

## ***Ask Fr James***

### **Meatless Fridays: On all Fridays or just Fridays in Lent?**

No meat on Fridays had been practiced as early as the 3rd century but was not made compulsory until Pope Nicholas I (A.D. 858-867) made it compulsory as a strict church rule, to be observed by all "under pain of sin." However, in 1966, Pope Paul VI who oversaw the Vatican II Council relaxed the law and permitted bishops in each country to set their own dietary practices to be observed during Lent and on all Fridays, all year round and this became coded in Canon Law.

**Canon Law #1250 and #1251 states thus:**

*Can. 1250 The penitential days and times in the universal Church are every Friday of the whole year and the season of Lent.*

*Can. 1251 Abstinence from eating meat or some other food according to the prescripts of the conference of bishops is to be observed on every Friday of the year unless a Friday occurs on a day listed as a solemnity. Abstinence and fasting, however, are to be observed on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday.*

In line with this long tradition and laws of the church, the Bishops of Canada decreed that Ash Wednesday and Good Friday are to be observed as a day of fasting and abstinence and we may not eat meat, but urged that throughout the year, every Friday while being observed as a day of abstinence from meat, we can substitute special acts of charity or piety on this day because each Friday, we share in the Lord's cross as was on Good Friday.

There are various types of penance and abstinence that we can offer to our God:

- Abstain from meat, or some other form of food, drink or dessert or entertainment.
- We can cut down on the amount of our food, candy, treats or snacks.
- We can try to keep the commandments
- We may spend some extra time on Friday in Adoration praying for peace or for a family in need. We may pray with an older person or someone who is sick.
- Each Friday we may spend some time in reading God's word.
- Take part in a service of worship with others, or pray with our family, or spend some extra time in personal prayer.
- Do good works like visiting the sick or aged, helping those in any need, or by contributing time or money to a work of charity through the church (Matthew 6.1 6, 16 17). We are called to do good works every day. On Friday we may do them to thank Jesus for suffering and dying on the cross for us.

The reason for abstinence is because of what Jesus said in the Gospels. We are to go hungry and thirsty for the sake of justice (Matthew 5:6). Since it was on a Friday that Jesus freely died to save us from our sins, from the earliest centuries, Christians have tried to follow these commands. Believers made special effort to do some form of penance on Fridays. This law obliges Catholics who are 14 years and above.

***You may email/send your faith questions to Fr. James and he will answer them in our Sunday Bulletins.***