

## **General Laws of Fast and Abstinence**

**Canon 1249:** All members of the Christian faithful in their own way are bound to do penance in virtue of divine law; in order that all may join in a common observance of penance, penitential days, are prescribed in which the Christian faithful in a special way pray, exercise works of piety and charity, and deny themselves by fulfilling their responsibilities more faithfully and especially by observing fast and abstinence according to the norm of the following canons:

**Canon 1250:** All Fridays through the year and the time of Lent are penitential days and times through the universal Church.

**Canon 1252:** All persons who have completed their fourteenth year are bound by the law of abstinence; all adults are bound by the law of fast up to the beginning of their sixtieth year. Nevertheless, pastors and parents are to see to it that minors who are not bound by the law of fast and abstinence are educated in a authentic sense of penance.

**Canon 1253:** It is for the conference of bishops to determine more precisely the observance of fast and abstinence and to substitute in whole or in part for fast and abstinence other forms of penance, especially works of charity and exercises of piety.

While abstinence from eating meat is observed on every Friday during Lent and abstinence and fasting are observed on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday, in 1966, the United States bishops determined that penances other than abstinence from meat could be practiced on Fridays throughout the year. Nonetheless, every Friday during the year is “a day of self-denial and mortification in prayerful remembrance of the passion of Jesus Christ.” The bishops added that among freely chosen penitential practices, “we give first place to abstinence from flesh meat. We do so in the hope that the Catholic community will ordinarily continue to abstain from meat by free choice as formerly we did in obedience of Church law.” (Complementary Norms of Penance and Abstinence, 1966)