission from the Holy See for Catholics in the US to substitute a penitential or charitable practice of their choosing on Fridays outside of Lent.*

In addition to these days, I will abstain on:

- All Wednesdays of Lent.
- All Saturdays of Lent.
- All Wednesdays and Saturdays of Lent.
- I will practice partial abstinence on Wednesdays and Saturdays during Lent (see below).
- I will practice partial abstinence on all days of Lent except Fridays, in which full abstinence is required.

Fasting and partial abstinence, in which meat is permitted only at the main meal, is encouraged on all weekdays of Lent (with full abstinence on Fridays). Fasting and full abstinence are specifically recommended on Holy Saturday, ending with the Easter Vigil service.

Other forms of fasting may include abstaining from certain foods or drinks. Lent is also a good opportunity to research the health benefits of "intermittent fasting" and perhaps incorporate this discipline in your lifestyle year-round.

*Solemnities during Lent, such as Sundays, the Solemnity of St. Joseph, Spouse of the Blessed Virgin Mary (March 19<sup>th</sup>), and the Solemnity of the Annunciation of the Lord (March 25<sup>th</sup>) are not days of penance; as such, the penitential practices of fasting and abstaining are not obligatory on these days.*

### PRAYER

Prayer "is nothing else than a close sharing between friends; it means taking time frequently to be alone with [Him Who] we know loves us...one makes time for the Lord, with the firm determination not to give up, no matter what trials and dryness one may encounter." -St. Theresa of Avila

During the season of Lent I will:

- Attempt to attend Mass once or more during the week.
- Attempt to arrive at Mass 15 minutes early to pour out my heart to God and formulate my intention for the offering of that Mass.
- I will stay five minutes after Mass to thank God for listening to my prayers and to focus on the localization (literally) of Jesus now in my heart and to relish that Presence.

- Make at least one hour of Eucharistic Adoration each week.
- Prayerfully read the Scriptures for 15 minutes thrice a week (preferably every day).
- Pray one decade of the Rosary (preferably five) each day.
- Make a daily examination of conscience each day at noon and again in the evening before going to bed.
- Make a good confession.
- Commit to pray at the 40 Days for Life vigil at Blue Mountain Clinic (February 17<sup>th</sup> to March 28<sup>th</sup>).

### ALMS

Sharing our treasure with those in need is a sign of fraternal charity and a work of justice. Almsgiving also helps to free ourselves from our attachment to wealth and assists in correctly ordering our relationship with created goods.

- Make a contribution to local charity that brings direct relief to the poor (e.g. food bank).
- Do some spring cleaning and take extra clothing or household items to a thrift shop or, depending on the items, other center of need (like Care Net).
- Support the efforts of the Knights of Columbus, who in turn support those in need.

**The Corporal Works of Mercy:** Feed the hungry; give drink to the thirsty; clothe the naked; shelter the homeless; visit the sick; ransom the captive; bury the dead.

**The Spiritual Works of Mercy:** Instruct the ignorant; counsel the doubtful; admonish the sinner; bear wrongs patiently; forgive offenses; comfort the afflicted; pray for the living and the dead.

Other things to do:

- Take part in a faith formation program (religious education, women's group, men's group, etc.).
- Turn off the television an hour (or half hour) before bed and do some spiritual reading.
- Read a book to help you learn more about the Catholic faith (a suggested reading list can be found in the narthex and on our website).
- Log off social media and write small notes to those who might need a word of encouragement, especially those on our parish prayer list published in the bulletin.
- Try to complain less and make fewer excuses.
- Rise 30 minutes earlier and love God with your mind by using that time for spiritual reading.
- Focus less on feeling welcome and seek ways to welcome others.
- Work on eradicating one fault and replace it with a virtue.
- Have a Mass offered for a deceased member of the parish who seems to have been forgotten.
- Plan ahead and resolve to attend all of the liturgies of the Sacred Triduum (Good Friday, Holy Saturday, and the Easter Vigil).

The overall point of the season of Lent is not to do the “minimum” and plow through 40 days of meatless Fridays, but to deeply examine our relationship with Christ. By using all the tools and treasures He has given the Church, we can better our intimacy with Him and live His life with renewed commitment and purpose. The progress we make during Lent, with the help of God's grace, is meant to be something that becomes a permanent habit and a further transformation in Christ, in Whose image we have been created.

Please use this guide prayerfully and only do what you reasonably believe you can do. Challenge yourself, but be humble and realistic; do not let “holy” desire cause you to bite off more than you can chew and leave you disappointed. This is a guide only. The Lord is pleased, very pleased, with small steps made with great love. After prayer and reflection, formulate your intentions for the season of Lent and, then, entrust them—along with all of your interests and desires—to the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of God.

May God favor you with a blessed Lent.