

Year of Reparation

November 1, 2018 to October 31, 2019

This resource is offered as an aid in the instruction of the faithful concerning reparation for sin through catechesis, homilies or other means. Options for acts of reparation for abuse are offered with a view to strengthening discipleship within parish communities.

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When is the Year of Reparation?

The Year of Reparation will begin on November 1, the Solemnity of All Saints, when we will seek prayers of the saints in heaven in support of our efforts of reparation. The year will end on October 31, 2019, although it is hoped that acts of reparation will continue after this date. [Top of the Document](#)

What is reparation?

Acts undertaken through prayer, penance and mercy to amend or atone for the sins committed by oneself or others to repair damage caused in relationship with the person(s) harmed by the sin. This includes damage caused in our relationship with God, the Church and society. [Top of the Document](#)

Why reparation for the offense of others?

Community and relationship are foundational tenets of Christian faith. As members of the Body of Christ we are redeemed and work to respond to God’s constant grace enabling us to grow in unity and holiness. Individualism and isolationism are a real threat to our faith. When we isolate ourselves from the community, we are weakened. Without the strength of the Christian community to form us and to challenge us when needed, we may rationalize our actions and fall into sin. We need to live in the light of Christ and the Christian community to resist the deception and divisiveness of Satan. Being in Christian community means participation in Sunday Mass and the countless other gatherings of the faithful in prayer, fellowship, formation and service.

Another key tenet of the faith is the call to sacrifice and penance. We often try to avoid these whenever possible as they are uncomfortable and even painful acts of self-denial. Holiness is impossible without sacrifice (the Latin *sacrificare* means “to make holy”). Through sacrifice and penance, we turn our attention outside of ourselves, offering ourselves to God to be of service to others. Through sacrificial acts, we make reparation for our actions and, as members of the Body of Christ, for one another.

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What does “reparation” mean?

Reparation is a word we do not hear often, but its meaning is commonly known. The word comes from the Latin *reparare* meaning to make ready again, to restore or to repair. As related to justice, reparation is restitution given to someone against whom a wrong has occurred to repair the damage caused. For many offenses there can be no exact reparation. In theology, reparation refers to actions we undertake to make amends to God for having offended God through sin. It is important to note while reparation may be a response to having sinned, reparation is not a means of earning God’s grace. Rather, reparation is an attempt to repair the damage in our relationship with God caused by our sin or the sin of others. Our acts of reparation are already a response to God’s grace. Traditional practices of prayer, fasting and works of charity or almsgiving strengthen us individually as well as communally in the Body of Christ. As each of us becomes more attuned to God’s presence, our world is transformed by God’s action through us. [Top of the Document](#)

How does restitution work?

First, it is important to note that restitution is not a matter of earning God’s forgiveness, which is freely offered to all through the love and sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Through restitution, we cooperate with God’s grace to be vessels of God’s love and mercy in our world. Acts of reparation or restitution repair the rift in our relationship with God caused by our sin and the sin of others. The more fully each of us allow God to be active in our life, the more tangibly God is present to others around me through my faithful discipleship. God grants all the freedom to accept or reject God. Rejection of God is sin. When we choose things we know are contrary to God’s will, we sin. Acceptance of God is a response to God’s constant grace inviting us to an ever-deepening relationship with the Holy Trinity. When one suffers, we all suffer (1 Cor:12:26). As disciples of Jesus Christ, we are called to bring comfort and gladness found in relationship with God. [Top of the Document](#)

Are Fridays significant for penance?

Wednesdays and Fridays were traditional days of prayer and fasting in early Christianity as we see in the first century document known as the *Didache*. The observance of the Wednesday fast waned, but the Friday observance remained as a way of commemorating the death of the Lord through prayer, fasting and abstinence from meat and fowl. Today we experience this most strongly in Lent, but Fridays are still days of prayer, fasting and penance. [Top of the Document](#)

Didn’t the Church abolish penance and fasting on Fridays?

In short, “no.” In 1966, Saint Pope Paul VI, in his Apostolic Constitution, *Paenitemini*, declared, “By divine law, all the faithful are required to do penance.” Further, he wrote, “The days of penitence to be observed under obligation throughout the Church are all Fridays and Ash Wednesday.” **However**, he allowed each episcopal conference to substitute abstinence and fasting in whole or in part with other works of charity and pious exercises. The reasoning was that in wealthy nations, such as the United States, abstinence from meat and fowl may be penitential but for poorer countries consumption of meat

or fowl was a necessity of life. Many bishops' conferences decided to forego the obligatory meatless Fridays and permitted the faithful to choose their own penance.

The 1983 Code of Canon Law states, "The penitential days and times in the universal Church are every Friday of the entire year and the season of Lent. Abstinence from meat, or from some other food as determined by the Episcopal Conference, is to be observed on all Fridays, unless a solemnity should fall on a Friday. Abstinence and fasting are to be observed on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday" (c. 1250-1251). [Top of the Document](#)

Are there times other than Lent when prayer, penance and reparation are common?

Yes, today, two very common and popular liturgical devotions are the First Friday Devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus and the First Saturday Devotion to the Immaculate Heart of Mary. Ember Days are another traditional penitential observance which occur four times a year. [Top of the Document](#)

What is First Friday Devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus?

The Catechism of the Catholic Church notes, "The prayer of the Church venerates and honors the Heart of Jesus just as it invokes his most holy name. It adores the incarnate Word and his Heart which, out of love for men, he allowed to be pierced by our sins" (2669). St. Margret Mary Alacoque popularized this ancient tradition by which the faithful observers make reparation for sins against God by participating in Mass and receiving holy Communion with the intention of honoring the loving Sacred Heart of Christ on nine consecutive first Fridays. ([click here for how to observe](#)) [Top of the Document](#)

What is First Saturday Devotion to the Immaculate Heart of Mary?

The First Saturday Devotion was invited by Our Lady of Fatima after revealing her Immaculate Heart which is surrounded and pierced by thorns representing the ingratitude and blasphemies of humanity. By Sacramental Confession, participation in Mass and reception of holy Communion, praying five decades of the rosary and meditating on the mysteries of the rosary for 15 minutes. ([click here for how to observe](#)) [Top of the Document](#)

What are Ember Days?

Ember Days were traditionally observed four times a year in each of the natural seasons as a time for giving thanks to God for the gifts of nature. Prayers are offered to use the gifts of nature wisely and in moderation to assist those who were in need. It has been said that Ember Days serve as a quarterly checkup during which, through fasting, we offer a "joyous tithe" to God. The observance included fasting and abstinence from meat on a Wednesday, Friday and Saturday. Observation of Ember Days are no longer mandatory. The dates for the next liturgical year are:

- December 19, 21, 22, 2018 (Wednesday, Friday, Saturday following Dec. 13)
- March 13, 15, 16, 2019 (Wednesday, Friday, Saturday following 1st Sunday of Lent)
- June 12, 14, 15, 2019 (After Pentecost)
- September 18, 20, 21, 2019 (After September 14) ([click here for how to observe](#))

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What about adding prayers like the Hail Mary or the Prayer of St. Michael to the Mass?

It is inappropriate to add these prayers to the Mass. Seeking the aid of the Blessed Virgin Mary, St. Michael, and all the saints is certainly a holy and prudent action. However, in the Mass, all the saints are united with us in our sacrifice of praise and our intercession.

The Mass itself is the most powerful action given to the Church. Our participation in the Mass is a right and a duty by reason of baptism. In the Mass, we are most who we are called to be as God's people, gathered in response to the Holy Spirit and united with Christ with whom and through whom we offer praise and worship to God. During the Mass, we also exercise our baptismal priesthood by prayerfully interceding before the throne of God for all of creation.

We should frequently seek the aid of the saints during our earthly pilgrimage; however, prayers in the Mass are always directed to God. If a pastor/parish schedules communal prayers before or after the Mass, a 10-minute window before and after Mass is to be respected, to allow the faithful time to prayerfully prepare themselves in their own way for the celebration of the Mass. [Top of the Document](#)

How does prayer and fasting strengthen us?

As an institution which is both human and divine, the Church is susceptible to sin through human weakness. God's grace is constantly offered to us, but often we choose our own way and desires rather than the way of God. This is sin. By returning to traditional practices of prayer, fasting and service throughout the year, the communal Church and we as individual disciples are strengthened to avoid sin and to grow in holiness by denying ourselves in service to others. [Top of the Document](#)

Ways for families, individuals and groups to observe this Year of Reparation:

- Participation in daily Mass
- Daily prayers for victims of abuse and those who suffer from lack of resources and assistance; offering prayers for the Church and her ministers
- Fasting (minimally no eating between meals and two smaller meals and one regular meal)
- Pray daily "A Prayer for Our Church" (attached and found on the diocesan website)
- Acts of penance, mercy and service
- Praying the Rosary individually or as a group
- Spending time in prayer before the Blessed Sacrament in the tabernacle or exposed
- Giving alms to or serving those in need; e.g., donating to food pantries
- Praying the Litany of the Holy Eucharist
- Praying the Litany of the Most Precious Blood
- Praying the Stations of the Cross
- Voluntary observance of meatless Fridays throughout the year with fasting or acts of penance and service
- Praying the Angelus three times a day (traditionally prayed at 6 a.m., noon, 6 p.m.)
- Praying the Divine Mercy Chaplet

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Traditional Liturgical Reparatory Penitential Practices

First Friday Mass in honor of the Sacred Heart of Jesus

- Participation in Mass and reception of Communion on nine consecutive first Fridays of each month with the intention of making reparation for the sins and ingratitude of humanity.
- May be accompanied by fasting, abstinence, prayer and works of mercy.

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First Saturday Devotion in honor of the Immaculate Heart of Mary

- Participation in Mass and reception of Communion on five consecutive first Saturdays of each month with the intention of making reparation for the sins of the world.
- Confession
- Five decades of the rosary with meditation on the mysteries for at least 15 minutes
- May be accompanied by fasting, abstinence, prayer and works of mercy.

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Prayer, fasting and abstinence in joyful gratitude for the countless gifts and blessings of God on the Ember Days within Mass if possible.

- December 19, 21, 22, 2018 (Wednesday, Friday, Saturday following Dec. 13) – help to focus our attention of the coming light of the Savior at Christmas and the call to make straight his path.
- March 13, 15, 16, 2019 (Wednesday, Friday, Saturday following 1st Sunday of Lent) – focus our attention on the coming new season of spring growth and to persevere in conversion and penance.
- June 12, 14, 15, 2019 (after Pentecost) – a time of offering first fruits and to pray for priests to be ordained, and to reflect on the graces of the Holy Spirit.
- September 18, 20, 21, 2019 (after September 14) – associated with the harvest, giving thanks, and renewing our hearts in gratitude for God’s abundance.

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Greater reliance and practice of Christian discipleship and fraternity by:

- increasing prayer and the reading of Scripture within the family;
- gathering with other Catholics for fellowship, prayer and formation, e.g., participation in Church organizations, gathering at the parish or within neighborhoods; and
- participating in parish and organizational efforts to serve the poor and the vulnerable.

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An increased effort for all adults to participate in the diocesan Ethics and Integrity in Ministry (EIM) program (whether a minister or not) to help ensure the safety of children and vulnerable adults in our parishes and our communities.

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