

CHURCH REGULATIONS FOR LENT 2009

In *The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy* it is stated, “The two elements which are especially characteristic of Lent -- the recalling of Baptism or the preparation for it, and penance--should be given greater emphasis in the liturgy and liturgical catechesis. It is by means of them that the Church prepares the faithful for the celebration of Easter, while they hear God’s word more frequently and devote more time to prayer.[109] During Lent, penance should be not only internal but also external and social. The practice of penance should be encouraged in ways suited to the present day, to different regions, and to individual circumstances.” [110]

The Sacrament of Penance

A principal means of promoting penance and renewal is the celebration of the Sacrament of Penance. The *Rite of Penance* states that “the season of Lent is most appropriate for celebrating the Sacrament of Penance . . . It is therefore fitting to have several penitential celebrations during Lent, so that all the faithful may have the opportunity to be reconciled with God and their neighbor and *so be able to celebrate the paschal mystery in the Easter Triduum with renewed hearts.*” [13]

Penitential Practices

Many Lenten programs recently have stressed parish-wide efforts of prayer, fasting, almsgiving and education toward the goal of carrying out the works of mercy. Needy parishes have been adopted in missionary or inner-city locations; child-caring institutions, homes for the aging and prisons have benefited from the interest, talents, and resources of some parishes. Such demonstrations of Christian love have given motivation and direction to individual Lenten exercises and at the same time have helped bring about to a greater degree the unity of Christ’s Church with the poor, suffering and neglected. The Code of Canon Law reflects this view of penance. Canon 1249 urges all the Christian faithful to offer special prayers, to perform works of piety and charity, and to mortify themselves by fulfilling their responsibilities more faithfully. They are likewise encouraged to perform acts of fast and abstinence. Canon 1250 especially singles out Lent as a penitential season.

FASTING prescribes that only one full meal a day be taken. Two smaller meals may be taken to maintain strength but these taken together should

not equal another full meal. Fasting obliges from the 18th to the 59th birthday.

ABSTINENCE forbids the eating of meat. Abstinence obliges from the 14th birthday on.

ASH WEDNESDAY and GOOD FRIDAY ARE DAYS OF FAST AND ABSTINENCE.

ALL FRIDAYS OF LENT ARE DAYS OF ABSTINENCE FROM MEAT.

There is a serious obligation to observe these penitential practices in a substantial way. Those whose work or health would be impaired are excused from fast and abstinence. Individual conscience should decide proper cause for excuse.