

Guidelines Regarding Fast and Abstinence

February, 2010

Prepared by the Office of Worship, Diocese of Gary

The Lenten Fast

Ash Wednesday:

This day is commemorated by fasting and by abstinence from meat.

Lenten Fridays:

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

The Lenten Fast is a fast of penance.

Our self-denial is a way of emphasizing our dependence on God.

The Paschal Fast

“The Paschal Fast must be kept sacred. It should be celebrated everywhere on Good Friday, and where possible should be prolonged throughout Holy Saturday” (Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy # 110)

Good Friday through Holy Saturday:

These days are marked by fasting and by abstinence from meat. Please note that these days are not part of Lent or the Lenten Fast.

The Paschal Fast is a fast of anticipation.

The observance of this most ancient fast is a solemn way to prepare ourselves for the reception of the Easter Communion.

How do we fast?

The customary fast:

- ✘ This fast allows for only one full meal to be taken during the day. Two smaller meals are permitted, if necessary, to maintain strength according to one's needs. Eating solid foods between meals is not permitted.

The fast of the early church:

- ✘ This fast begins upon rising. No meals are taken until the customary work day (5:00 p.m.) is ended.
- ✘ A glass of juice may be taken in the morning and simple liquids such as water, coffee and tea, during the day. The fast ends with a brief prayer followed by an adequate meal. For many this may work as a more natural way to fast.

Age guidelines for fasting:

- ✘ 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.

How do we abstain?

Traditional abstinence:

- ✘ This is the practice of refraining from meat and meat products.

Abstinence as penance:

- ✘ Entering fully into the spirit of the Lenten Fast and the Paschal Fast, we are also encouraged to abstain from other foods, practices or activities.

Age guidelines for abstinence:

- ✘ Abstinence is to be practiced by all who are 14 years of age and older.

When we fast and abstain, we do it together:

The practice of the Lenten Fast and the Paschal Fast is a practice of the whole parish community. Though the fast is carried out personally, we are united in our action through Jesus Christ. Our united fast and abstinence is our prayer to the Father through Jesus. Those who have already celebrated their 59th birthday are welcome to share with the community in these practices. However, they should take appropriate care regarding their personal health.

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 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.

We can see that the Lenten Fast and the Paschal Fast are not ancient diet plans. If we lose some unwanted pounds it's an added blessing.

Why do we fast and abstain?