



DIOCESE OF SACRAMENTO

Office of Worship

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2018 Lenten regulations

Lent this year begins on **Ash Wednesday, February 14**. Lent is a season in which the faithful are called to reflect on the Paschal Mystery in a particularly focused way. It is a time of spiritual renewal and to carefully examine one's relationship with God and others. It is also a time in which catechumens prepare to receive the Sacraments of Initiation at the Easter Vigil. The Church calls everyone, therefore, to a spirit of penance through the traditional Lenten practices of prayer, fasting, and almsgiving.

I. FASTING AND ABSTINENCE.

In order foster a spirit of repentance and unite ourselves more closely to Christ, Church law requires the observance of Abstinence and Fasting (CIC - Code of Canon Law, 1249-1253).

1. Abstinence: All persons, 14 years and older, are obliged to abstain from meat on Ash Wednesday and all Fridays of Lent.

2. Fasting: Everyone from ages 18 to 59 is obliged to fast on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday. Voluntary fasting on other weekdays of Lent, especially on Wednesdays and Fridays, is highly recommended. Fasting is generally understood to mean that one full meal may be eaten. Two other small meals may be eaten, but together they should not equal a full meal. Eating between meals is not permitted, but liquids are allowed.

When health or ability to work would be seriously affected, neither the law of fasting nor the law of abstinence obliges. If in doubt, one's parish priest or confessor should be consulted. Airport workers, travelers, and others while on board ships or airplanes are dispensed from the laws of fast and abstinence for the duration of their journey (except on Good Friday). It is desirable that they perform some other pious act instead.

Other forms of fasting, including abstinence from alcoholic beverages, television, video games, the internet and social media, is spiritually beneficial and strongly encouraged.

II. PRAYER.

Catholics are urged to read and pray with sacred Scripture more intently during Lent, and to strengthen their knowledge of the faith by reading the Catechism of the Catholic Church. The faithful are encouraged to participate in special devotions offered by the parish, especially parish penance services and Eucharistic adoration. Other devotions such as the Rosary, the Divine Mercy Chaplet, visits to the Blessed Sacrament, and praying for vocations to the priesthood and religious life are strongly encouraged.

1. Sacrament Reconciliation: Lent is a privileged time for celebrating the Sacrament of Reconciliation. The faithful should be reminded that they are obliged to confess their sins at least once a year (CIC 989). To that end, parishes are encouraged to provide additional opportunities for the faithful to partake of the Sacrament of Reconciliation by expanding their Confession schedule during Lent; for example, to include an extra weekday evening or two. Public parish penance services are strongly encouraged. *Please note that general absolution is not permitted at parish penance services.*

2. Lenten Mass Schedule: The faithful are urged to attend Mass on weekdays as often as possible, especially during Lent. Daily Masses during Lent should be scheduled so as to facilitate attendance.

3. The Stations of the Cross are to be celebrated in each parish on Fridays during Lent and parishioners should be encouraged to participate.

4. Special day of penance and prayer: Wednesday, March 14. According to Diocese Statute 123§3c the second Wednesday of March is to be observed as “A day of penance for negative attitudes and discrimination toward people of differing cultures, ethnicity and race; and prayer for unity in our diversity, for equality, mutual respect and peace among all peoples.”

5. Wedding Masses may not be celebrated during the Easter Triduum, on Sundays of Lent, Ash Wednesday, or during Holy Week. Marriages may take place at other times during Lent according to the proper liturgical norms and provisions, but it is contrary to the penitential spirit of the season to have elaborate weddings or lavish receptions.

6. Funeral Masses are not to be celebrated on Holy Thursday, Good Friday, or Holy Saturday, nor on the Sundays of Lent. When pastoral considerations necessitate that a funeral be celebrated on these days, the Liturgy of the Word with the Final Commendation and Farewell may be conducted.

7. No Masses are to be offered on Good Friday and Holy Saturday.

8. The Easter Vigil (March 31) should not begin until *after nightfall* (Roman Missal) or about thirty minutes after sunset, which is 7:29 p.m. this year. The Easter Vigil, therefore, may begin any time **after 8:00 p.m.**

9. Easter Duty: All Catholics who have been initiated into the Holy Eucharist are bound to receive Holy Communion worthily at least once during the Easter Season: Easter Sunday through Pentecost, May 20. In the United States, the Easter duty may be fulfilled through Trinity Sunday, May 27. 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)

III. ALMSGIVING.

From earliest times giving to the poor, or almsgiving, has been an invaluable spiritual practice, a religious duty, a form of penance, an expression of Christian charity, and an aid to interior conversion. Therefore, all Catholics are urged to give generously to assist the poor and support the charitable works of the Church, especially through their local parish and the Annual Catholic Appeal.

The faithful are also encouraged to visit the sick, the homebound, the aged, and those in prison, remembering the words of our Lord Jesus Christ who said, “As you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me.” (Matthew 25:40). Fasting and abstinence together with almsgiving and charitable works unites us to the crucified Christ reflected in the image of our brothers and sisters who suffer.