

# LENTEN REGULATIONS FOR THE DIOCESE OF BATON ROUGE

■ ■ ■ In the Diocese of Baton Rouge, as in the rest of the Church in the United States, Catholics aged 18 through 59 are bound by a **grave obligation** to observe a **solemn fast** on **Ash Wednesday and Good Friday**. Catholics between the ages of 14 and up are to **abstain from meat** on **Ash Wednesday, all Fridays of Lent, and Good Friday** as well. These norms have been established by the United States' **National Conference of Catholic Bishops** in accord with the norms of canons 1249-1253 in the revised **Code of Canon Law** of 1983.

■ ■ ■ To **fast** means to consume only one full meal a day at most, although taking of other, smaller quantities of food at the other customary mealtimes is permitted. Food and drink "between meals" (excepting only water and medicine) is not permitted on fast days.

■ ■ ■ To **abstain** from meat means refraining from eating beef, veal, pork, or poultry at least, although not necessarily eggs, milk products, or condiments made from animal fat. The consumption of fish, shellfish, and reptiles is permitted if desired.

■ ■ ■ In addition to the mandatory days listed above, abstinence from meat on every Friday throughout the year which is not a solemnity, and fasting on all Lenten weekdays (especially Wednesdays and Fridays) and on Holy Saturday, is strongly **recommended** to all the faithful. There always remains, of course, the grave obligation to participate at Holy Mass on all Sundays and days of obligation.

■ ■ ■ Each in his or her own way, **every Christian is bound** to do **penance** by virtue of divine law. Only ill health or some similar situation of urgency excuses. During the Lenten Season, Christ Jesus' own challenges to "**prayer, fasting and almsgiving**" are paramount (see the Gospel reading for Ash Wednesday, Mt. 6:1-6,16-18). We seek ongoing forgiveness for sin (especially in the Sacrament of Penance) and come to appreciate ever more the great sufferings and sacrifice which Our Savior experienced for the sake of our salvation.

■ ■ ■ Clergy (priests and deacons) and those religious priests who have legitimate residence and active ministry within the Diocese of Baton Rouge have been delegated the power to dispense the faithful of the diocese, in individual cases and for a just reason, from the obligation to observe a particular day of penance, or to commute some or all of its obligations to other pious works. Included in this is the faculty to dispense from the Lenten obligations to fast and abstain from meat. Yet the obligation to do some kind of penance remains a serious one, and will not be taken lightly by a good Catholic.