

Lenten Guidelines

Abstinence

Abstinence is to be practiced by all Catholics who are 14 years of age or older.

Abstinence is practiced on **Ash Wednesday and on all Fridays during Lent.**

Ash Wednesday: This day is observed by fasting and abstinence.

Lenten Fridays: These days are marked by the discipline of abstinence from meat.

Good Friday: This day is observed by fasting and abstinence. Traditional abstinence is the practice of refraining from meat and meat products.

Entering fully into the spirit of the Lenten fast, we are also encouraged to abstain from other foods, practices or activities. The Lenten fast is one of penance. Our self-denial is a way of emphasizing our dependence on God. Failure to observe individual days of penance is not considered serious. However, failure to observe a substantial number or all of the penitential days during Lent must be considered serious.

Those under the age of 14

Fasting and abstinence are not always possible for the younger members of the community. However, they should be encouraged to observe the spirit of the Lenten fast by assuming a penance appropriate to their age.

Those age 18-59 years old



Fasting is to be observed on **Ash Wednesday and Good Friday** by all Catholics who have celebrated their 18th birthday and who have not yet celebrated their 59th birthday.

Age 59 years and older

Those who have celebrated their 59th birthday are welcome to share with the community in the practice of fasting. However, they should take appropriate care regarding their personal health conditions.

How we do it...

In the customary fast, **those who are bound by this may take only one full meal.** Two smaller meals are permitted if necessary to maintain strength according to one's needs, but eating solid foods between meals is not permitted.

In the fast of the early Church, the fast began upon rising. No meals were taken until the customary work day ended at approximately 5 p.m. A glass of juice may be taken in the morning and simple liquids during the day, e.g., water, coffee, tea. The fast ends with a brief prayer, followed by an adequate meal. For many this may work as a more natural way to fast.

Why we do it...

When we fast and abstain, we do it together.

The practice of the Lenten fast and Paschal fast is a practice of the whole community. Though the fast is carried out personally, we are united in our action through Jesus Christ. Our united fast and abstinence are our prayers to the Father through Jesus.

Our actions speak louder than our words.

Both personally and as a community we deliberately place ourselves in need (hunger being the most basic need) so that we can discover that for which we hunger spiritually in our lives and in our world. We do this to give concrete expression to our trust in God and to give us the spiritual sustenance we require. Our joint action is intended to strengthen our deep belief that the God who raised Jesus from the dead also fills our every need.