

LENTEN REGULATIONS

FAST AND ABSTINENCE

With the beginning of the holy season of Lent, the Church proclaims anew Christ's call to penance and conversion of life. "If anyone wishes to come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me." (Mt., 16, 24)

The entire season of Lent from Ash Wednesday, March 9th to the Mass of the Lord's Supper exclusive, April 21st, is a penitential season, a time for self-denial, prayers and Christian charity.

The Easter Triduum begins with the evening Mass of the Lord's Supper, reaches its high point in the Easter Vigil and closes with evening prayer on Easter Sunday.

The fast of Good Friday then is different from that of Ash Wednesday. This fast as a paschal fast is a day of fast required by the Church. The instruction recommends that this fast extend past Friday to the Easter Vigil. On Good Friday and, if possible, on Holy Saturday until the Easter Vigil, the Easter Fast is observed everywhere.

During this season you are encouraged to participate in Mass and receive Holy Communion daily, to receive the Sacrament of penance, to attend Lenten devotions and the Stations of the Cross, to read the Scriptures prayerfully and to perform acts of self-denial and works of mercy.

The specific discipline of the Church of the United States regarding penitential days is as follows:

- 1. The days of fast and abstinence are Ash Wednesday and Good Friday.**
- 2. The Fridays of Lent are days of abstinence.**
- 3. The Fridays of the year, outside of Lent, are designated as days of penance, but each individual may substitute the traditional abstinence from meat for some other practice of voluntary self-denial as penance. This may be physical mortification or acts of religion, charity or Christian witness.**

Those between the ages of 18 and 59 are obliged to fast; by this obligation the individual is permitted only one full meal in the day.

At the age of 14 people are obliged to abstain. The law of abstinence forbids the eating of meat, but not eggs, milk products or condiments of any kind even though made from animal fat.

The obligation to observe the laws of fast and abstinence "substantially" or as a whole is a serious obligation.

Failure to observe any penitential day in itself is not considered serious. It is the failure to observe any penitential days at all, or a substantial number of such days, which must be considered serious.

"Have mercy, Lord, we have sinned," the Church prays on Ash Wednesday. May the awareness of our sinfulness urge us to respond to Christ's teaching of our need to do penance.

The time for fulfilling the paschal precept (Easter Duty) extends from the First Sunday of Lent, March 13th to Trinity Sunday, June 19th.