



ARCHDIOCESE  
OF  
SAINT PAUL &  
MINNEAPOLIS

OFFICE OF THE CHANCELLOR FOR CANONICAL AFFAIRS

February 22, 2017

To the clergy, consecrated women and men and lay faithful of the Archdiocese:

Soon we will be entering into the liturgical season of Lent. In these solemn forty days, we will look to the example of Christ who overcame the deceptions of the Tempter during his forty days in the desert. In Pope Francis' message for Lent this year, he reminds us that "Lent is the favorable season for renewing our encounter with Christ, living in His word, in the sacraments, and in our neighbor." It is a penitential season that calls us to spiritual exercises, penitential acts, charitable works, fasting, and almsgiving.

The Church provides norms to help guide us in these practices, primarily in the areas of fasting and abstinence. In particular, Ash Wednesday (March 1, 2017) and Good Friday (April 14, 2017) are days of fasting. Fasting is obligatory for all between the ages of 18-59 who do not have a medical condition in which fasting may be considered harmful. Fasting is defined as limiting oneself to one full meal and two lighter meals, which together do not consist of a full meal.


Moreover, all Fridays of Lent are days of abstinence in the United States. Abstinence is refraining from eating meat for the entire day. The obligation of abstinence is binding on all Catholics who have reached at least 14 years of age.

Pastors and parents are to see to it that their children, even when not bound by the law of fast and abstinence, are educated in an authentic sense of penance and are encouraged to do acts of penance suitable to their age. All members of the Christian faithful are encouraged to do acts of penance and charity during the Lenten season beyond what is prescribed by the law.

As a general rule, a request for a dispensation from the obligation of abstinence on Fridays of Lent will not be considered unless some serious reason is present. It has been noted, however, that Friday of the second week of Lent this year corresponds with St. Patrick's Day (March 17), which has traditionally been an occasion for joy-filled celebrations in this Archdiocese. Having consulted with the Archdiocesan Presbyteral Council and taken into consideration both past practice and present circumstances, and having judged that it would serve the common spiritual good, **Archbishop Hebda has granted to the faithful of the Archdiocese of Saint Paul and Minneapolis, as well as any visitors or travelers who may be physically present within the territory of this Archdiocese, a dispensation from the obligation of abstinence from meat on March 17, 2017.** Those taking advantage of the dispensation, however, are exhorted to undertake a work of charity, an exercise of piety, or an act of comparable penance on some other occasion during the Second Week of Lent.



With prayers for a blessed Lent,

  
Susan Mulheron, JCL  
Chancellor for Canonical Affairs