

## Lenten Message - Fasting and Prayer



Dear Friends,

The rules of Fasting and Abstinence have changed over the years. Serious obligation to fast exists now only on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday and abstinence from meat on all other Fridays during Lent.

Fasting is a practice found throughout Scripture. A fast in the Bible is usually a voluntary, total abstinence from food for a set time for the purpose of devoting ourselves to seeking God. Fasting denies our flesh what it wants so that we can focus more clearly on strengthening ourselves spiritually.

Why should we fast?

Because Jesus told us to! Fasting and prayer was a regular practice in the early church. When we fast, we humble ourselves before God and spiritual benefits will follow.

Not everyone is able to fast. If you are not able to fast completely from food, you can simplify your foods, cut out the big meals and eat crackers, toast, simple breads or fruit, cheese or juice. Many of us are unable to abstain from food for medical reasons. In that case, we can deny ourselves something else such as fasting from television or social media.

Fervent prayer and fasting practiced together are a *powerful combination*! When we fast, we don't just stop eating, we start *listening*. Fasting and prayer clears away the distractions and allows us to clearly hear the voice of the Lord for direction in our lives. As we spend time seeking God in fasting and prayer, we will begin to see a problem or an event from *two* perspectives: we will see ourselves the way *God* see us and the situation we're praying for as *He* sees it.

Fasting focuses our commitment to spend time with God, because we are paying a price to do so. Our hunger is a reminder of why we are doing this. We deny our bodies food for a time to awaken the *spiritual* hunger for God inside of us.

Fasting and prayer will deepen our relationship with God and when we willingly give up food to spend time with Him, we will develop a deeper intimacy with Him.

As you spend time in fasting and prayer, believe that God will give you wisdom and understanding. Not only in the thing you're praying for but also for every area of your life. He will give you a clear mind and better understanding.

Ask God to show you your heart and to show you what you've filled it with over the last few years. As He reveals the baggage you've been carrying, take each piece and give it to God. Let go of it! Lay it at His feet. He will haul it away and clean up your heart.

If you want divine intervention, seek God through prayer and fasting!

**In Faith,**

***Fr. Ignatius Tran***