

Lent

Fasting Well and Feasting Well

Ash Wednesday is the beginning of the forty days of Lent—our season of prayer, penance, and preparation for the Easter Feast. On Ash Wednesday, we are marked with ashes and told “remember you are dust and unto dust you shall return.” All life, particularly our human lives, are fragile; the ashes serve as a reminder to ourselves and to the world that sees this mark that human life passes as all things in this world do. This time of Lent serves as a chance to reflect on our sinfulness and spend time in preparation for our own eventual passing into eternal life.

The Lenten season brings its own requirements and aspirations. The classic Catholic approach is the threefold approach of **Prayer, Fasting, and Almsgiving**. Each purifies our minds and our desires while opening our eyes to the presence of the Lord among us. Each of these also urges us to see the Lord “in those whom we so often neglect to love and serve—for surely Christ is most especially present in them.” **They allow us to open our hands to let go of the abundance we consider our own—both of time and material goods—and to give them to others. With our open hands, we can then better receive the blessings God offers us.** It is in celebrating this period of fasting with devotion that we can approach the celebration of Easter with the greatest anticipation and joy.

Please consider the following as a guide of some of the **Lenten Obligations** as well as the **optional Lenten opportunities** that are made available for your Lenten devotions. These obligations are the *minimum* that the Church asks of us unless it is impossible for us to do so; however, we are free to take on more and/or stricter penitential practices ourselves, using prudence as a guide in our decisions.

LENTEN OBLIGATIONS

FASTING—All Catholics in good health from ages 18 through 59 are bound to observe the law of fasting on **Ash Wednesday** and **Good Friday**. Fasting requires limiting yourself to one full meal and avoiding food between meals. Two other light meals may be taken during the course of the day.

ABSTINENCE—All Catholics who have reached their 14th year are bound to abstain totally from meat on **Ash Wednesday** and all Fridays of Lent up to and including Good Friday.

THE SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION—After attaining the age of discretion (about age 7), each of the faithful bound by an obligation faithfully to confess serious sins at least once a year (Canon 989). This need not occur during the Easter Season.

Lent is an appropriate time to celebrate this sacrament, and there will be opportunities to do so at our regular scheduled times, at Lenten Reconciliation Services, or by appointment.

EASTER DUTY (HOLY COMMUNION)—All of the faithful, after they have been initiated into the Most Holy Eucharist, are bound by the obligation of receiving Communion at least once a year. This precept must be fulfilled during the Easter Season unless it is fulfilled for a just cause at some other time of the year (Canon 920). In the United States, the Easter duty may be fulfilled through Trinity Sunday. Catholics are encouraged to receive Communion as often as possible, not only during Eastertide, but throughout the year. However, “Anyone conscious of a grave sin must receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation before coming to Communion.” (Catechism, no. 1385; cf. Canon 916)

OPTIONAL LENTEN OPPORTUNITIES

ASH WEDNESDAY—26 February 2020—Masses with Distribution of Ashes 8:30 AM & 7:00 PM

STATIONS OF THE CROSS—Thursdays 8:30 AM; Fridays 3:00 PM (27 Feb—3 Apr)

LENTEN DAILY MASS SCHEDULE—Mon: 6:15 PM (5:30 Holy Hour/Confessions); Tues: 8:30 AM; Wed: No Mass; Thurs: 9:00 AM; Fri: 12 Noon.

Please see the bulletin for other opportunities for prayer and service throughout Lent.