

duty to penance into a means of implementing the right of the poor to their part in our abundance. We also recommend spiritual studies, beginning with the Scriptures as well as the traditional Lenten devotions (sermons, Stations of the Cross, and the Rosary) and all the self-denial summed up in the Christian concept of "mortification".

Let us witness to our love and imitation of Christ by special solicitude for the sick, the poor, the underprivileged, the imprisoned, the bed-ridden, the discouraged, the aged, the stranger, the lonely, and persons of other color and nationalities of background other than our own. A catalogue of not merely suggested but required good works under these headings is provided by Our Blessed Lord Himself in His description of the Last Judgment.

Then the King will say to those at his right hand, 'Come, O blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.' Then the righteous will answer Him, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed You, or thirsty and give You drink? And when did we see You a stranger and welcome You, or naked and clothe You? And when did we see You sick or in prison and visit You? And the King will answer them, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me'. Mt 25:34-40

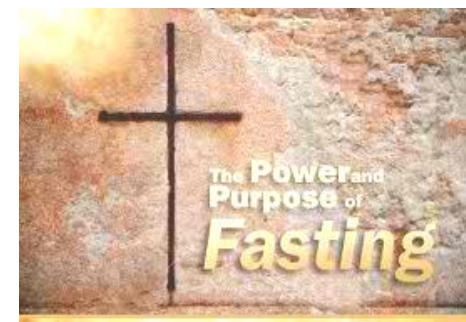
This salutary word of the Lord is necessary for all the year but should be heeded with double care during Lent.

Everyday Fast and Feast Choices

We can use Lent to fast from certain things and to feast on others.

- Fast from gossip; Feast on truth
- Fast from problems that overwhelm; Feast on prayer that sustains
- Feast on faith; Fast from anxiety
- Fast from judging others; Feast on the Christ dwelling in them
- Fast from emphasis on differences; Feast on the unity of life
- Fast from thoughts of illness; Feast on the healing power of God
- Fast from pride; Feast on humility
- Fast from discontent; Feast on gratitude
- Fast from anger; Feast on patience
- Fast from pessimism; Feast on optimism
- Fast from complaining; Feast on appreciation
- Fast from negatives; Feast on affirmatives
- Fast from bitterness; Feast on forgiveness
- Fast from self-concern; Feast on compassion for other
- Fast from personal anxiety; Feast on eternal truth
- Fast from discouragement; Feast on hope.

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Rules of Fasting and Abstinence

1) **Abstinence:**

No meat is eaten on days of abstinence.

Days of Abstinence are every Friday in Lent, Ash Wednesday, and Good Friday.

Everyone 14 and older is bound to abstain from meat on days of abstinence (invalids, pregnant and nursing mothers are exempt).

2) **Fasting:**

Fasting means having only one full meal to maintain one's strength. Two smaller meatless and penitential meals are permitted according to one's needs, but they should not equal the one full meal.

Eating solid foods between meals is not permitted.

Days of fasting are Ash Wednesday and Good Friday.

Everyone from 18 but not yet 60 years of age is bound to the law of fasting (again, invalids, pregnant and nursing mothers are exempt).

3) **Friday Abstinence Outside of Lent:**

It should be noted that Fridays throughout the year are *designated days of penance*. The *Code of Canon Law* states that Friday is a day of abstinence from meat throughout the year. The American Bishops have allowed us to choose a different form of penance rather than abstaining from meat but there must be some form of penance, for this is the day we commemorate Christ's suffering and death. The bishops stress that "[a]mong the works of voluntary self-denial and personal penance...we give first place to abstinence from flesh meat" (*Pastoral Statement on Fasting and Abstinence*).

Why Fasting and Abstinence?

We are required by Church law to observe the prescribed days of fasting and abstinence, which is the fifth precept of the Church. Today, the regulations are not as prohibitive. In 1966, Pope Paul VI issued his Apostolic Constitution on Penance, *Paenitemini*, which states:

The time of Lent preserves its penitential character. The days of penitence to be observed under obligation throughout the Church are all Fridays and Ash Wednesday, that is to say the first days of "*Grande Quaresima*" (Great Lent), according to the diversity of the rite. Their substantial observance binds gravely.

Abstinence and fast are to be observed on Ash Wednesday or, according to local

practice, on the first day of 'Great Lent' and on Good Friday.

1. Abstinence laws consider that meat comes only from animals such as chickens, cows, sheep or pigs – all of which live on land. Birds are also considered meat. Abstinence does not include meat juices and liquid foods made from meat. Thus, such foods as chicken broth, consommé, soups cooked or flavored with meat, meat gravies or sauces, as well as seasonings or condiments made from animal fat are technically not forbidden. However, moral theologians have traditionally taught that we should abstain from all animal-derived products (except foods such as gelatin, butter, cheese and eggs, which do not have any meat taste). Fish is a different category of animal. Salt and freshwater species of fish, amphibians, reptiles, (cold-blooded animals) and shellfish are permitted.

2. The law of fasting allows only one full meal a day but does not prohibit taking some food in the morning and evening, observing—as far as quantity and quality are concerned—approved local custom.

To the law of abstinence those are bound who have completed their 14th year of age. To the law of fast those of the faithful are bound who have completed their 18th year and up until the beginning of their 60th year. As regards those of a lesser age, pastors of souls and parents should see to it with particular care that they are educated to a true sense of penitence.

The United States Bishops issued their document *On Penance and Abstinence* the same year to give the US Catholics spiritual

guidelines in implementing the directives in *Paenitemini*.

Wherefore, we ask, urgently and prayerfully, that we, as people of God, make of the entire Lenten season a period of special penitential observance.

Following the instructions of the Holy See, we declare that the obligation both to fast and to abstain from meat, an obligation observed under a more strict formality by our fathers in the faith, still binds on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday. No Catholic Christian will lightly excuse himself from so hallowed an obligation on the Wednesday which solemnly opens the Lenten season and on Friday called "Good" because on that day Christ suffered in the flesh and died for our sins.

In keeping with the letter and spirit of Pope Paul's constitution *Paenitemini*, we preserve for our dioceses the tradition of abstinence from meat on each of the Fridays of Lent, confident that no Catholic Christian will lightly hold himself excused from this penitential practice.

The US Bishops not only reinforce the fasting and abstinence guidelines, they give recommendations on how to continue this spirit of Lent throughout the 40 days.

For all other weekdays of Lent, we strongly recommend participation in daily Mass and a self-imposed observance of fasting. In the light of grave human needs which weigh on the Christian conscience in all seasons, we urge particularly during Lent, generosity to local, national, and world programs of sharing of all things needed to translate our