

What is so radical to me about Christianity is that it is not a bunch of do's and don'ts—it is about a new way of living. —Pope Francis



And so, it begins — the holy and, for some, daunting, season of Lent. This is the season in our liturgical year when the Church encourages us to increase our prayer, fasting and almsgiving in order to enter more deeply into the mystery of our Lord's Passion and Death and Resurrection. To help us, yes, I said "to help us", the Church gives us Lenten "Regulations"; she prescribes a course of actions to guide us. Participation in our Catholic traditions and practices leads to growth in understanding and appreciation.

PRAYER *Lent is a favorable time for letting Christ serve us so that we in turn may become more like him. This happens whenever we hear the word of God and receive the sacraments, especially the Eucharist. There we become what we receive: The Body of Christ. - Pope Francis*

Lenten Regulation: All the faithful, after they have been initiated into the Most Holy Eucharist, are bound by the obligation of receiving Communion at least once a year. The time for fulfilling this Paschal Precept or Easter Duty extends from the First Sunday of Lent, February 18 to the Solemnity of the Most Holy Trinity, May 26.

FASTING *Lent invites us to look inside our heart, with fasting, which frees us from attachment to things and from the worldliness that numbs the heart. It is a summons to stop, to focus on what is essential, to fast from the unnecessary things that distract us. It is a wake-up call for the soul. - Pope Francis*

Lenten Regulation: The obligation to observe the laws of Fast and Abstinence "substantially," or as a whole, is a serious obligation. The days of both Fast and Abstinence during Lent are Ash Wednesday and Good Friday. The other Fridays of Lent are days of Abstinence. On a day of Fast, only one (1) full meal is permitted. Those between the ages of 18 and 59 are obliged to fast. On a day of Abstinence, no meat may be eaten. Those who have reached the age of 14 are obliged by the law of abstinence.

ALMSGIVING *In our Christian life too prayer and action are always profoundly united. Prayer that does not lead to concrete action toward a sister or brother who is poor, sick, in need of help is a sterile and incomplete prayer. - Pope Francis*

Lenten Regulation: The Fridays of the year, outside of Lent, are designated as days of penance, but each individual may substitute for the traditional abstinence from meat some other practice of voluntary self-denial as penance.

OPERATION RICE BOWL

This Lent, put your faith in action with CRS Rice Bowl, Catholic Relief Services' Lenten program to pray, fast, learn and give. Rice Bowls will be collected during Holy Week during collections for the poor.

Why Go To Confession During Lent?

CONFESSION *Even when the door that Baptism opened to enter into the Church is closed a bit because of our weakness and our sins, Confession reopens it, because it is like a second Baptism that forgives us all and illuminates us to go forward with the light of the Lord. - Pope Francis*

Lenten Regulation: The faithful are to be encouraged to participate in the sacrament of Penance during Lent. It is a beautiful season to celebrate the sacrament of Reconciliation. As we realize more deeply the goodness of God, we also become more aware of the ways we have failed to live as we should.

Why Go To Stations of the Cross?

STATIONS The cross speaks to us of the supreme love of God and invites, today, to renew our faith in the power of that love, and to believe that in every situation of our lives, our history and our world, God is able to vanquish death, sin and evil, and to give us new, risen life.

Lenten Suggestion: During the season of Lent, there is a rich tradition of celebrating the Way of the Cross, both privately and publically. This devotion helps to prepare us for the celebration of Christ's Paschal Mystery.