

Lenten Fast, Abstinence and Observance

Each Friday of the year is an appropriate time for voluntary self-denial in memory of the death of the Lord. Although not obligatory, the Church encourages penitential practices on all Fridays. However, in Lent, the Church prescribes special practices on certain days.

On Ash Wednesday, March 6, 2019, as well as on all of the Fridays of Lent, all who have celebrated their 14th birthday and older are to abstain from meat on those days. In addition, on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday, all those who are healthy between the ages of 18 and 59 are to limit themselves to one main meal and no more than two other partial meals, which together do not equal the one main meal on those same days. Sundays of Lent are not days of fast and abstinence.

The Sundays in the Lenten Season are characterized by the use of violet vestments to emphasize that we have entered into a time of repentance in our lives and in our worship together. Some of these changes are required and others are optional. So that we can better enter into the penitential spirit of Lent we are observing the following changes. During Mass we are kneeling for the Penitential Rite as we plead for God's mercy for our sins. We see the color purple displayed in the church and sanctuary as a sign of our call to conversion from sin and to life in Christ. Singing the Gloria and the Alleluia are completely suspended for all Sunday Masses during Lent as a reminder that our joy is suppressed until we can praise the Lord of Glory as his Resurrection dawns at Easter. No fresh flowers are used and the more limited use of music complements this penitential season. All of this helps us to experience the dying of ourselves that must precede our rising to new life. During the entire season of Lent no baptisms are celebrated, except in cases of life-threatening emergencies. Instead, Lent is a time of catechesis preparing us for Baptism. Baptisms will again be celebrated beginning on Saturday night, April 20 at the Easter Vigil.

As we break out of our usual mode of celebrating the Sundays in Ordinary Time, let these external changes spur us on toward internal changes that are a sign of our response to God's call for a deeper Conversion during this Season of Lent.