

FAST AND ABSTINENCE

Fasting regulations

One of the most ancient practices linked to the season of Lent is fasting. Fasting is not only a discipline of self control; but it also serves as an aid to prayer. Just as our bodies hunger for physical food, so too, do our souls hunger for God. By fasting we signify our oneness with the Lord, acknowledge our need for conversion, and give witness to our solidarity with those less fortunate. Traditionally, the canonical obligation of fasting has been understood in the church as the taking of only one full meal a day. These traditions of fasting and abstinence are an expression of our desire to be converted in our hearts, to be reconciled with each other, and to love our neighbor.



The U.S. Catholic bishops call for all Catholics 14 years and older to abstain from meat on Ash Wednesday, Good Friday and the Fridays of Lent. Abstinence forbids the consumption of meat, but not of eggs, milk products or condiments made of animal fat.

Catholics who are 18 to 59 years old are to fast on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday. Fasting refers to the quantity of food eaten. Traditionally, fasting calls for refraining from eating between meals and consuming only one full meal per day. Some food which will not equal another full meal is permitted.

"This, rather, is the fasting that I wish: releasing those bound unjustly, untying the thongs of the yoke; setting free the oppressed, breaking every yoke; sharing your bread with the hungry, sheltering the oppressed and the homeless; clothing the naked when you see them, and not turning your back on your own." (Is 58:6-7)

Other forms of penance that we are encouraged to observe during Lent include:

- **Prayer:** In prayer, we encounter and walk with God. Opportunities for prayer can include attending Mass, praying the liturgy of the hours, praying within the family, visiting a chapel, prayerfully reading the Bible, praying the rosary or praying before the Blessed Sacrament.
- **Almsgiving:** This penitential practice entails giving money or other resources for the benefit of those in need. One possible source of this money is that which has been saved from fasting or other means of self-denial. In our diocese, we are encouraged to give alms to the Ashes to Easter project, which benefits missionaries from our diocese.



Prayer



Fasting



Almsgiving