

10 REASONS TO FAST

- 1. Jesus seemed to think it was a good idea! Fasting was a Jewish tradition that Jesus clearly expected to continue.**

“Whenever you fast, do not look dismal, like the hypocrites.... But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, so that your fasting may be seen not by others but by your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you” (Mt. 6:16-18).

“Jesus said to [the Pharisees and scribes], ‘You cannot make wedding guests fast while the bridegroom is with them, can you? The days will come when the bridegroom will be taken away from them, and then they will fast in those days’” (Lk. 5:34-35).

- 2. Fasting is a traditional sign of sorrow, repentance and humility before God. In this sense, it is an offering to God symbolizing our contrition (Neh. 1:4; Ps. 35:13; Joel 2:12).**

“I humbled my soul with fasting” (Psalm 69:10).

- 3. Fasting helps us empty ourselves and focus on God. When we fast, we have the opportunity to rid ourselves of things that distract or burden us. As we strip away distractions, our focus can turn away from ourselves and toward God.**

“No one can serve two masters” (Mt. 6:24).

“Let my tongue cling to the roof of my mouth, if I do not remember you, if I do not set Jerusalem above my highest joy” (Psalm 137:6).

- 4. Fasting gives us that familiar “yearning” feeling. When we stop to think about that feeling, we can recognize our ultimate yearning is not for that piece of chocolate or cup of coffee; rather, we are all yearning for what truly fills us: the love of God.**

“As a deer longs for flowing streams, so my soul longs for you, O God” (Psalm 42:1).

- 5. Fasting helps us develop self-discipline, which is important in the spiritual life.**

“Whoever is faithful in a very little is faithful also in much” (Lk. 16:10).

“If any want to become my followers, let them *deny themselves* and take up their cross *daily* and follow me” (Lk. 9:23).

- 6. Fasting – experiencing some small deprivation – makes us more mindful of those in need. In fact, the prophet Isaiah describes for us the type of fast that really pleases the Lord:**

“Is not this the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of injustice, to undo the thongs of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke? Is it not to share your bread with the hungry and bring the homeless poor into your house; when you see the naked, to cover them, and not to hide yourself from your own kin?” (Isa. 58:6-7)



- 7. Fasting builds up our sense of community as a Church. It is something we do together.**

“The people of Israel were assembled with fasting and in sackcloth” (Neh. 9:1).

- 8. Sacrifices made during Lent make the celebration of Easter even more festive and meaningful.**

“‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son.’ But the father said to his slaves, ‘Quickly, bring out a robe – the best one – and put it on him; put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. And get the fatted calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate; for this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found!’ And they began to celebrate” (Lk. 15:21).

- 9. When we fast, we imitate Jesus who fasted and prayed for 40 days before beginning his public ministry (Mt. 4:1-11; Mk. 1:12-13).**

“Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness, where for forty days he was tempted by the devil. He ate nothing at all during those days, and when they were over, he was famished” (Lk. 4:1-2).

- 10. When we fast, we imitate Jesus who sacrificed all for us. Our own sacrifices help us focus on the meaning of the cross.**

“May I never boast of anything except the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world” (Gal. 6:14).