

## A PRIMER ON LENT, FASTING AND ABSTINENCE FOR YOU.

Summed up succinctly, Roman Catholics must fast and abstain from meat on Ash Wednesday, Wednesday, February 17, 2021 and Good Friday, April 2, 2021. Additionally, they must abstain from meat on all Fridays during [Lent](#).

[Lent](#) is a 40-day season of prayer, fasting, and almsgiving that begins on Ash Wednesday and ends at sundown on Holy Thursday. It's a period of preparation to celebrate the Lord's Resurrection at Easter. During [Lent](#), we seek the Lord in prayer by reading Sacred Scripture; we serve by giving alms; and we practice self-control through fasting. We are called not only to abstain from luxuries during [Lent](#), but to a true inner conversion of heart as we seek to follow Christ's will more faithfully. We recall the waters of baptism in which we were also baptized into Christ's death, died to sin and evil, and began new life in Christ.

Many know of the tradition of abstaining from meat on Fridays during [Lent](#), but we are also called to practice self-discipline and fast in other ways throughout the season. Contemplate the meaning and origins of the [Lenten](#) fasting tradition in this reflection. In addition, the giving of alms is one way to share God's gifts—not only through the distribution of money, but through the sharing of our time and talents. As St. John Chrysostom reminds us: “Not to enable the poor to share in our goods is to steal from them and deprive them of life. The goods we possess are not ours, but theirs.” (Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 2446).

In [Lent](#), the baptized are called to renew their baptismal commitment as others prepare to be baptized through the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults, a period of learning and discernment for individuals who have declared their desire to become Catholics.

**Ash Wednesday** is one of two yearly days of obligatory fasting and abstinence for Roman Catholics, along with **Good Friday**. According to the [United States Conference of Catholic Bishops](#), the norms of fasting are obligatory from age 18 until age 59.

Fasting means a person is permitted to eat one full meal. Two smaller meals may also be taken, but they are not to equal that of a full meal.

The rule of abstinence from meat is binding upon Catholics aged 14 and onwards.