

## LENTEN REGULATIONS FOR THE DIOCESE OF ALEXANDRIA

Ash Wednesday and Good Friday are days of fast and abstinence. This means that we do not eat meat and we have only one full meal.

The other Fridays of the season of Lent are days of abstinence from meat. The obligation to abstain from meat binds Catholics 14 years of age and older. The obligation to fast, limiting oneself to one full meal and two lighter meals in the course of the day, binds Catholics from the age of 18 to 59. Those who are younger or older may freely embrace these disciplines. But Lenten disciplines should never endanger your health.

It is obvious that abstaining from meat is meaningless for vegetarians, who must choose some other form of abstinence. It is equally obvious that replacing meat with a gourmet seafood meal is not in keeping with the spirit of Lent.

*–Bishop David Talley*

## Renewing our Baptismal Call through Prayer, Fasting and Almsgiving

Lent is a time of renewal, conversion and change; a time of penance, pardon, and peace.

But mainly Lent is celebrated to remind us of our Baptismal call to holiness and challenge us to “repent and believe in the gospel.” Through these weeks of Lent we are preparing not only to celebrate fully the Passion and Resurrection of Jesus Christ; we are also preparing to renew our Baptismal promises at Easter.

Traditionally we prepare for this renewal of promises through Prayer, Fasting and Almsgiving.

There is no substitute for the great prayer of the Mass. Our celebration of the Sunday Eucharist is meant to unite us to Christ and to one another. In celebrating this great prayer of the Church as a community of believers we grow in holiness and gain strength to live the life of Christ. The celebration of daily Mass

during Lent is another opportunity for us to grow in our walk with the Lord and our fellow believers.

But we are also called to personal prayer. The more we knock, the more the door is opened to us. A commitment of time is required. But the rewards are worth it!

Fasting means consuming less – or sometimes nothing. Abstinence means avoiding a certain kind of thing – such as meat or television. Both are hallmarks of Lent and they may be applied to a wide variety of things.

Fasting from food affects the body and helps to shape the human spirit. After Lent ends on Holy Thursday we observe the paschal fast on Good Friday and Holy Saturday to prepare ourselves for Easter.

But again fasting and abstinence can be applied to more than food. Perhaps we can fast or abstain from time in

front of the television or computer. “Giving something up” is also traditional to Lent. However, our abstinence should not be purely passive. We can be proactive and replace these activities with time spent in prayer, or visiting a lonely neighbor, or a nursing home. In this way we not only are “giving something up,” we are “doing something extra.”

We usually think of almsgiving to mean financial contributions only. This is indeed important, especially to those in need. But what about our time and talent? Giving our time for service, or putting our talent to the work in your home, church or neighborhood are other ways of true almsgiving.

May this season of Lent lead us all to greater holiness so as we rejoice and renew on Easter Day we may do so with true joy and thanksgiving!

*–Fr. Craig Scott*