

“WHY ARE YOU AFRAID?
HAVE YOU STILL NO FAITH?”

(MARK 4:40)





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Bishop Paul is also consultor of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue and Congregation for the Evangelisation of Peoples, and member of the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development.



Bishop Paul receiving a chalice from Pope Francis during the Papal Mass at Sheikh Zayed Sports City Stadium, Abu Dhabi (5 February 2019)

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PASTORAL LETTER 2019

**BISHOP PAUL HINDER OFM CAP.
APOSTOLIC VICAR OF SOUTHERN ARABIA**

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

1. There are moments in our lives, when we are terribly frightened because we are exposed to powers stronger than ourselves. I remember a moment many years ago when I was with a Capuchin friend on a six-day mountain hike. One evening, while in an extremely exposed place, we were suddenly surprised by a heavy thunderstorm. Lightning was hitting the ground around us in a terrifying way. There was no time to escape. Fortunately, nothing bad happened. However, it was an experience that reminded me of what the people of Israel must have felt at Mount Sinai: "On the morning of the third day there was thunder and lightning, as well as a thick cloud on the mountain, and a blast of a trumpet so loud that all the people who were in the camp trembled" (Exodus 19:16).

"All of us experience moments when we are terrified, afraid and in great distress."

PASSING THROUGH MOMENTS OF CRISIS

2. All of us experience moments when we are terrified, afraid and in great distress. The reasons can be very different: discovering the first symptoms of a life-threatening illness; failure in professional life; loss of a job; the sudden death of a close family member or friend. We may be frightened because of political unrest in the world, especially in the Middle East, where at any moment a major conflict with terrible consequences for all of us can erupt. Many are afraid of losing their homes and residence permits and of suddenly becoming literally homeless.
3. Many of the faithful are also afraid that the Church will no longer be what she was in the past or what some of the faithful consider

her to be. Many are deeply concerned when they see or hear about grave misbehaviour and sin even in higher ranks of the Church where we least expect it. All these things and many more poison the climate and make us sometimes feel helplessly exposed to the powers of evil. Mistrust can arise within our hearts and lead us to scepticism which, in turn, paralyses our faith, hope and love. Sometimes we may have the feeling of a mouse in front of a cat, unable to move and resigned to an inevitable death.

MANIFESTATION OF GOD'S POWER IN OUR TRIALS

4. However, it is not only the powers of evil that cause us distress. We can also be struck by the experience of God's overwhelming greatness in the midst of our own weakness and emptiness. This was the experience of the patriarchs and prophets in the Old Testament. They were filled with wonder and awe in the presence of the God who called them. In the New Testament the disciples experienced this on the mountain of the Transfiguration. Saul, who later became Paul, was struck on the way to Damascus in a similar way by the overwhelming power of the Lord. Indeed, there can be thunderstorms in our lives that make us tremble and put our security into question.

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5. During my pastoral visits to the different parishes of our Vicariate and on many other occasions I meet people who openly reveal their concerns about their personal and familial situations, about what is going on in their parish and the worldwide Church, and also about the social and political unrest around them. Many are more and more aware that the values handed down from the past

seem to no longer fit our modern context, with the consequence that the whole fabric of principles with which many have grown up seem to be vanishing. Parents struggle to educate their children. Young adults face a world where the principle "everything goes" risks cancelling what the Church and general moral standards have taught them since their childhood.

6. Looking at the challenges and trials we have to face, I am always reminded of the scene of the storm at sea from the Gospel of Mark: "A great windstorm arose, and the waves beat into the boat, so that the boat was already being swamped" (Mark 4:35-41). It was a life-threatening situation in which we too would have been afraid. Terrified, the disciples woke up Jesus, who was asleep: "Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?" Is this not our own cry when we have to pass through stormy waters and feel that we are seriously threatened? How could Jesus sleep in the shaking boat which was about to sink? How can he sleep when we are struggling in the stormy waters of the present time? Why does he wait for the last moment to calm the sea? Are not the fears of the disciples and our own fears more than justified? However, we know that as soon as "the wind dropped, and there followed a great calm", he asked the disciples (as he asks you and me): "Why are you afraid? Have you still no faith?"

DRAWING COURAGE FROM THE LORD

7. Jesus was so familiar with his heavenly Father that even in extreme situations he was at peace. He trusted unconditionally in his Father when he was in the boat shaken by the stormy sea; when he struggled in anxiety with the Father's will at Gethsemane and when he surrendered himself on the cross, saying, "Father, into your hands I commend my spirit" (Lk 23:46). It was his unconditional trust that made him face courageously, without

failure, the challenges of his public mission. Because Jesus was completely at home with and in his Father, he could invite those who believed in him to do the same. "Why are you afraid? Have you still no faith?" This is the same question he asks us who claim to be Christians. To have faith means to overcome fear and address the challenges we face.

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8. Pope Francis reminds us again and again that Christians should not fall into fear and resignation. I went through the letter he addressed to the youth after the Synod of Bishops on Young People, Faith and Vocational Discernment, held in 2018. The document is entitled "Christus Vivit" or "Christ is alive." Although it is mainly addressed to young people, the contents are also applicable to every Christian. To encourage all of us, Pope Francis refers to the experience of the prophet Jeremiah, who was called by God: "In his fear, he said: "Ah, Lord God! Truly I do not know how to speak, for I am only a youth" (Jer 1:6). But the Lord told him not to say that (cf. Jer 1:7), and added: "Do not be afraid of them, for I am with you to deliver you" (Jer 1:8). The devotion of the prophet Jeremiah to his mission shows what can happen when the brashness of youth is joined to the power of God." (Christus Vivit 10) The Lord does not say "Do not worry, you won't have problems"; in reality there were problems.

"How many times would we prefer to escape and to hide like Jonah or to tell the Lord, "Excuse me, I am not the right person for what you want me to do!" However, there is no escape, except to miss the chance to live and to do what the Lord wants us to do!"

Moses had a real problem with his speech, which is why Aaron was given to him as a speaker. Jeremiah felt too young and had to face the hostility of his opponents. Jonah tried to escape his very unpleasant mission to preach in Nineveh. We too may very often be frightened when we are faced with the challenges of our Catholic faith and our task to witness to it courageously. How many times would we prefer to escape and to hide like Jonah or to tell the Lord, "Excuse me, I am not the right person for what you want me to do!" However, there is no escape, except to miss the chance to live and to do what the Lord wants us to do.

FEAR OF THE LORD IMPARTS COURAGE AND STRENGTH

9. All the great believers in the past had to go through the experience of fear. However, in Proverbs 9:10 we are taught: "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is insight." The fear of the Lord is the seventh gift of the Holy Spirit, which is very often misunderstood. Pope Francis spoke about it in one of his General Audiences when he said that fear of the Lord "does not mean being afraid of God: we know well that God is Father, that he loves us and wants our salvation, and he always forgives, always; thus, there is no reason to be scared of him! Fear of the Lord, instead, is the gift of the Holy Spirit through whom we are reminded of how small we are before God and of his love and that our good lies in humble, respectful and trusting self-abandonment into his hands. This is fear of the Lord: abandonment in the goodness of our Father who loves us so much." (General Audience, 11 June 2014).
10. In the same speech, the Pope continued as follows: "When we are pervaded by fear of the Lord, then we are led to follow the Lord with humility, docility and obedience. This, however, is not an attitude of resignation, passivity or regret, but one of the

wonder and joy of being a child who knows he is served and loved by the Father. Fear of the Lord, therefore, does not make of us Christians who are shy and submissive, but stirs in us courage and strength! It is a gift that makes of us Christians who are convinced, enthusiastic, who aren't submissive to the Lord out of fear but because we are moved and conquered by his love! To be conquered by the love of God! This is a beautiful thing. To allow ourselves to be conquered by this love of a father, who loves us so, loves us with all his heart."

11. Fear of the Lord, therefore, does not mean to live in permanent anxiety of being condemned to eternal death. On the contrary, it means to have wonder and awe before God who is love and infinitely greater than we are, "who desires everyone to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth" (1 Tim 2:4). Many of us faithful do not really trust in the love of God, revealed in Jesus Christ once and for all. In the bottom of our hearts, we doubt the essence of God as good and merciful. This is a kind of pride which we have to overcome by making space instead for humility and faith. When we confess our sins and obtain sacramental reconciliation, our sins are forgiven once and for all. There is no need to come back again and again with the sins confessed in the past. This would be to doubt God's forgiveness. God wants us to look forward with the confidence that Saint Paul expresses in his letter to the Philippians: "Not that I have already obtained this or have already reached the goal; but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. Beloved, I do not consider that I have made it my own; but this one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the heavenly call of God in Christ Jesus." (Phil 3:12-14) True fear of God means therefore to be fully oriented towards God and to forget what lies behind us as Saint Paul teaches.

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12. Many times, people in the Old and the New Testaments are told “Do not be afraid”. This word is always addressed to people who are faced with a situation of distress and who are completely stunned. When God or his messenger says: “Do not be afraid”, he does not mean that there is no risk of calamity. God does not promise that there will be no war, that we shall never be sick, that we shall not have conflicts with others, that we shall not lose our jobs, and so on. He simply says, “Do not be afraid”. He gives this message through the angels to the shepherds on the fields of Bethlehem who “were terrified (Lk 2:9-10) and to the women coming to the tomb of Jesus (Mt 28:5). Fear of God and childlike trust in the Lord go together. We can learn this from Jesus who teaches us by word and example that in all that happens to us, we are in the hands of God, just as He is in the hands of His Father: “Father, into your hands I commend my spirit” (Lk 23:46). Jesus, the Son of God, had to suffer and die, but that was not the end because he knew the power of his heavenly Father. He wants us to share in the same confidence and trust that he himself had in the Father.

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BE FEARLESS WITNESSES OF THE GOOD NEWS

13. In the last chapter of Matthew’s gospel, the risen Lord appeared to the women and “said to them: Do not be afraid; go and tell

my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me" (Mt 28:10). The words "Go and tell my brothers" were in fact meant for the disciples, to prepare them for the great commission which was shortly to follow: "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age" (Mt 28:18-20).

14. The risen Lord remains invisibly present, while his disciples are called to be his witnesses. Pope Francis has announced that the month of October 2019 will be a special month to remember the Mission of the Church in honour of a very important missionary document of Pope Benedict XV published in 1919. In his letter Pope Francis refers to it with the following words, important also for us: "In his Apostolic Letter *Maximum Illud*, the Pope (i.e. Benedict XV) noted that the Church's universal mission requires setting aside exclusivist ideas of membership in one's own country and ethnic group. The opening of the culture and the community to the salvific newness of Jesus Christ requires leaving behind every kind of undue ethnic and ecclesial introversion. Today too, the Church needs men and women who, by virtue of their baptism, respond generously to the call to leave behind home, family, country, language and local Church, and to be sent forth to the nations, to a world not yet transformed by the sacraments of Jesus Christ and his holy Church. By proclaiming God's word, bearing witness to the Gospel and celebrating the life of the Spirit, they summon to conversion, baptize and offer Christian salvation, with respect for the freedom of each person and in dialogue with the cultures and religions of the peoples to whom they are sent." (Pope Francis, Message for World Mission Day 2019)

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15. We know the specific conditions in this part of the world where we are living. However, the restrictions given to us in Muslim countries do not mean that we have to remain inactive. There is always a way to be courageous witnesses of the Good News. In his letter to the youth, Pope Francis writes something that is valid for all of us: "Where does Jesus send us? There are no borders, no limits: he sends us everywhere. The Gospel is for everyone, not just for some. It is not only for those who seem closer to us, more receptive, more welcoming. It is for everyone. Do not be afraid to go and bring Christ into every area of life, to the fringes of society, even to those who seem farthest away and most indifferent. The Lord seeks all; he wants everyone to feel the warmth of his mercy and his love". He invites us to be fearless missionaries wherever we are and in whatever company we find ourselves: in our neighbourhoods, in school or sports or social life, in volunteer service or in the workplace. Wherever we are, we always have an opportunity to share the joy of the Gospel. That is how the Lord goes out to meet everyone." (Christus Vivit 177) The purpose is not to make ourselves great or well-known. The purpose is to witness to the love of God through our lives, our deeds and our words.

A CHURCH SENSITIVE TO THE MODERN WORLD

16. The Pope invites the youth and all of us not to be afraid of this witness even while knowing that the Church while holy, has nonetheless many members whose sins and defects cause her

to appear wrinkled in the sight of the world. He is very clear in his letter to the youth when he says that the long history of the Church "is not without its shadows. Our sins are before the eyes of everyone; they appear all too clearly in the lines on the age-old face of the Church, our Mother and Teacher. For two thousand years she has advanced on her pilgrim way, sharing 'the joys and the hopes, the grief and anguish' of all humanity. She has made this journey as she is, without cosmetic surgery of any kind. She is not afraid to reveal the sins of her members, which some try at times to hide, before the burning light of the word of the Gospel, which cleanses and purifies. Nor does she stop reciting each day, in shame: "Have mercy on me, Lord, in your kindness... my sin is always before me" (Ps 51:3,5). Still, let us never forget that we must not abandon our Mother when she is wounded, but stand beside her, so that she can summon up all her strength and all her ability to begin ever anew." (Christus Vivit 101)

"Still, let us never forget that we must not abandon our Mother when she is wounded, but stand beside her, so that she can summon up all her strength and all her ability to begin ever anew."

17. Pope Francis knows that the Church although being "Mother and Teacher" needs also to learn sometimes like every good mother and teacher. It is good to keep in mind his words to the youth: "Although many young people are happy to see a Church that is humble yet confident in her gifts and capable of offering fair and fraternal criticism, others want a Church that listens more, that does more than simply condemn the world. They do not want to see a Church that is silent and afraid to speak, but neither one that is always battling obsessively over two or three issues. To be credible to young people, there are times when she needs to regain her humility and simply listen, recognizing that what

others have to say can provide some light to help her better understand the Gospel. A Church always on the defensive, which loses her humility and stops listening to others, which leaves no room for questions, loses her youth and turns into a museum." (Christus Vivit 41) For this reason I have started to convoke lay representatives from our parishes in order to listen and to learn or, as the Pope says, to recognize "that what others have to say can provide some light to help (us) better understand the gospel".

THE POPE'S VISIT: SOWING SEEDS OF HOPE AND FRATERNITY

18. We had the joy of welcoming Pope Francis in our midst last February. He came to encourage us knowing that we are living as a Church of migrants in Muslim countries. The signing of the Abu Dhabi Document on Human Fraternity for World Peace and Living Together on February 4, 2019 was an important step forward in the mutual respect of the Muslim and the Christian religions. The intended coincidence with the Year of Tolerance in the UAE shows us the strong will of the rulers towards that peace among religions which is an essential part of the peace in the world.

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The fact that a small delegation of Yemeni Christians could join the papal Mass at the Stadium of Zayed Sports City and briefly meet the Holy Father is a sign that even amidst war and conflicts significant gestures are possible. "Do not be afraid" is a word spoken in such situations too. We announce it to our brothers and sisters in Yemen as well as to all those who are struggling in difficult situations. Have we not just heard the word of the risen

Lord: "And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age" (Mt 28:20)?

19. There have been some concerns expressed about the meeting between Pope Francis and the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar, Ahmed el-Tayeb, and fears that the document may be understood in a syncretic sense. Others expressed reservations as to whether the two signatories would understand the text in the same way. It is legitimate to ask such questions. However, people who call into question the orthodoxy of Pope Francis should ask themselves if they are not rather defending their own idea of the Church than the Church built on the rock of Peter. We profess in the Apostolic Creed "I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth." Because the Creator is also Father, there exists a basic brotherhood within the creation as a whole. Saint Francis of Assisi was in a particular way aware of this mystery and called all creatures his brothers and sisters. It is not by chance that he – exactly 800 years ago – had the courage to break through the frontlines of battle between Christians and Muslims in order to meet the Sultan of Egypt. He did it humbly and fearlessly because he knew that "God the Father almighty" was also the Father of the Sultan – and the Sultan therefore was his brother. The time has come for us to rediscover the basic truth we profess in the Apostolic Creed, sometimes pronounced a little bit too thoughtlessly.

GROWTH IN THE MIDST OF CRISIS

20. Let us come back to the story of the storm at sea. There is no doubt that the boat of the Catholic Church is going through a stormy sea as she faces both internal unrest and open persecution in many parts of the world. It is also not surprising that many of the faithful are terrified in the face of the heavy waves which threaten the Church. Many may feel that the Lord

is absent. However, he is with us. He may be sleeping because he knows the Father Almighty and feels secure in his hands even in times of crisis. Panic does not help, nor does it change the circumstances. It is legitimate to wake the Lord up with our cries and prayers coming from the depth of our hearts. However, it is the Lord who will calm down the waters, not at the moment and in the way we desire, but in his time. What we have to take to heart is the word of the Lord: "Why are you afraid? Have you still no faith?" (Mk 4:40) It sounds similar to the word he addressed to Peter who was about to sink and "cried out, 'Lord, save me!' Immediately Jesus stretched out his hand and caught him, and said to him, 'O you of little faith, why did you doubt?'" (Mt 14:30-31) We are these people of little faith who have to learn in the company of Jesus to overcome our doubts.

"However, it is the Lord who will calm down the waters, not at the moment and in the way we desire, but in his time."

21. Saint Paul had to pass through many trials and failures. His mission in Athens was rather a failure. He then went to Corinth, a town well known for its immorality, where most of us would have said: "A hopeless case!" There is an interesting and challenging text in the Acts of the Apostles regarding this situation: "One night in a vision the Lord said to Paul, 'Do not be afraid, but speak and do not be silent; for I am with you, and no one will lay a hand on you to harm you, for there are many in this city who are my people.' He settled there for a year and a half and taught the word of God among them" (Acts 18:9-11). The episode in Corinth teaches us that there is no "hopeless case", because even under hostile conditions the Lord can say: "There are many in this city who are my people" not only in Corinth, but also in Abu Dhabi, in Dubai, in Muscat, in Sana'a and so on. "Do not be afraid, but speak" and live as a truthful witness of Christ Jesus.

22. We know from the letters of Saint Paul that the situation of the Church in Corinth was everything but ideal. There were divisions, immoral behaviour, doubts about the resurrection, irregularities in the prayer meetings, lawsuits among Christians before the pagan court and so on. Even the liturgy had become a kind of battlefield where the Apostle had to intervene strongly. "I do not commend you, because when you come together it is not for the better but for the worse ... What should I say to you? Should I commend you? In this matter I do not commend you!" (1 Co 11:17,22). Then Saint Paul reminds them about the very roots of the mystery we celebrate in the Holy Eucharist with the words of the institution spoken by Jesus Christ at the Last Supper. And he concludes with those words which we very often repeat after the Consecration: "For as often as you eat this Bread and drink the Cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes" (1Co 11:26) Unity within the community and correct behaviour in the daily lives of the faithful have to start with meeting the Lord: eating his Bread and drinking his Cup, thus proclaiming his death until he comes, because "Christ is alive". The death of Jesus on the cross remains a reality that we can never forget. However, professing his Resurrection we put our trust in him and when he comes again, he will share his life with us.

"There is no growth without crisis — do not be afraid of crises, do not be afraid, just as there is no fruit without pruning nor victory without struggle."

23. As I mentioned already, many people feel and observe symptoms of crisis also in the Church. In this context, it is helpful to keep in mind what Pope Francis said to the Jesuits in December 2018: "There is no growth without crisis — do not be afraid of crises, do not be afraid —, just as there is no fruit without pruning nor victory without struggle. To grow, to put down roots means to struggle without respite against all spiritual worldliness, which is

the worst evil that can befall us, as Father de Lubac used to say. If worldliness damages the roots, goodbye fruit and goodbye plant. And I think this is the most formidable danger at this time: spiritual worldliness, which leads one to clericalism and so forth. However, if growth is a constant acting against one's own ego, there will be much fruit. And while the enemy spirit will not give up tempting you to seek your 'consolations,' by insinuating that you live better if you have what you want, the friendly Spirit will gently encourage you in goodness, to grow in humble docility, moving forward, without rifts and without dissatisfaction, with that serenity that comes from God alone." (Speech to the Jesuits, 3 December 2018)

MARY, MODEL OF UNWAVERING TRUST

24. The motto of the last World Youth Day in Panama was "Do not be afraid", taken from the words of the angel Gabriel to Mary at the annunciation: "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favour with God" (Lk 1:30). Our Lady is therefore an expert in the fear of God and teaches us how to overcome our anxiety in our relationship with the Lord, who shows his favour not only to her but to all those who trust in him. Mary not only courageously said "Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word" (Lk 1:38) but she also had the courage to fulfil the mission of her Son beneath the Cross and to wait in expectation together with the Apostles for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Her fearlessness may be an encouragement for all of us.

"Mary not only courageously said "Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word" but she also had the courage to fulfil the mission of her Son beneath the Cross and to wait in expectation together with the Apostles for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit."

25. After calming the sea-storm, Jesus rebuked the disciples with the question: "Why are you afraid? Have you no faith?" I wish to conclude this pastoral letter with a very challenging quote from the letter of Pope Francis to the youth: "Keep following your hopes and dreams. But be careful about one temptation that can hold us back. It is anxiety. Anxiety can work against us by making us give up whenever we do not see instant results. Our best dreams are only attained through hope, patience and commitment, and not in haste. At the same time, we should not be hesitant, afraid to take chances or make mistakes. Avoid the paralysis of the living dead, who have no life because they are afraid to take risks, to make mistakes or to persevere in their commitments. Even if you make mistakes, you can always get up and start over, for no one has the right to rob you of hope. (Christus Vivit 142)

"Anxiety can work against us by making us give up whenever we do not see instant results. Our best dreams are only attained through hope, patience and commitment, and not in haste. "

Dear sisters and brothers! Do not be afraid. Have faith! Whatever our situations, trials and pains may be, there is one thing we can all be sure of: the Lord Jesus who strengthens and protects us is with us always, even until the end of time. May he bless you and keep you.

Bishop Paul Hinder, O.F.M. Cap.

Apostolic Vicar of Southern Arabia

Abu Dhabi, 15th August 2019 (Assumption of Our Lady)

REGULATIONS

1. Holy Days of Obligation on which the faithful are obliged to participate in the celebration of the Eucharist are:
 - Sundays or Fridays (where it has been decided);
 - the Nativity of the Lord (December 25);
 - the Assumption of B.V. Mary (August 15).
2. Special Celebration days on which the faithful are encouraged to participate in the celebration of the Eucharist are:
 - Immaculate Conception of the B.V. Mary (December 8);
 - Mary, Mother of God (January 1);
 - Our Lady of Arabia (Saturday before Second Sunday in Ordinary Time);
 - St. Joseph (March 19);
 - Sacred Heart (Friday after the Most Holy Body & Blood of Christ);
 - Ss. Peter and Paul (Sunday after Jun 28);
 - All Saints (November 1);
 - Dedication of the Parish Church (Sunday before All Saints);
 - Parish Titular Saint.
3. Observances transferred to the following or preceding Sunday are:
 - Epiphany of the Lord;
 - Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ (Corpus Christi);
 - Ascension of the Lord;
 - Ss. Peter and Paul.
4. Fasting is prescribed for Ash Wednesday and Good Friday for those who have completed 18 years of age and up to the beginning of the 60th year. One meal a day is eaten. A smaller quantity of food, sufficient to maintain strength, may be taken at two other times in the day.
5. Abstinence from meat (milk products, eggs or animal fat not included) applies to those who have completed 14 years of age. It is prescribed for Ash Wednesday, Good Friday and every Wednesday that is not a Solemnity. However, on Wednesdays outside of Lent, abstinence from meat can be

substituted by another act of penance, such as prayer or a work of charity.

6. During Lenten weekdays and Days of Prayer, abstinence from meat, almsgiving, fasting and other works of prayer, penance and/or charity are encouraged according to ability.
7. Eucharistic Fast: The faithful must abstain from food and drink, aside from water and medicine, for one hour before receiving Holy Communion. The sick, infirm and elderly (and their caregivers) may receive Holy Communion even if they have eaten something within the preceding hour.
8. Paschal (Easter) Precept: The faithful who have made their First Holy Communion should receive Holy Communion at least once a year during the Easter Season. Within the Vicariate, this precept may be fulfilled at any time between the First Sunday of Lent and Trinity Sunday (Sunday after Pentecost). One who has reached the age of discretion is also obliged to confess one's grave sins at least once a year.
9. General Absolution: may be given on Good Friday and the Midnight Mass(es) of Christmas, if large numbers of parishioners make it impossible for all to avail of the increased opportunities for the sacrament of Reconciliation in the weeks preceding Christmas and Easter. The faithful are to make an individual confession of grave sins at the next available opportunity (C.I.C. 962).

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