

Prayer + Fasting + Almsgiving

As we begin this season of repentance and reflection, let us contemplate what this time means and how the three pillars of Lent lead us to a closer relationship with God.

The word Lent comes from an old English word meaning “spring,” or “a new birth.” This time of year helps us to renew our lives as Catholics and renew our life in Jesus, his Church, and his Father. These 40 days allow us to journey with Jesus through his passion and death leading us to rejoice in his resurrection. This is the reality of the Paschal Mystery, the essence of our sacramental life in the Church.

In order to be fully immersed in the Lenten experience, the Church gives us three extraordinary ways to draw closer into this mystery: Prayer, Fasting, and Almsgiving.

- + **Prayer:** Prayer is conversation with God. It is essential for fasting and almsgiving because prayer gives us the strength to fast. Pope Francis said, “Lent is a privileged time for prayer.” In prayer, we draw closer in relationship with God. Relationship with God makes us grateful for the blessings we have received. Prayer is the cornerstone of our Lenten journey and is vital to all of our actions in life.

Scripture References for Prayer: Zephaniah 3: 17; Joel 2: 1-2
John 16: 33; Philippians 3: 10-11

- + **Fasting & Abstinence:** Fasting and abstinence are old traditions in Judeo-Christian history and early Lenten practice. Found in the Scriptures, they offer a way of growing closer to God. Pope Francis reminds us, “Fasting makes sense if it really chips away at our security and, as a consequence, benefits someone else...”

The current regulations are as follows:

- Individuals between the ages of 18 and 59 are required to fast on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday by having only one full meal and two smaller meals that together are not equal to a full meal.
- All over the age of 14 are required to abstain from meat on Ash Wednesday and Fridays during Lent.

In addition to the above traditional forms, try fasting from social media, technology, gossip, and excessive screen time. Fasting reminds us of our hunger for God.

Scripture References for Fasting: Joel 2: 12-14; Isaiah 58: 6-7
Matthew 6: 16-18; Mark 1: 12-15

- + **Almsgiving:** Almsgiving (giving) is a response to God, one that we can come to through prayer and fasting. It is a way to live out our gratitude for all that God has given us, reflecting the realization that we are the Body of Christ, responsible for each other. Justice, mercy, and charity are integral elements of our baptism that call us to be disciples of Jesus.

Scripture References for Almsgiving: Leviticus 19: 9-10; Proverbs 19: 17
Luke 19: 1-10; Romans 15: 25-28

~ Prayer, Fasting, and Almsgiving lead us to the heart of what Lent is about - a deeper conversion. ~