

## **Lenten Instructions – 2023**

Lent allows each of us to let our Catholic tradition of fasting and abstaining be an important reminder of what it means to suffer or to be without. This liturgical season is a blessed opportunity for us to unite with our brothers and sisters who are hungry, poor, homeless, or living on the fringes of society and to draw near to all those who suffer from illness, affliction, addiction or other serious burden. The following is a reminder of the Lenten instructions to use as a guide as we unite with those who suffer, near and far.

So that the Church of Metuchen may be spiritually one in a common observance of Lent, the following days of fast and abstinence are to be observed by all Catholics of the Diocese who enjoy the blessings of good health:

1. **The days of fast and abstinence are Ash Wednesday and Good Friday.**
2. **All other Fridays of Lent are days of abstinence.**
3. **From the Evening Mass of the Lord's Supper on Holy Thursday until the celebration of the Easter Vigil on the evening of Holy Saturday, the Easter fast is suggested so that, with uplifted and welcoming hearts, we may be ready to celebrate the joys of the Resurrection. This ancient tradition, intimately connected with the *Rites of Holy Week and the Order of Christian Initiation of Adults*, is encouraged, especially in those places baptizing catechumens at the Easter Vigil.**

The obligation to fast applies only to Catholics between the ages of 18 and 59. To fast in the Catholic tradition means to limit oneself to one full meal during the day so as to experience hunger.

The obligation of abstinence affects all Catholics who have reached the age of 14. Abstinence in the Catholic tradition means to abstain from meat.

The obligation of fast and abstinence, as a whole, is a serious obligation. While failure to observe any penitential day in itself may not be considered serious, the failure to observe any penitential days at all, or a substantial number of them without good cause, would be considered a grave matter. Those unable to abstain for a valid reason on any given Friday of Lent are asked to perform some other penitential act, or to abstain on another day.

In our fasting and abstaining this Lent, I pray that we each may choose to embrace this small suffering rather than accept it with misery or complaint. For, if we are joyful in our Lenten observances, we will be granted an opportunity to more fully understand the true sacrifice that Jesus Christ made for all humanity by accepting death on the cross in order to gain our eternal salvation.