

OUR FAITH

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The Sacrament of Reconciliation

According to Church law, all Catholics “having reached the age of discretion” are required to confess all “grave sins” at least one a year. It is also recommended that they confess venial sins. Lent is the ideal time to make a good confession. Most parishes offer extended confession times and even special penance services.

Catechism CONNECTION

“It is called the sacrament of forgiveness, since by the priest’s sacramental absolution God grants the penitent ‘pardon and peace.’ It is called the sacrament of Reconciliation, because it imparts to the sinner the life of God who reconciles: ‘Be reconciled to God.’”

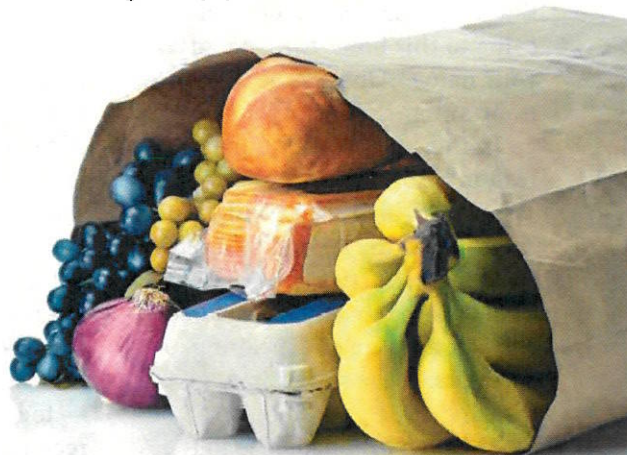
— *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1424

SIGNS OF THE SEASON

Fasting

Fasting, one of the Lenten practices, is often observed as fasting from food. It is not because our bodies need to be punished (or that we need to go on a diet). We fast to allow our physical hunger to remind us of our spiritual hunger, our need for God. We fast to remind ourselves of our baptismal commitment and need for renewal.

Fasting not only reminds us of our dependence on God but also on the needs of others, the hungry and the poor. Fasting is a Gospel value, but not fasting by itself. Fasting and almsgiving are Gospel twins. Our tradition of fasting has never been to purge, to deprive the body for deprivation’s sake, but to have more to give away. We fast in order to place ourselves in solidarity with the poor and hungry. If the grocery money saved by our fasting does not somehow help feed the poor and hungry then our fasting is empty and useless.



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FAMILY ACTIVITY

Random Acts of Kindness

Part of penance is service, and we are called to serve one another with joyful hearts! As a family, write out several random acts of kindness that can be carried out over the week. Include things like smiling at someone, picking up trash, inviting someone to play a game, making a phone call to a grandparent, and helping someone carry a package. Throughout the week, have each family member draw a slip and complete the action. When everyone has completed their random act, talk about what happened and how it felt. Be sure to pray for the recipients of your acts of kindness.