

Fasting

Blessings and Benefits

Mitch Finley

A Living Faith Publication

RESPONDING TO THE CALL

NUTRITIONISTS and other authorities on human health make all sorts of claims about the health benefits of fasting. We probably don't need experts to tell us that among North Americans, overeating is a big problem. Obesity is on the increase, even among children. So when Lent comes around offering us an opportunity to eat less, we can anticipate some physical as well as spiritual benefits, and that may increase our motivation. Fast and abstinence during Lent offers us an opportunity to enrich and enliven our Christian faith.

The purpose of this pamphlet is to help you better understand the Lenten fast so you can participate more wholeheartedly and experience its spiritual benefits and blessings more deeply during this holy season.

Most people understand that "fasting" refers not just to *not eating*, but making that choice freely. Some wouldn't think of not eating on

purpose. Among those who do fast, the reasons vary. More than a few do so in order to lose weight. Others fast because they believe it promotes good health. Still others fast for religious reasons.

Muslims, for example, fast annually during the month of Ramadan, the ninth month on the Muslim calendar—the month, Muslims believe, when the Qur'an came down from heaven. They choose to not eat or drink anything—not even water—during the daylight hours, and then break the fast at the end of each day with prayer and a meal.

The only similar, Church-wide, fast for Catholics happens during the liturgical season of Lent, the forty days prior to Easter when we celebrate the ultimate mystery upon which our faith is based, the Resurrection of Christ. The tradition of a Lenten fast goes back to at least the fourth century, but its inspiration goes back even further. Fasting among Christians during the forty days of Lent goes back to Jesus himself.

Fasting Blessings and Benefits

Why does the Church ask us to fast? Fast and abstinence during Lent offers us an opportunity to enrich our Christian faith. This pamphlet will help you better understand the Lenten fast so you can participate more wholeheartedly and experience its spiritual benefits more deeply during this holy season.

Imprimatur

Bishop William S. Skylstad • Diocese of Spokane

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