



## LENTEN PENANCE

Lent is a preparation for Easter, the focal point of the Church's liturgical year. As we prepare for the most important of the Christian feasts we are reminded of the love that God has shown in sending Jesus to us. Lent is a time of thanksgiving for what God has done for us. Jesus' announcement that the Kingdom of God had come was a proclamation of the divine intervention, which was intended to draw all humanity to a share in the divine life.

The preparation to receive the Kingdom is to repent: "Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand." In the presence of Jesus, we are called to conversion. This is not just something that takes place once. Conversion is a continuing transformation of ourselves which opens us up more and more to God's presence in Jesus. Conversion is an ongoing reality in our lives.

We remember this especially at this time of Lent. Lent is a period in which we focus in a special way on turning our hearts towards God. To do this we must be ready to surrender ourselves. We need to find ways which are personally meaningful for us to bring about this surrender.

Practices of penance are meant to help us to come to openness to God. They need to be educative, transforming us so that our hearts may turn more easily to God. The choice of Lenten penance is important. It is not just what we do; it is why we do it, and the effect that it has on our lives. Choose wisely and Lent can become a time of many graces and significant growth in our relationship with God.

### DAYS OF PENANCE

Abstinence from meat and fasting are to be observed on **Ash Wednesday** and **Good Friday**.

On all other Fridays of the year the law of the common practice of penance is fulfilled by performing any of the following:

- a) **Prayer** – for example, Mass attendance; family prayer; a visit to the church or chapel; reading the Bible; making the Stations of the Cross; praying the Rosary.
- b) **Self-denial** – for example, not eating meat; not eating sweets or dessert; giving up entertainment to spend time with the family; limiting food and drink so as to give to the poor.
- c) **Helping others** – for example, special attention to someone who is poor, sick, elderly, lonely or overburdened.

*All who have completed their eighteenth year and have not yet begun their sixtieth year are bound to fast.  
All who have completed their fourteenth year are bound to abstain.*

Lent lasts from **Ash Wednesday** (17 February) to **The Mass of the Lord's Supper** (1 April) inclusive. On **Good Friday** and, if possible also on **Holy Saturday** until the **Easter Vigil**, the **Easter Fast** is observed.

### PASCHAL PRECEPT

Each of the faithful is obliged to receive Holy Communion at least once a year. This is done between Ash Wednesday (17 February) and Trinity Sunday (30 May), unless for a good reason it is done at another time during the year.

All of the faithful are obliged to confess their grave sins at least once a year.

**David L Walker**  
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