



LENTEN PENANCE

In the liturgy and liturgical catechesis of Lent, the reminder of baptism already received or the preparation for its reception, as well as the theme of repentance, renew the entire community along with those being prepared to celebrate the paschal mystery, in which each of the elect will share through the sacraments of initiation. For both the elect and the local community, therefore, the Lenten season is a time of spiritual recollection in preparation for the celebration of the paschal mystery. *RCIA 125*

This year the season of Lent commences on **Ash Wednesday, 17 February**, and concludes on **Thursday 1 April**. In our Catholic tradition, it is marked as a time for conversion, repentance, and renewal. It begins on Ash Wednesday with the imposition of ashes coupled with the words of invitation, “*Turn away from sin and believe the good news*”. In this annual invitation, we recognise our human frailty and our reliance on the grace and mercy of God.

As Jesus fasted for forty days and forty nights in the desert (Matthew 4:1-11); he accompanies us as we too make the journey into the desert of our souls. It is there that we are encouraged to resist and turn away from sin, which places limitation on our lives and relationships. It is precisely in those moments of vulnerability that we are called to take refuge in the God of mercy and compassion.

Lent is a time of pruning back the obstacles in our relationships so that we might flourish and have “life to the full” (John 10:10). Through the season of Lent we come to Easter, which is a celebration of the life, death, and resurrection of Christ. It is a joyful time to celebrate the new life promised to us and the whole world by the risen Jesus, our hope and our salvation.

DAYS OF PENANCE

On Ash Wednesday and Good Friday, abstinence from meat is to be observed by those who have completed their fourteenth year of age. Those who are aged between 18 and 60 are to fast on these days. Priests should encourage those under their pastoral care to embrace the spirit of abstinence and fasting. This Lenten practice is not to be a burden upon those who have health issues or special needs.

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On all other Fridays of the year the law of the common practice of penance is fulfilled by performing any one of the following:

1. *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; or in other ways;
2. *Self-denial* – for example, not eating meat; not eating sweets or desserts; giving up entertainment to spend time with the family; limiting food and drink so as to give to the poor in one's own country and elsewhere; or in other ways;
3. *Helping others* – for example, special attention to someone who is poor, sick, elderly, lonely or overburdened or feeling isolated from our Church community; or in other ways.

Lent is from **Ash Wednesday** (17 February 2021) until the **Mass of the Lord's Supper** (1 April 2021) inclusive. Fasting is also observed on **Good Friday** and if possible on **Holy Saturday** until the Easter Vigil.

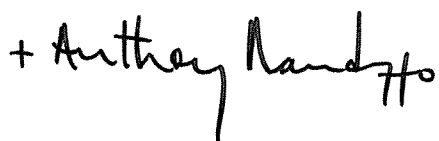
PASCHAL PRECEPT

Each of the faithful is obliged to receive Holy Communion at least once a year. This is done between **Ash Wednesday** (17 February 2021) and **Trinity Sunday** (30 May 2021), unless for a good reason it is done at another time during the year.

All of the faithful who have reached the age of discretion (seven years old) are obliged to confess their grave sins at least once a year.

I would encourage you also to consider being part of a Lenten prayer or discussion group and to read the Scriptures in your homes. A visit to a church for private personal prayer before the Blessed Sacrament is also a marvellous way to strengthen one's prayer life during this season. Do not hesitate or be fearful, "the Lord waits to be gracious to you" (Isaiah 30:18).

My dear brothers and sisters in Christ, my prayer over these coming weeks is that our Catholic community in the Diocese of Broken Bay will seek to live the new life in Christ. This Lent, may we move with confidence and loving reverence deeper into the heart of the Father who is grace, mercy and love.



Most Rev Anthony Randazzo DD JCL
Bishop of Broken Bay
3 February 2021