

## **Traditional Lenten Observances\***

**\*These guidelines are no longer obligatory, but Catholics may practice them during Lent if they so choose.**

Here are the traditional rules of fast and abstinence outlined in Canons 1250-1254 of the 1917 Code of Canon Law and observed per the 1962 liturgical calendar:

### **Who was bound to observe these laws?**

- The law of abstinence bound all Catholics, beginning on the day after their 7th birthday.
- The law of fasting bound all Catholics, beginning on the day after their 21st birthday and ending at the midnight which completed their 59th birthday (Note: The USA's particular law had lowered the obligatory fasting age to 18).

### **What was forbidden and allowed to be eaten:**

- The law of abstinence forbade the eating of flesh meat and of broth made of meat, but did not exclude the use of eggs, dairy products, or seasonings made from the fat of animals.
- The law of fasting prescribed that only one full meal a day was taken with two smaller meals that did not equal the main one.
- As to the kind of food and the amount that might be taken, the approved customs of the place were to be observed. It was not forbidden to eat both flesh meat and fish at the same meal, nor to interchange the midday and evening meals.

### **In the Universal Church:**

- Abstinence was obligatory on all Fridays, except on Holy Days of Obligation outside of Lent.

### **Fasting and complete abstinence were obligatory on the following days:**

- Ash Wednesday
- Fridays and Saturdays in Lent
- Good Friday
- Holy Saturday (until midnight)
- Ember Days (Wednesday, Friday and Saturday)

### **Partial abstinence:**

Fasting and partial abstinence (meaning meat could be eaten at the principal meal) were obligatory on all other weekdays of Lent (i.e., Monday through Thursday). Friday was always complete abstinence).

### **Fasting and partial abstinence was obligatory on the following days:**

- Ember Wednesdays and Saturdays
- Vigil of Pentecost
- all other weekdays of Lent including Saturdays

Liquids, including milk and fruit juices, might be taken at any time on a day of fast, but “other works of charity, piety, and prayer for the pope should be substituted” to compensate for this relaxation.