

# Lent at Blessed Trinity and Spirit of Christ + 2013

## Some Practical Ways to Approach the Holy Fast

- ◆ **Look at fasting, and all the way in which you re-imagine that discipline, not as punishment but as a service to your body—to its good.** The body is good and worthy because of the mystery of the incarnation: God's flesh-taking among us has made all flesh, all earthly things, holy.
- ◆ **Look at fasting, not as denial of the flesh or a degradation of fleshly hungers, but as leading to the enhancement of our earthly joys.** The Talmud says: "One will have to give account on the Judgment Day of every good thing which one might have enjoyed—and did not."
- ◆ **See fasting as necessary to the enhancement of the feast.** A good appetite allow us to enjoy the earthly gifts we were given. We need to learn to be deeply joyful as much as we need to learn healthy, constructive suffering.
- ◆ **Fast from instant gratifications.** Take a moment to reexamine cravings and hungers, yearnings, compulsions, and impulses as natural and right—but in need of being fed at the right level.
- ◆ **Examine your diet and resolve to make the necessary changes if it is not healthy.** Examine your eating habits and change them if you eat impulsively, constantly, alone, too fast, unconsciously or without savoring your food, with disinterest, without care of dignity.
- ◆ **Eat only when seated at a table.** Try not to eat alone but find someone to share your meal with. Companion means the one you share your bread with. Invite the lonely. Bring a meal to a shut-in. Volunteer at **Poverello** or at another place where people are served and cared for. Bring designated food items for the **MISSOULA/LOLO FOOD BANK**.
- ◆ **Return a sense of the sacramental to mealtime in your household.** Present all meals with dignity and care. Take at least forty-five minutes to eat your dinner. Don't "eat and run" or "run and eat!!" (The average American family eats a whole meal in five minutes!)
- ◆ **If you have a family, discuss these Lenten exercises with them.** Make your Lenten practices an exercise in mutual support and solidarity.
- ◆ **Learn to cook and serve the foods the poor eat.** Tasty and healthful meals can be made from lentils, rice, grains, legumes which, eaten together, offer all the protein you need. You may want to invest in a simple Indian or Mexican cookbook.
- ◆ **Try vegetarian meals.** If we eat the grains instead of feeding them to the cattle, we can save the beasts caught in the middle—and also save the forests that are cut down to make grasslands for cattle!
- ◆ **Use the OPERATION RICE BOWL boxes and set it in the middle of your dining table.** You can label it: **The fasts of the Rich are the Feasts of the Poor.** The money you save by eating sparingly, not dining out, forgoing meats (not just on Friday!), can be graphically turned into alms.
- ◆ **Begin planning or planting a vegetable garden or herb patch.** Growing, tending, harvesting, sharing and eating your own produce brings us down to earth and is often a healing experience.
- ◆ **Get ready to participate in the Blessed Trinity GARDEN OF EATON** again this spring. Growing food for people!
- ◆ **If you have no difficulties with your meals or mealtime and food is not an issue with you, consider other ways of "fasting."** During Lent we ask ourselves: **What does my baptism cost me?** Surely it asks us to fast from our sinful behaviors.
- ◆ **Fast from guzzling gas.** Drive the speed limit. Ride public transportation. Ride a bike or walk when you can.
- ◆ **Take "saving the earth seriously."** Learn more about global warming and what we must do as good stewards of GOD'S creation.
- ◆ **Fast from compulsive consumerism.** Check your closets, cupboards, storage rooms and garage. How many items have you collected that your thought you needed until you got them home and had "buyer's remorse?"
- ◆ **In reparation, choose some of these areas in your house to clean out.** Fix, clean and deliver these items to those who need them more that you do.
- ◆ **Examine the ways in which you consume and waste, using up nature's resources and adding to landfills or air/water pollution—the ways you contribute to Global warming.** Shorten your showers. Save the warm-up water for your plants. Eat your leftovers at the next meal. Recycle religiously. Refuse to use plastic. Use your own shopping bag. Write or print on both sides of your paper, or recycle your paper as scratch pads. Lower your thermostat. Wear a sweater, add a blanket.
- ◆ **Find ways to volunteer in your neighborhood, city or parish.** Every neighborhood has its poor and lonely. Visit the sick. Cook for the aged or homeless. Work for children's rights and education. Speak for peace. Build dwellings for the homeless. Write letters to politicians for peace and justice, and for conservation of the earth's resources.

LEO, BISHOP OF ROME, once wrote:

*The sum total of our fasting does not consist in merely abstaining from food. In vain do we deny our body food if we do not withhold our heart from wickedness and restrain our lips so that they speak no evil. We must so moderate our rightful use of food that our other desires may be subject to the same rule. They therefore who desire to do good works, let them not fear that they shall be without the means: since even for giving two pennies, the generosity of the poor widow of the Gospel was glorified!*

