

LENT- A PENITENTIAL SEASON

Lent is a time of conversion and penance, when we as Catholics focus those areas of our lives that damage in some way our relationship with God. Through acts of repentance (literally “turning back” to God), this is a time where we reconcile ourselves with God through our Lenten practices of prayer, fasting and almsgiving.

Fasting and Abstinence

Fasting (limiting the amount of food that we eat) and abstinence (doing without certain foods) are two ways that we sacrifice during Lent.

The Church law of ABSTINENCE- not eating meat- applies to all those between 18 and 59. We practice abstinence on all Fridays during Lent.

FASTING allows for only one full meal a day, as well as two smaller meals that together do not equal a full meal. Eating between meals is prohibited. Ash Wednesday and Good Friday are days of FASTING and ABSTINENCE. A person’s age, health condition, medications, pregnancy, those on special diets for medical reasons and those who work at extremely physical jobs are all factors that affect how strictly one is required to fast.

PRAYER

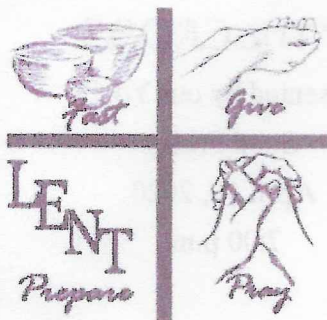
Lent is a time to refocus and strengthen our prayer life. It is important to take time to reflect on how we are living our faith and finding the quiet we need to hear the voice of God.

Lent is a good time to commit to regular prayer. We can choose to lengthen the time we spend in prayer by setting a regular prayer time, try a different form of prayer, read the daily Mass readings (readily available on on-line), pray the rosary, attend Stations of the Cross, spend time before the Blessed Sacrament at Adoration or read a spiritual book.

GIVING

Almsgiving is the act of donating money or material goods to the poor and needy as an act of charity and penance.

Our giving should be done in a Lenten spirit. Our motivation in giving should be one of charity and sacrifice and does not always have to be monetary or material. We can give of our time and talent, through activities such as volunteer work, visiting the sick, homebound or the elderly.



It's Not Always About Giving Things Up...

Many of us were taught that fasting was a time of “giving things up”, such as desserts. Another way to look at fasting is to “give up” actions or attitudes (resentment, anger, bad habits such as gossiping, etc.). This type of sacrifice can lead to conversion of the heart. Sometimes these types of Lenten fasting are a more difficult penance than giving up chocolate.