

## FAST, ABSTAIN, AND GIVING ALMS AS ACT OF PENANCE



During Lenten season, Catholics in the age groups of 21 to 59 are required to fast only on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday. Abstinence from meat is recommended for the other Fridays of Lent. Voluntary fasts and abstinences are encouraged for the entire season. And "When you fast do not look gloomy," as Jesus tells us (Matt. 6:16-18), we do not have to tell or show to anybody our penance it should be done privately because God will see the unseen to others and He will reward the unseen acts. Those who are sick or under medication are not obliged to fast.

According to the Catholic teachings, in abstaining, we are not only supposed to abstain from food. We also need to abstain from other leisure like TV, radio, internet, parties and alike that we are used to do as a sign of penance. The main intention for this is purification, and making reparation for the offenses against the Mystical Body of Christ. So even if these actions are done in private or secret, they help us grow in our spiritual life, and benefit the whole Church.

Almsgiving is tied closely with fasting. Whatever we give up, the money we save should go to the needy. It should be given away to the missions, the Church or a worthy charity. Giving alms, as Jesus teaches (Matt. 6:1-10), means making the needs of others as our own. They are all around us: children and the old, the sick and the suffering, families and individuals, next-door neighbors and people in lands far away. Giving will make you live.

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