

Catholic Mission/Identity

We've entered into the annual season of Lent, always as winter is ending and we come into spring. Lent – which comes from an Old English word that also gives us “length” and “lengthen” (i.e., days getting longer) – is a period of 40 days meant to prepare us for the celebration of Easter.

Traditionally, Lent is observed by three practices: prayer, fasting and almsgiving. To focus on one: Fasting used to mean, strictly, taking only one meal per day and abstaining from meat. Catholics are still called to give up meat on Ash Wednesday and all Fridays during Lent. In our day, we have broadened what it means to fast: what can we step away from or what behavior can we work to change that might bring us more clarity, focus, closeness to God? Some choose to fast from social media. A director at Catholic Charities USA just published an essay suggesting a fast from AI (artificial intelligence).

Whether you have a faith or belief system or not, might I humbly suggest that you take on the challenge of fasting from something that doesn't seem to be life-giving for you? Maybe it's diet related. Maybe it's a behavior or habit you struggle to change using screens to numb out, using social media to doomscroll, using consumerism to fill your home with things you don't really need, etc. Our Muslim sisters and brothers just started their holy season of Ramadan (Feb. 28th), which extends to March 29th. They will be undertaking similar disciplines and sacrifices to brush off the superficial and the busy to come to a more clear-eyed relationship with what is most important.

Here in the agency, we will be bringing a series of vegetarian lunches to different sites, to bring us together in community and to promote simpler choices that help us tread more lightly and more intentionally. We look forward to seeing you at one (or more!).

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