



Invest time each week to  
expand your vocabulary and  
deepen your faith.

11 February 2024

## WORD OF THE WEEK

### Fasting <sup>\ˈfɑːstɪŋ\</sup>

Refraining from food and drink for religious purposes. Biblically, it implied not eating or drinking from morning till evening.

The Catholic Church defines **fasting** as one full meal a day, with two additional breaks. Catholics observe a eucharistic **fast** and abstain from food and drink one hour prior to receiving Holy Communion. They also **fast** annually on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday if in good health and between the ages of 21 and 59.

*Pronunciation:* <https://tinyurl.com/Take5-fasting>

### CONTEXT

Do you wish your prayer to fly toward God? Make for it two wings: **fasting** and almsgiving. —*Saint Augustine*

There's something about it that makes sense, Lent. You give something up, and everything's more joyful. —*Elaine Stritch*

When my stomach hungers from **fasting**, it is a reminder of the spiritual hunger my soul experiences at every moment of my existence. —*Bishop Robert Baron*

### WHY IT MATTERS

When we're self-sufficient, it's easy to forget that God is our ultimate source of life and hope. **Fasting** is a visceral reminder to trust in God. **Fasting** helps us to detach from worldly things not because they are bad but to remind us that God is the source of all gifts.

From the Catechism of the Catholic Church: "**Fasting** and abstinence . . . help us acquire mastery over our instincts and freedom of heart" (2043).

### RELATED WORDS

Abstinence | Sacrifice | Asceticism | Mortification

## QUESTION OF THE WEEK

### Why do we fast?

Why **fast**? Our survival requires us to eat and drink. When we refrain from these most basic activities, it reminds us that "we do not live by bread alone." **Fasting** provides us with an opportunity to affirm our faith in God's providential care.

**Fasting** as a spiritual practice falls into the category of sacrifice. As in other acts of religious sacrifice, **fasting** takes something away from us. **Fasting** stirs us to contemplate justice—many in this world go without food—and motivates us to pray in a deeper, richer way. Because we don't want to do it, **fasting** is regarded as a penitential practice: We do it in reparation for sin, ours and the world's.

When you think of everything **fasting** can do—encourage fidelity and humility, awaken the spirit of justice, enhance prayer, assist those who are tempted—the question becomes: Why *not fast*?

—*Alice Camille, from Questions Catholics Ask* <http://tinyurl.com/QCA-fasting>

## REFLECTION OF THE WEEK

ASH WEDNESDAY, DAY OF FAST AND ABSTINENCE  
(FEBRUARY 14)

### The spirit of our fasting

**Fasting**, prayer, and almsgiving are ancient spiritual practices that foster humility and charity. In the words of fifth-century Doctor of the Church Peter Chrysologus: "When you **fast**, see the **fasting** of others. If you want God to know you are hungry, know that another is hungry. If you hope for mercy, show mercy. If you look for kindness, show kindness. If you want to receive, give."

READINGS: Joel 2:12-18; 2 Corinthians 5:20-6:2; Matthew 6:1-6, 16-18 (219 <https://bible.usccb.org/bible/readings/021424.cfm>).  
"When you **fast**, do not look gloomy."

### FAITH IN ACTION

Use **fasting** as a way to see more clearly the things you've missed by inattention.