



LENTEN PENANCE

The Church's Canon Law reaffirms our obligation to do penance. The special times of penance are all Fridays throughout the year and the season of Lent. We recall that St. John the Baptist prepared for the coming of the Lord by "preaching a baptism of repentance". Christ began his ministry on earth with the exhortation to repent: "Repent and believe the Gospel" Mk 1: 15.

Repentance means the rejection of sin. It implies conversion to, and reconciliation with God. Penance is the concrete expression of repentance. It takes the forms of prayer, self-denial, and works of charity. Each of these identifies us more closely with our Saviour. By penance we make satisfaction for our sins, and take real steps in the renewal of our lives. Penance is the proof of our repentance. Repentance and conversion are central, on-going features of Christian living. Penance has to be a constant, even daily, practice in our lives. In nominating special times of penance, the Church encourages and promotes in all of us the *habit* of penance.

Furthermore, observance of these special times by all Catholics throughout the universal Church emphasises what we call "the social dimension of sin". The sin of the individual member always in some measure infects the whole body. Therefore during Lent and on the Fridays of the year, we do penance, not only on our own account, but also in the name of the Church and of the world. We must take very seriously our penitential obligations and be sure to carry them out. The Australian Catholic Bishops' Conference has not restricted our penance to fast and abstinence in all cases, it has left room for our own responsible choice. Where we make the choice, we should carefully select the form of penance that we consider most appropriate for our own circumstances and growth in the Christian life.

DAYS OF PENANCE

1. Rules for Lent follow in (a), (b), and (c).
2. Abstinence from meat, and fasting, are to be observed on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday.
3. On all other Fridays of the year the law of the common practice of penance is fulfilled by performing any one of the following:
 - (a) prayer - for example, Mass attendance; family prayer; a visit to a church or chapel; reading the Bible; making the Stations of the Cross; praying the rosary.
 - (b) self-denial - for example, not eating meat; not eating sweets or dessert; giving up entertainment to spend time with the family; limiting food and drink so as to give to the poor of one's own country.
 - (c) helping others - for example, special attention to someone who is poor, sick, elderly, lonely or overburdened.

All who have completed their eighteenth year and have not yet begun their sixtieth year are bound to fast. All who have completed their fourteenth year are bound to abstain.

LENT LASTS FROM ASH WEDNESDAY (17TH FEBRUARY) TO THE MASS OF THE LORD'S SUPPER EXCLUSIVE (1ST APRIL). ON GOOD FRIDAY AND, IF POSSIBLE, ALSO ON HOLY SATURDAY UNTIL THE EASTER VIGIL, THE EASTER FAST IS OBSERVED.

PASCHAL PRECEPT

Each of the faithful is obliged to receive Holy Communion at least once a year. This is to be done between Ash Wednesday, 17th February, and Trinity Sunday, 30th May, 2010 unless for a good reason it is done at another time during the year. All the faithful are obliged to confess their grave sins at least once a year.

St. Mary's Cathedral
SYDNEY.
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+ *George Card. Pell*
ARCHBISHOP OF SYDNEY.