

Lenten Regulations

Prayer and Works of Charity

During Lent, Catholics participate more often in the Eucharist not only on Sunday but also on traditionally penitential days, such as Friday. We also celebrate the Sacrament of Penance and other liturgies, such as Evening Prayer and adoration of the Blessed Sacrament. To deepen our prayer life, we participate in other devotions and works of service, including Stations of the Cross, daily prayer, Scripture reading, spiritual reading, alms-giving, self-denial, forgiveness of others, and increased care for those in need. Especially in this Year of Mercy, we more fully engage in the spiritual and corporal works of mercy.

Fasting and Abstinence

We practice the traditional penitential discipline of fasting by denying or limiting ourselves of food. During Lent, Catholics age 18 or older, until the beginning of their 60th year, are obligated to fast on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday. Fasting means eating only one full meatless meal per day. One may also eat two other meatless meals that are sufficient to maintain strength but together do not equal a full meal. One may also drink liquids, including milk and fruit juice, between meals. If your health or ability to work is affected, you are not obligated to fast. If possible, fast on other days of Lent as well. We practice abstinence from meat on Ash Wednesday and all Fridays of Lent. On these days, from the day after one's 14th birthday, all Catholics are bound by Church law to abstain from meat. For children younger than 14, pastors and parents should form them to have an authentic sense of penance, conversion, and reconciliation.

Easter Duty and Holy Communion

All the faithful, after they have participated in First Communion, are obligated to share in Communion at least once a year. This law must be fulfilled during the Easter season unless it is fulfilled for a just cause at some other time during the year. In the United States, with regard to this law, the Easter season is the period from the First Sunday of Lent until Most Holy Trinity Sunday (the Sunday after Pentecost).

Sacrament of Penance

After Baptism and a diligent examination of conscience, members of the Christian faithful who are old enough to understand what they have done are obligated at least once a year to celebrate the Sacrament of Penance if one has consciously committed a serious sin. The Church encourages us also to confess less serious, or venial, sins.