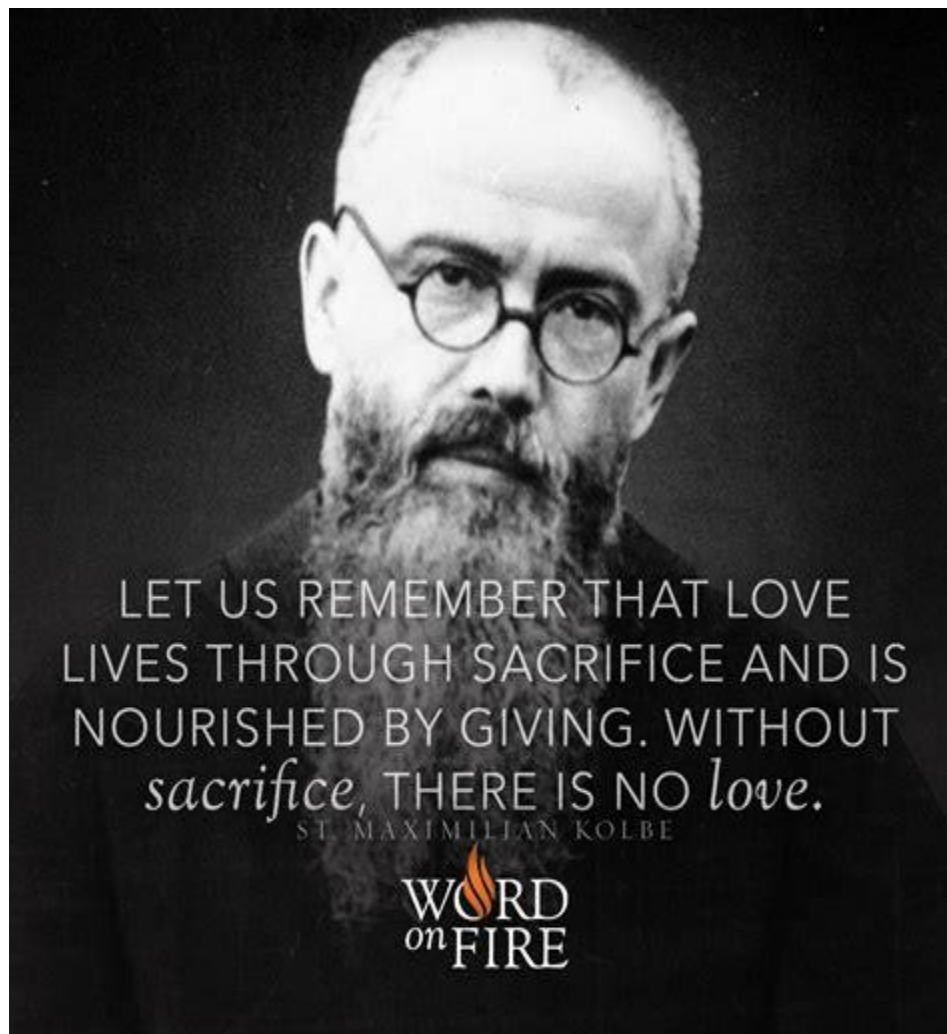


FROM FATHER JOHN: *“A clean heart create for me, God; renew within me a steadfast spirit. My sacrifice, O God, is a contrite spirit; a contrite, humbled heart, O God, you will not scorn.” ~ Psalm 51:12, 19*

Lord Jesus Christ, Son of the living God, have Mercy on me, a Sinner!



Someone recently asked why Catholics give up meat on Fridays during Lent. Actually, we are called to give up something on every Friday throughout the year. The Second Vatican Council changed the requirement to give up meat each Friday throughout the year to a requirement to either give up meat or to choose something else to give up on the Fridays outside of the season of Lent. What this means is that we have the option to choose what we'd like to give up on those Fridays during ordinary time, the Easter season, Advent and the Christmas season.

The Bishop, Saint Peter Chrysologus, said *“There are three things, my brethren, by which faith stands firm, devotion remains constant, and virtue endures. They are prayer, fasting and mercy. Prayer knocks at the door, fasting obtains, mercy receives. Prayer, mercy and fasting: these three are one, and they give life to each other. Fasting is the soul of prayer, mercy is the lifeblood of fasting.”*

By giving something up on Fridays, whether meat during Lent or something else outside of Lent, we are offering something we desire to God. And in doing so, we express sorrow for our sins and atone for our sins.

This is analogous to making restitution for the sin of stealing something. When we steal something we need to make amends to the person we stole from; we need to give back to them what we stole. We can think of sins as stealing from God and we need to atone (make amends) for our sins.

St. John Chrysostom wrote, *“Fasting is the change of every part of our life, because the sacrifice of the fast is not abstinence but the distancing from sins.”* In making this sacrifice, we acknowledge the sacrifice our Lord Jesus made for us on the cross. We acknowledge that our Lord and God died for us; to save us from our own sinfulness.

When we give up meat, we enter into a spiritual exercise that builds up our willpower to resist the temptation to sin. When we give up earthly things that we may desire it helps us to focus on God and our relationship with Him as we become more detached from the distractions of the created world. It reminds us that we live for something greater than the mere things of the earth; we live for God.

I’ve never liked vegetables. In fact, I dislike most of them intensely. When I was a child, my mom made my brothers and me eat at least four ounces of vegetables every single night at dinner. She did this to make sure we ate something healthy every day.

The sacrifice of meat on Fridays during Lent is similar to having to eat your vegetables every day. The Church chooses to require us to give up meat during Lent, rather than giving us an option like the other Fridays throughout the year, in

order to make sure we do something that is spiritually healthy during the season of Lent.

May God Bless you and all those who love the Lord.

