



# What's What

*A weekly communication that provides an opportunity for our faith community to grow together in faith.*

## Fasting

Fasting and abstinence are often linked together but are two different disciplines. Fasting has to do with the quantity of food eaten on particular days (little or none). Abstinence refers to the kind of food denied oneself, for example, meat. Fasting has always been a popular religious practice. Denying oneself a basic human need such as food for a period of time may be done for different reasons. It prepares for a feast. It promotes self-discipline. It supports one's prayers. It cleanses oneself of previous abuses and sin. All of these have been motives for the lenten tradition of fasting. Another motive has always been part of lenten fasting and abstinence: almsgiving, giving to the needy from what is saved through the discipline of fasting and abstinence, or from one's surplus.

Fasting and abstinence began as voluntary practices. Gradually they became very strict and were enforced by church law. From the 400s to the 800's only one meal a day—usually in the evening according to local custom—was permitted. Flesh meat, fish, alcohol, and in some places even eggs and mild products were forbidden. Beginning in the 10th century, it became customary to eat this meal at noon. By the 14th, a light meal was permitted in the evening. In the Middle Ages the prohibition against fish and dairy products during Lent was lifted.

A rather severe lenten discipline of fasting and abstinence remained in force until 1966. Only one main meal was permitted on all days of Lent except Sunday for parishioners between the ages of 21 and 59. Two other meat-

less meals were permitted, sufficient to maintain strength, but together not equaling another full meal. This was coupled with abstinence from flesh meat, gravies, and condiments on Ash Wednesday and all Fridays for those seven years of age and older. On weekdays of Lent, meat was permitted only at the main meal except on days of abstinence.

**Recent Trends**  
A trend began in the 1960s to emphasize the more positive aspects of discipline and good works. This trend received official sanction in 1966 in Pope Paul VI's apostolic constitution, *Poenitemini*, which limited obligatory abstinence to Ash Wednesday and all Fridays of Lent...

*Catholic Customs & Traditions*  
Dues, 23rd Publications, 2000,  
pgs 75-77

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### Things to talk about:

- What are you fasting from this Lent?
- What have you fasted from in the past?
- What is the hardest things for you to fast from?



*f*ast from  
discontent  
anger  
bitterness  
self-concern  
discouragement  
laziness  
suspicion  
guilt

*f*east on  
gratitude  
patience  
forgiveness  
compassion for others  
hope  
commitment  
truth  
the mercy of God

*Lent is just  
such a time  
of fasting  
and feasting.*



## Saint in the Spotlight — St Gabriel of Our Lady of Sorrows (1838-1862)

February 27 is the memorial of St. Gabriel of Our Lady of Sorrows..

Born in Italy into a large family and baptized Francis, he lost his mother when he was only four years old. He was educated by the Jesuits and, having been cured twice of serious illnesses, came to believe that God was calling him to the religious life. Young Francis wished to join the Jesuits but was turned down, probably because of his age, not yet 17. Following the death of a sister to cholera, his resolve to enter religious life became even stronger and he was accepted by the Passionists. Upon entering the novitiate he was given the name Gabriel of Our Lady of Sorrows.

Ever popular and cheerful, Gabriel quickly was successful in his effort to be

faithful in little things. His spirit of prayer, love for the poor, consideration of the feelings of others, exact observance of the Passionist Rule as well as his bodily penances—always subject to the will of his wise superiors—made a deep impression on everyone.

His superiors had great expectations of Gabriel as he prepared for the priesthood, but after only four years of religious life symptoms of tuberculosis appeared. Ever obedient, he patiently bore the painful effects of the disease and the restrictions it required, seeking no special notice. He died peacefully on February 27, 1862, at age 24, having been an example to both young and old.

Gabriel of Our Lady of Sorrows was

canonized in 1920.

### Comment:

When we think of achieving great holiness by doing little things with love and grace, Therese of Lisieux comes first to mind. Like her, Gabriel died painfully from tuberculosis. Together they urge us to tend to the small details of daily life, to be considerate of others' feelings every day. Our path to sanctity, like theirs, probably lies not in heroic doings but in performing small acts of kindness every day.

[www.americancatholic.org/Features/SaintOfDay](http://www.americancatholic.org/Features/SaintOfDay)

### The Catholic Minimum on Fasting

Catholics between the ages of 18 and 59 are **required** to fast on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday. Fasting is encouraged but not required for all weekdays of Lent. Fasting is defined as only taking one full meal in a day, not excluding taking a little food in the morning and at another time as custom and the Bishops' Conference allow (in the U.S., for example, this should not add up to another full meal).



FASTING

### Connections to Doctrine & Tradition

- You shall observe the prescribed days of fasting and abstinence. *Fasting* is refraining from food or drink to some degree. *Abstinence* is refraining from eating meat. The Church identifies specific days and times of fasting and abstinence to prepare the faithful for certain special feasts; such actions of sacrifice can also help us to grow in self-discipline and in holiness (One of the Precepts of the Church: CCC 2041-2043)
- Apostolic Constitution on Penance (*Poenitemini*)
- Code of Canon Law

CCC: *Catechism of the Catholic Church*; These documents can be found online at [www.vatican.va](http://www.vatican.va) or [www.usccb.org](http://www.usccb.org).

“What’s What” is a publication of the Youth Ministry Department of St Mary, Canandaigua, and St Bridget, Bloomfield.

Our Youth Ministry Mission Statement [Draft]:

Building on the mission of our parishes to follow the way of Christ in our thoughts, words, and deeds, and to make Christ more fully present in all who live within our community, the Youth Ministry mission is to empower young people to live as disciples of Jesus Christ in the world today; to affirm the gifts of our youth and provide opportunities for young people to share their gifts with the larger community; and to meet the religious, spiritual and social needs of all youth with the committed leadership, guidance and support of our parish family, providing an opportunity for our entire faith community to grow together in Christian faith.

### Want to know more?

Would you like to know more about prayer? Check out the following books or websites for more information:

- Catholic Customs & Traditions, Greg Dues, Twenty-Third Publications, 2000
- [http://www.bustedhalo.com/features/2004\\_12spirituality2.htm](http://www.bustedhalo.com/features/2004_12spirituality2.htm)
- [www.americancatholic.org/Features/lent/faqle9902.asp](http://www.americancatholic.org/Features/lent/faqle9902.asp)

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