

Dear Brother Priests, Pastors, and All Working in Parish Liturgy,

In honor of the beginning of the season of Lent, here is a list of ten questions most frequently asked of our office.

Ten Frequently Asked Questions Regarding Lent

1. Are parishes supposed to cover statues in their church during Lent?

Statues *may* be veiled beginning on the 5th Sunday of Lent and remain so through Holy Saturday. Especially in a church with a great deal of devotional areas and images, this can be a method of focusing worshippers on the central mystery of Christ's passion, death, and resurrection. The Crucifix may be unveiled after the Good Friday services.

2. Why is there no holy water at the entrance of the church during Lent?

Actually, holy water is to remain in the entry to churches until the commencement of the Triduum on Holy Thursday. Only then it is to be removed and replaced after the Triduum. This highlights the relationship between holy water—itsself symbolic of sacramental grace given to us by God—and the Paschal Mystery, celebrated in a preeminent way in the Triduum.

3. What is “fasting” specifically?

Fasting is the consuming no more than one meal per day, along with two smaller repasts which, when combined, are not larger than the main meal.

4. Who is required to fast during Lent?

Adult Catholics from the age of 18 through 59 are required to fast, unless of course prohibited by medical or physical reasons. (Canon 1252)

5. In Lent, who has to abstain from meat?

Catholics from age 14 and up are to abstain from meat on days of abstinence. (Canon 1252)

6. When are the days of fasting and abstinence?

The days of fasting are Ash Wednesday and Good Friday. The days of abstinence are the two just mentioned along with each Friday in Lent.

7. What counts as “meat”?

Food is considered meat if it comes from an animal that walks on land. This includes mammals and fowl. Crab? Not meat.

8. Can we fast and do our private Lenten practices on Sundays in Lent?

Even in Lent, Sunday is a solemnity of the Resurrection of the Lord and is therefore not a day of fasting and penance. The Sundays during Lent are not counted among its forty days. Recognizing this can help to focus the goal of our private Lenten practices: the Easter joy that comes from being conformed to Christ Himself. Sundays in Lent strengthen us with a small foretaste of the Resurrection along our journey through the desert of Lent. Breaking with our Lenten fasts (in moderation, of course) can be a part of this foretaste.

9. Should liturgical music change at all during Lent?

The nature of Lent does in fact affect liturgical music. Musical instruments, including the organ, may only be used in order to accompany singing, Laetare Sunday and solemnities being exceptions to this rule (*Ceremonial of Bishops*, 252).

10. Can parishes have weddings and baptisms during Lent?

Weddings and baptisms are permitted for pastoral reasons, but they must reflect the Lenten season in which they are carried out.

Have a Blessed Lent! Feel free to contact the Office of Worship with any questions or suggestions with how we can assist you this Lent and throughout the year.

Yours in Christ,

Fr Kieran Kleczewski, Executive Director, Office of Worship
Fr John Muir, Assistant Director, Office of Worship