



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 that call given to us in our discipleship of Jesus: that something must die in order that something might rise. We are to die to our selfishness and rise with a new openness to others. In this way, the life of the Risen Christ, present in our midst, becomes more transparent, more invitational.

This way of conversion by which we turn from our self-centredness and live more fully for others, is something that requires our constant mindfulness. We repent from what encloses us in our ourselves; we rejoice in what binds us more closely to others. "*Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand.*" Lent is our annual invitation to recognize that we are not self-sufficient and to identify our radical dependence on something other than ourselves: the mercy of God given its human presence in Jesus. The traditional practices that reflect this are prayer, fasting and almsgiving. Each of them help to develop a greater openness to God, the source of our life. Let us ensure that we engage each of them this Lent with awareness so that they become transformative for us, deepening our sense of Christian life and responsibility. Then, our Lent can become a time of significant growth in our relationship with God, and Easter become a wonderful celebration of the new life that we have in the Resurrected Lord.

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.

In 2019, Lent lasts from **Ash Wednesday** (6 March) to The **Mass of the Lord's Supper** (18 April) inclusive. On **Good Friday** and, if possible also on **Holy Saturday** until the Easter Vigil, **the Easter Fast is observed**.

THE LIGHT IS ON

Another part of our Lenten exercise could be to participate in **The Light is On** event which will be conducted in our parish churches on the Fridays through Lent. This especially is an opportunity to come together in prayer before the Blessed Sacrament, to enact the Way of the Cross, or to celebrate the life-restoring Sacrament of Reconciliation.

In particular, **Friday 29 March** is the celebration of **24 Hours for the Lord**. I ask parishes to have adoration of the Blessed Sacrament and the opportunity to celebrate the Sacrament of Penance as we join in solidarity with Pope Francis and the Universal Church.

PASCHAL PRECEPT

Each of the faithful is obliged to receive Holy Communion at least once a year. This is done between **Ash Wednesday, 6 March** and **Trinity Sunday, 16 June**, 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.

May this Lent be a time of renewal and grace for us all. Let us keep each other in our heart and in our prayer as we make our annual journey to the great celebration of Easter.

Very Rev Dr David Ranson
Diocesan Administrator
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