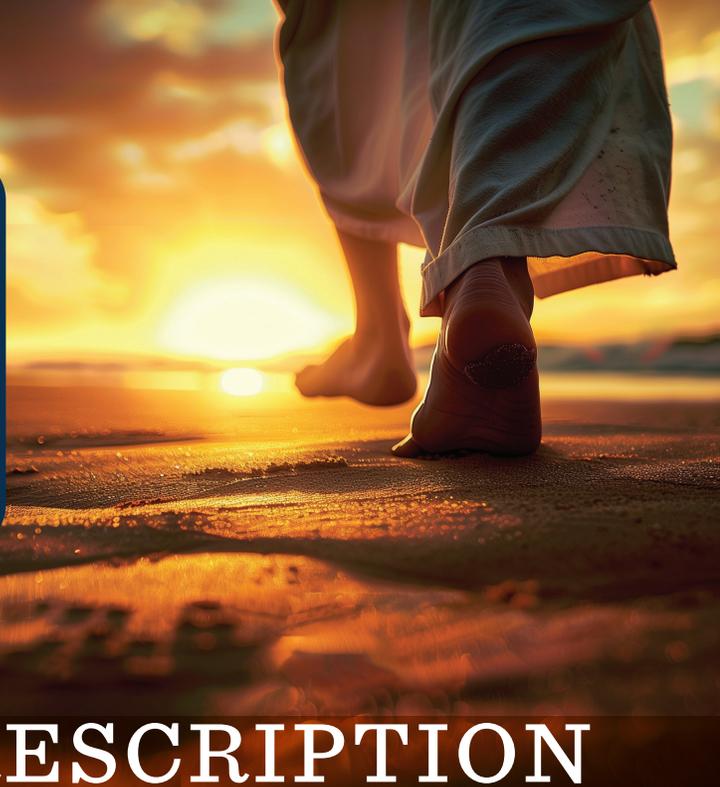


Sunday Q&A

Your Faith in Focus



A UNIVERSAL PRESCRIPTION

Why Do We Fast?

Fasting is an indispensable part of the spiritual life during the entire liturgical year, but most especially during Lent when it is emphasized as a universal prescription for Catholics. Colin MacIver helps us understand why.

When we fast, we follow Jesus into the desert. We fight the devil and temper the flesh. In order to do this, the Church lays out universal fasting norms for everybody. On Ash Wednesday and Good Friday, all Catholics over the age of fourteen abstain from meat, and those over the age of seventeen and under the age of sixty fast. (That is, they limit themselves to one full meal, as well as two smaller meals that together are not equal to a full meal.) Then, every Friday is a day of abstinence from meat.

Personal Habits

Along with that, all Catholics are encouraged to take up personal habits of fasting—along with prayer and almsgiving—in ways that are tailored to their own attachments, personalities, and states of life.

Seven Reasons

Why fast? Here are seven reasons:

1. Fasting offers spiritual sacrifice in solidarity with Jesus himself (see Matthew 4:1–11).
2. Fasting can help us grow in discipline and therefore virtue.
3. Fasting brings us into solidarity with the poor.
4. Fasting helps us to subordinate created goods to the Creator.
5. Along with almsgiving and prayer, fasting trains us to be a gift to others.
6. Fasting, along with prayer, is a powerful mode of penance and supplication.
7. When we fail at it, fasting reminds us that we are in need of redemption.

Ponder and Pray

- How are these early days of Lent going for you?
- From what are you fasting and why?
- What do you sense the Holy Spirit calling you to do as we go deeper into this season?



Make It Your Own

Examine your sacrifices and deepen your Lenten observance this week. Are there things that you should be incorporating? Is your fast challenging you and drawing you closer to the Father? Adjust, if necessary, and write up a plan for Lent using this space.

Tip of the Week

While shaking off sinful habits is in keeping with the repentant spirit of Lent, giving up something sinful isn't the same as fasting. Fasting is withholding something good for a time so we can depend more fully on God.

Dive Deeper

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