



DIOCESE OF FORT WORTH THE BISHOP'S OFFICE



DIOCESE OF FORT WORTH 2017 Requirements of Lent

The time of Lent is to be observed by Catholics as a special season of prayer, penance, and works of charity.

Fast and Abstinence: Ash Wednesday and Friday of the Passion and Death of Our Lord are the most important penitential days of the liturgical year. They are days of both fast and abstinence. All Fridays in Lent are days of abstinence.

Can. 1250 - The penitential days and times in the universal Church are every Friday of the whole year and the season of Lent.

Can. 1251 - Abstinence from meat, or from some other food as determined by the Episcopal Conference, is to be observed on all Fridays, unless a solemnity should fall on a Friday. Abstinence and fasting are to be observed on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday.

Can. 1252 - The law of abstinence binds those who have completed their fourteenth year. The law of fasting binds those who have attained their majority, until the beginning of their sixtieth year. Pastors of souls and parents are to ensure that even those who by reason of their age are not bound by the law of fasting and abstinence, are taught the true meaning of penance.

Can. 1253 - The conference of bishops can determine more precisely the observance of fast and abstinence as well as substitute other forms of penance, especially works of charity and exercises of piety, in whole or in part, for abstinence and fast.

The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops has determined that the following practices shall prevail in the United States: Fast and Abstinence are to be observed on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday by all those who have celebrated their 18th birthday until one has celebrated his/her 59th birthday. Abstinence from meat is to be observed on the Fridays of Lent by all who have celebrated their 14th birthday.

Fasting on all weekdays of Lent is strongly recommended; on all Fridays of the year, the USCCB recommends that we select one or more of the following: abstinence from meat, prayer, penance (especially by eating less food) and almsgiving, "as a tangible sign of our need and desire to do penance for the cause of peace."

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Those that are excused from fast and abstinence outside the age limits include the physically or mentally ill including individuals suffering from chronic illnesses such as diabetes. Also excluded are pregnant or nursing women. In all cases, common sense should prevail, and ill persons should not further jeopardize their health by fasting.

Fasting on these days means we can have only one full, meatless meal. Some food can be taken at the other regular meal times if necessary, *but combined they should be less than a full meal*. Liquids are allowed at any time, but no solid food should be consumed between meals.

Abstinence laws consider that meat comes only from animals such as chickens, cows, sheep or pigs --- all of which live on land. Birds are also considered meat. Abstinence does not include meat juices and liquid foods made from meat. Thus, such foods as chicken broth, consommé, soups cooked or flavored with meat, meat gravies or sauces, as well as seasonings or condiments made from animal fat are technically not forbidden. However, moral theologians have traditionally taught that we should abstain from all animal-derived products (except foods such as gelatin, butter, cheese and eggs, which do not have any meat taste). Fish are a different category of animal. Salt and freshwater species of fish, amphibians, reptiles, (cold-blooded animals) and shellfish are permitted.

The substantial observance of the laws of fast and abstinence is a serious obligation. Those who are not able to observe the laws because of work or health related issues are excused from fasting and abstinence. The individual conscience can decide if there is a proper cause to excuse. A more serious reason should be present to excuse from the Ash Wednesday and Good Friday penance. Parents and teachers should see to it that even those who are not bound by the laws of the fast and abstinence because of age are brought up in an atmosphere that is conducive to a sense of penance.

(Excerpts are from the Code of Canon Law and USCCB on Lenten Practices)