

Regulations on Fast and Abstinence

The following is taken from *Penitential Practices for Today's Catholics*, (Committee on Pastoral Practices, National Conference of Catholic Bishops: Washington, DC, February, 2001) (On the web, see <http://www.usccb.org/dpp/penitential.htm>.)

PENITENTIAL DAYS

- **Ash Wednesday** — This day marks the beginning of the Lenten season. The imposition of ashes is an ancient penitential practice symbolizing our dependence upon God's mercy and forgiveness. Ash Wednesday is a day of fast and abstinence in the Church.
- **Good Friday** — Christ suffered and died for our salvation on Friday. On the Friday that we call "Good," the Church gathers to commemorate Jesus' Passion and death. Good Friday is a day of fast and abstinence. The Good Friday fast is the Paschal fast — a fast of anticipation and longing for the Passover of the Lord, which should continue, when possible, through Holy Saturday.
- **Fridays During Lent** — In the United States, the tradition of abstaining from meat on each Friday during Lent is maintained.
- **Fridays Throughout the Year** — In memory of Christ's suffering and death, the Church prescribes making each Friday throughout the year a penitential day. All of us are urged to prepare appropriately for that weekly Easter that comes with each Sunday.

FORMS OF PENANCE

- **Fasting** — By refraining from eating, we signify our oneness with the Lord, acknowledge our need for conversion, and give witness to our solidarity with those less fortunate. Catholics who are eighteen years and older and in good health are bound until their fifty-ninth birthday by the obligation to fast on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday. Traditionally, the canonical obligation of fasting has been understood in the Church as the taking of only one full meal a day. *[Editor's note: Two other light meatless meals, are permitted in accord with local custom as to the amount and kind of food. The consumption of solid food between meals is prohibited, but liquids may be taken at any time.]*
- **Abstinence** — In the United States, this penitential practice consists of refraining from the consumption of meat. The Latin Church's requirement of abstinence binds Catholics after they have celebrated their fourteenth birthday, and it is practiced on Ash Wednesday, Good Friday, and the Fridays during Lent. Pastors and parents are encouraged to see that children who are not bound by the obligation to fast and abstain are led to appreciate an authentic sense of penance.

ACTS OF CHARITY: VIRGINIANS HELPING VIRGINIANS. Once again St. Agnes parishioners are volunteering to collect food for the poor in Madison County, VA. Our food and monetary offerings have meant so much to the folks in Our Lady of the Blue Ridge Parish who are struggling with multiple issues of poverty. If you would like to participate, bring a **non-perishable food item, of appropriate date, to any entrance of the church during the first 5 Sundays of Lent.** Simple, staple foods are best. A can of soup, or a box of crackers a week will help to fill the pantry that serves, Madison, Orange and Culpepper Counties. Our St. Agnes Girl Scouts and their parents will help collect, and transport the food to Madison. We are grateful for their loving service.