

Understanding the Precepts of the Church

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Acknowledgments

This text on Precepts is taken from the online course offered by the same name at CatechismClass.com. For that reason, you may notice some repetition in the prayers of this text, as they occur in each chapter. Additionally, the quiz questions in this book do not have an answer key. If you would like to test your knowledge of the material, please enroll in the CatechismClass.com online Precepts of the Church course in order to take the test on the website and see the results.

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CatechismClass.com operates with the singular goal of being the best Catholic catechesis program in the world. All actions of our company are ultimately directed to the sole purpose of saving souls. In the words of the holy apostle Paul, “And how can they believe in him of whom they have not heard?” (Romans 10:14).

Integrated throughout this book are sections from the best of instructors. These writings are valuable resources and should be in every Catholic home. We refer you to the original sources and excerpt material here in order to bring together these various resources in one place. Many of these materials are now in the public domain. All images are in the public domain unless otherwise noted.

Introduction

Catholics are bound to observe the laws of the Church, in addition to the Ten Commandments. Many of these additional laws have been long established and observed by the Faithful for centuries. Altogether, the Deposit of Faith, that which a Catholic must believe in order to truly be a Catholic, requires Catholics to observe the Precepts of the Church.

The Precepts of the Church are not all inclusive in terms of the rules for living a Catholic life. There are other laws that Catholics are bound to observe that are not listed in the Precepts of the Church. These additional laws include, among other ones:

1. Catholics are forbidden to maintain membership in Masonic or other anti-Catholic associations
2. Catholics are not to send their children to non-Catholic schools
3. Catholics are not to read or possess any bad books, magazines, or publications.

The Precepts of the Church are the six principal ones, that is, the six ones with which Catholics should ordinarily be concerned, since they ordinarily occur in a person's life. The last of the six precepts that we will mention, is often included separately on some lists. For that reason, some lists of the Precepts maintain only five in number. Some lists also include a seventh precept: To participate in the Church's mission of Evangelization of Souls.

The Principal Six Precepts of the Church include:

1. To assist at Holy Mass on all Sundays and Holy Days of Obligation
2. To fast and abstain on all days appointed
3. To confess our sins at least once a year
4. To receive Holy Communion during the Easter Season
5. To contribute to the support of the Church
6. To observe the laws of the Church concerning Holy Matrimony

Chapter 1: Mass Attendance on Sunday and Holy Days



Peter Fendi, Austrian - Fridolin Assists with the Holy Mass

The Difference Between the First Precept and the Third Commandment

The Third Commandment explicitly forbids servile work on Sundays. And the Church further commands that all Sundays — and all other Holy Days of Obligation — are mandatory days of Mass attendance. Missing Mass on one of these days without a grave reason or without dispensation — illness, inability to reasonably obtain transportation, et cetera — is therefore a mortal sin.

But the Commandment to honor the Lord's Day, which can never be optional is different than the precept to attend Mass on Sundays. They are related but not the same.

Bishops may dispense people from the obligation of attending the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass for a legitimate reason (e.g. dangerous storms, epidemics, or other legitimate reasons). When this occurs, the Church dispenses souls from the precept of assisting at Mass. However, the obligation to sanctify Sundays and render homage to God is a divine precept and that cannot be abrogated.

So for instance, if a public health crisis in the form of an epidemic is occurring and a bishop chooses to issue a decree to dispense anyone over the age of 50 from attending Holy Mass over a two week period, those who are dispensed do not sin by failing to attend Mass on Sundays and Holy Days within the two week period. But if they neglect to pray on Sunday they sin, just like if they perform servile works (i.e. manual labor) on Sundays they sin.

Dispensations also only apply to those that they are issued to. For instance, a bishop may dispense people over a certain age from Mass. Only those over that age are dispensed. Those under that age are still obligated to attend Holy Mass. It's important to keep these distinctions in mind.

The First Precept of the Church

The first precept of the Church requires Catholics to assist (i.e. hear, attend) Holy Mass on all Holy Days of Obligation. These days have changed over the course of the centuries.

The first catalog of Holy Days comes from the Decretals of Gregory IX in 1234, which listed 45 Holy Days. In 1642, His Holiness Pope Urban VIII issued the papal bull "Universa

Per Orbem" which altered the required Holy Days of Obligation for the Universal Church to consist of 35 such days as well as the principal patrons of one's one locality.

1. Nativity of Our Lord
2. Circumcision of Our Lord
3. Epiphany of Our Lord
4. Monday within the Octave of the Resurrection
5. Tuesday within the Octave of the Resurrection
6. Ascension
7. Monday within the Octave of Pentecost
8. Tuesday within the Octave of Pentecost
9. Most Holy Trinity
10. Corpus Christi
11. Finding of the Holy Cross (May 3)
12. Purification of the Blessed Virgin Mary
13. Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin Mary
14. Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary
15. Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary
16. Dedication of St. Michael
17. Nativity of St. John the Baptist
18. SS. Peter and Paul
19. St. Andrew
20. St. James
21. St. John (the December feast day)
22. St. Thomas
23. SS. Philip and James
24. St. Bartholomew
25. St. Matthew
26. SS. Simon and Jude
27. St. Matthias
28. St. Stephen the First Martyr (the December feast day)
29. The Holy Innocents
30. St. Lawrence
31. St. Sylvester
32. St. Joseph

33. St. Anne
34. All Saints
35. Principle Patrons of One's Country, City, etc.

Some of the Holy Days of Obligation removed between 1234 and 1642 included Holy Monday through Holy Saturday in addition to Easter Wednesday through Easter Saturday. In 1708, Pope Clement XI added the Conception of the Blessed Virgin to the list in his papal bull *Commissi Nobis Divinitus*. Before the dogmatic definition of the Immaculate Conception in 1854, the feast was often referred to as the Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary without the word "Immaculate."

These universal days were not held in all places though. We see a lot of variety in the observance of these days. The Church has approved different days and reduced days of precept for a long time. Before the 1900s, there was also a distinction between days of single or double precept. Days of double precept required Mass attendance as well as observing a sabbath rest by not working. Days of single precept were days of Mass attendance but the faithful were permitted to work on them. By 1900, this distinction was dropped.

A Brief History of Holy Days of Obligation in the United States

We will start by looking at the history of the various holydays in the colonies and see how they changed over time to bring us to the list of days we observe now. We do not need to know the specifics of these places as of any point in time, but this context is important to see how the Church went from 45 holy days of obligation to the list we have now.

Not long after the Pope Urban VIII revised the holy days in 1642, we see changes occurring for those living in the colonies in the New World as The American Catholic Quarterly Review, Volume 11 published in 1886 summarizes:

"The Diocesan Synod held in 1688 by Bishop Palacios of Santiago de Cuba fixed as holydays for that diocese in which Florida was then embraced and from 1776 to 1793 Louisiana also the following: All the Sundays of the year, Circumcision, Epiphany, Purification, St Mathias, St Joseph, the Annunciation, Sts Philip and James, the Finding of the Holy Cross, St John Baptist, Sts Peter and Paul, St James, St Anne, St Lawrence, the Assumption, St Bartholomew, the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin, St Matthew, St Michael, St Simon and St Jude, All Saints, St Andrew, the Conception of the Blessed Virgin, St Thomas, Christmas, St Stephen, St John, Holy Innocents, and St Sylvester, Easter Sunday and the two following days, Ascension, Whit Sunday and two following days, Corpus Christi. A bull of Pope Clement X added St Ferdinand, St Rose 'National Patroness of the Indies', and a bull of Innocent XI added St Augustine, August 28th."

In Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, and California which were included in the ecclesiastical province of Mexico, the feasts and were regulated by the Third Council of Mexico in 1585, as American Catholic Quarterly Review states:

"In these parts besides those already [mentioned above for Florida], the faithful observed as holy days of obligation St Fabian and St Sebastian (January 20th), St Thomas Aquinas (March 7th), St Mark (April 25th), St Barnabas (June 1), the Visitation of the Blessed Virgin (July 2), St Mary Magdalene (July 22), St Dominic (Aug 4), the Transfiguration (Aug 6), St Francis (Oct 4), St

Luke (Oct 18), St Catharine (Nov 25), the Expectation of the Blessed Virgin (Dec 18).

The papal bull "Altitudo Divini Concilii" of Pope Paul III in 1537 reduced the days of penance and those of hearing Mass for the Native Americans out of pastoral concern due to the physically demanding lifestyle that they lived and also largely due to the fact that they fasted so much already. As a result, the native were required to only hear Mass on a much smaller number of days: Sundays, Christmas, Circumcision, Epiphany, Candlemas, Annunciation, Sts Peter and Paul, Ascension, Corpus Christi, the Assumption, and the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin.

Similar changes occurred in Canada. Bishop François de Laval, the first Bishop of Quebec, on December 3, 1667, set the required Holy Days for Canada in accord with the bull of Pope Urban VIII. To those he added St. Francis Xavier, and in 1687, he likewise added St. Louis IX. Bishop François de Laval was declared a saint by equipollent canonization in April 2014 and is known to us now as Saint Francis-Xavier de Montmorency-Laval. Quoting from the archives of Quebec, the American Catholic Quarterly Review lists the Holy Days in place as 1694:

"The holy days of obligation as recognized officially in 1694 were Christmas, St Stephen, St John, the Evangelist, Circumcision, Epiphany, Candlemas, St Matthew, St Joseph "patron of the country," Annunciation, St Philip and St James, St John the Baptist, St Peter and St Paul, St James, St Anne, St Lawrence, Assumption, St Bartholomew, St Louis "titular of the Cathedral of Quebec," Nativity of the Blessed Virgin, St Matthew, St Michael, St Simon and St Jude, All Saints, St Andrew, St Francis Xavier, the Conception of the Blessed Virgin "titular the Cathedral," St Thomas, Easter Monday and

Tuesday, Ascension, Whitsun Monday and Tuesday, Corpus Christi, and the patronal feast of each parish."

These holy days were likewise in force in many current American states under Quebec's jurisdiction as the journal elaborates:

"These were the holydays observed in the French settlements in Michigan, Wisconsin, Indiana, and Illinois, as well as in Louisiana, Mobile, and the country west of the Mississippi till that district passing under the Spanish rule was reclaimed about 1776 as part of the diocese of Santiago de Cuba. East of the Mississippi they continued to be in force certainly till the Holy See detached those parts of its territory from the diocese of Quebec and annexed them to the newly erected diocese of Baltimore."

In 1771, Pope Clement XIV abolished both Pentecost Tuesday and Easter Tuesday as days of rest. In 1778, the obligation to attend Mass on these two days was abrogated by Pope Pius VI, although they were not observed as Holy Days in most places, including in America.

It must be stated that the gradual removal of Holy Days was not limited to the New World only. The Irish Ecclesiastical Record from 1882 describes a similar trend in Ireland:

"The full list of holidays of obligation as laid down in the Canon Law. This is the list drawn up by Urban VIII (Universa, September 13, 1642), with the addition of the feast of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin, instituted by Clement XI in 1708. The holidays thus enumerated are 35 in number. I have of course included in the list the feast of St. Patrick, as holding in Ireland the place of the [patron] mentioned by Urban VIII in the constitution of 1642."

As previously mentioned, there was a distinction between days of single or double precept. Days of double precept required hearing Mass and restraining from servile works, while days of half precept only required hearing Mass. Pope Benedict XIV in 1755 removed 18 feasts from double precept and reduced them to single precept. Shortly thereafter in 1778, Pope Pius VI reduced the number of holy days to 13. And as the Record states, "On this occasion, the obligation of hearing Mass was removed, as well as the obligation of abstaining from servile works."

On March 9, 1777, Pope Pius VI "dispensed all Catholics in the kingdom of Great Britain from the precept of hearing Mass and abstaining from servile works on all holydays except the Sundays of the year, the feasts of Christmas, Circumcision, Epiphany, Annunciation, Easter Monday, Ascension, Whitsun Monday, Corpus Christi, St Peter and St Paul, Assumption, and All Saints." These were the holy days in place at the time of the American Revolution and became the original holy days of obligation in America.

As America expanded, there was a divergence in the days of precept. When Florida was purchased by the United States in 1821, its old holy days were maintained. And the same likewise occurred of the Texas territory when it was acquired by the United States in 1845. And this trend continued as America expanded westward. As the American Catholic Quarterly Review, Volume 11 observes:

"In the Second Plenary Council [of Baltimore] in 1866 the feast of the Immaculate Conception was made of obligation as it had been in Oregon, where the feast of St Peter and St Paul had retained its place with the Monday after Easter and Whit Sunday, St John the Baptist, Candlemas, and St Stephen. Pope Gregory XVI in 1837 dispensed all the dioceses then in the United States from

the obligation as to Easter Monday and Whitsun Monday and in 1840 from that of the feast of St Peter and St Paul and the same Sovereign Pontiff relieved the faithful from the fast on Wednesdays in Advent."

By the time of the Civil War, considerable changes had occurred to these holy days. It was not until the Third Plenary Council that uniformly was achieved, though at the cost of reducing the holy days observed by many Catholics in the New World. Quoting the same article:

"The effort to induce faithful to a more exact observance of holydays of obligation or least so far as hearing mass was concerned had not been successful. A general indifference prevailed. When zealous priests to give servants and mechanics every opportunity to fulfil the obligation Mass celebrated at an early hour to permit them to attend it proceeding to their usual work, it was found that almost the persons to avail themselves of the opportunity would be a pious old women while those of the very class for whose the Mass was thus offered were scarcely represented by a stragglng individuals.

"The Fathers of the Council renewed their petition to the See and His Holiness Pope Leo XIII on the 31st of December 1885 transferred the solemnization of Corpus Christi to the Sunday following the feast and made the holydays of obligation in all of the United States to be thenceforward: The Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin, Christmas Day, the feast of Circumcision, Ascension Day, the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin, and the feast of All Saints."

The Epiphany and Annunciation were no longer a Holy Day of Obligation in the United States - joining Easter Monday, Pentecost Monday, and St. Peter and Paul as working days.



Corpus Christi procession. Oil on canvas by Carl Emil Doepler

Holy Days of Obligation Today

In the largest change to Holy Days in centuries, Pope St. Pius X in *Supremi disciplinæ* in 1911 drastically reduced the number of Holy Days of Obligation in the Universal Church to 8:

1. Christmas
2. Circumcision
3. Epiphany
4. Ascension
5. Immaculate Conception
6. Assumption of the Blessed Virgin
7. Sts. Peter and Paul
8. All Saints

In only 269 years, the number of Holy Days on the Universal Calendar had been reduced from 36 under Pope Urban VIII to 8 under Pope St. Pius X. Shortly thereafter in 1917, Corpus Christi and St. Joseph were added back, bringing the total to 10. The 10 currently observed on the Universal Calendar are the same as from 1917.

The current list of the 10 Holy Days of Obligation has been set since 1917. As all Sundays are already required for Mass attendance, they are not included in the term "Holy Days of Obligation" even though Mass attendance is obligated on all Sundays.

As for the Holy Days observed in the United States, the Catholic Encyclopedia in referencing *Supremi disciplinæ* noted, "Where, however, any of the above feasts has been abolished or transferred, the new legislation is not effective. In the United States consequently the Epiphany and the feast of Sts. Peter and Paul are not days of precept." On a similar note, Corpus Christi when added back as a Holy Day in the Universal Church in 1917 remained transferred to the following Sunday in the United States as a result of Pope Leo XIII's indult from 1885.

Few countries observe all required Holy Days as some have been transferred to Sundays. Some countries observe additional Holy Days of Obligation. For example, Ireland observes St. Patrick Day as a Holy Day of Obligation and Germany still requires the 2nd Day of Christmas (The Feast of St. Stephen). Other countries may have their own unique requirements.

Holy Days of Obligation, which had remained the same in the United States since 1917, were further modified in the latter part of the century. On December 13, 1991, the United States Bishops issued a directive further abrogating New

Year's Day (traditionally called the Feast of the Circumcision), the Assumption on August 15, or All Saints on November 1 in years when the feast falls on a Saturday or a Monday. And on March 23, 1992, in another reduction, the Bishop of Honolulu obtained an indult from the Holy See and approval from the United States episcopal conference to reduce the Holy Days of Obligation to only Christmas and the Immaculate Conception for Catholics in Hawaii.

How Can We Observe the First Precept?

As affirmed in both the 1917 and 1983 Code of Canon Law, Mass attendance is satisfied only at a Catholic rite of Mass. As a result, Catholics do not fulfill their obligation at Orthodox Liturgies, even though such priests do offer a valid, though illicit, Liturgy. However, Catholics may certainly fulfill their obligation at Eastern Rite Catholic Liturgies (e.g. Byzantine, Mozarabic, Maronite, etc.). And, it should go without saying, that a Catholic certainly fulfills his obligation by attending a Tridentine Latin Mass.

Failure to attend Holy Mass on a Holy Day of Obligation (as well as on Sundays) without a valid reason to miss the Mass (e.g. a dispensation, illness, transportation issue, etc.) is a mortal sin that must be confessed in the Sacrament of Confession.

Picture an average Sunday morning or Sunday afternoon. The temperature is warm or at least pleasant. Sunshine fills the sky. The morning's calmness is punctuated only by the transcendent and alluring Church bells which toll throughout the morning during the Consecration at the Holy Mass. Holiness pervades the air and the day is characterized by Christian charitable works, meetings of apostolates,

authentic family time and other like activities — in one word, the day is set aside for leisure.

But this is how Sunday is in a Catholic nation.

Instead nowadays we find something far different — few if any Catholics go to Mass. The bells no longer toll during the Consecration of the Mass. In fact, few people even attend Mass and far, far fewer attend the reverent and beautiful Traditional Latin Mass. Divine Justice is not offered an august and immaculate victim; rather, the Triune God is angered by the indifference, injustice, and impiety of a people who have fallen from the True Faith. And all the while the day is characterized by the sounds of lawnmowers, power tools, and mundane machines.

It's not hard to find any Sunday in the year you will find people mowing their lawns, painting their homes, repairing household items, cleaning their cars, and doing other mundane activities that we are explicitly forbidden to do by the Third Commandment. A Christian commits a sin by so doing unless he receives explicit dispensation from a priest. So if you need to do a building painting project on Sunday, you must get dispensation from your priest first.

Has holiness gone from among men? Does no one care any longer for the sanctity of Sunday?

"And shewing mercy unto thousands to them that love me and keep my commandments. Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain: for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that shall take the name of the Lord his God in vain. Remember that thou keep holy the sabbath day. [9] Six days shalt thou labour, and shalt do all thy works. But on the seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord thy God: thou shalt do no work on it, thou nor thy son, nor thy daughter, nor thy

manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy beast, nor the stranger that is within thy gates. For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, and the sea, and all things that are in them, and rested on the seventh day: therefore the Lord blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it" (Exodus 20:6-10).

Have we forgotten the words of Our Lady of La Salette?

Melanie Calvat and Maximin Giraud were two children from Corps, France, near the town of Grenoble in the southeastern part of France. When Melanie was 14, and Maximin was 11, they were watching cattle in a pasture when they saw a globe of light that "opened" to reveal a most beautiful woman, clad in long dress and apron, with a shawl that crossed in front and tied in back. Around her neck was a Crucifix that depicted the instruments of the Passion, and on her head were a cap and roses. She sat on a rock with her face in her hands weeping. The Lady said that unless the people repented of working on Sundays and of blasphemy, she'd be forced to let go her Son's arm because it had grown so heavy. She said that crop blights and famine would follow if her wishes weren't heeded.



Henriette Browne "Nonnen im klösterlichen Arbeitsraum"

One of the greatest acts of charity that we can do is assist others in saving their souls. We have an obligation to admonish sinners, instruct the ignorant, and instruct the doubtful. The next time it is Sunday or a Holy Day of Obligation, post an update on Facebook or Twitter to remind your friends/follows of the need to go to Mass. Do it as a polite update to help others. Pray for your friends and family and offer sacrifices and prayers to God for them.

We have a moral obligation to stand against the onslaught of sin in this world. Next time you see someone cutting the lawn, painting their home, etc. on a Sunday remind them to stop. It is a spiritual work of mercy to admonish sinners. Doing so with prudence and charity is the key. Standing against sin is necessary lest we too participate in their sin by our quiet acceptance of it.

If you have a concern about approaching the person or truly believe it would not bring about their conversion, at least take the time to leave them an anonymous note in their mailbox.

In the words of the Holy Father Pope Pius XII in *Mediator Dei*:

"How will those Christians not fear spiritual death whose rest on Sundays and feast days is not devoted to religion and piety, but given over to the allurements of the world! Sundays and holidays must be made holy by divine worship which gives homage to God and heavenly food to the soul....Our soul is filled with the greatest grief when we see how the Christian people profane the afternoon of feast days...."

As a final recommendation, considering reading the short story *The Land Without a Sunday* by Maria Von Trapp.

Chapter 2: Fasting and Abstinence



The Fasting of St. Charles by Daniele Crespi

Fasting in Biblical Times

In principio, in the beginning, the very first Commandment of God to Adam and Eve was one of fasting from the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (cf. Genesis 2:16-17), and their failure to fast brought sin and disorder to all of creation. The second sin of mankind was gluttony. Both are intricately tied to fasting.

Both Elijah and Moses fasted for forty days in the Old Testament before seeing God. Until the Great Flood, man abstained entirely from the flesh meat of animals (cf. Genesis 9:2-3). Likewise, in the New Testament, St. John the Baptist, the greatest prophet (cf. Luke 7:28) fasted and his followers were characterized by their fasting. And our Blessed Lord also fasted for forty days (cf. Matthew 4:1-11) not for His own needs but to serve as an example for us. Our Redeemer said,

“Unless you shall do penance, you shall all likewise perish” (Luke 13:3). Fasting and abstinence from certain foods characterized the lives of man since the foundation of the world.

The Purpose of Fasting

The Church has hallowed the practice of fasting, encourages it, and mandates it at certain times. Why? The Angelic Doctor writes that fasting is practiced for a threefold purpose:

“First, in order to bridle the lusts of the flesh...Secondly, we have recourse to fasting in order that the mind may arise more freely to the contemplation of heavenly things: hence it is related of Daniel that he received a revelation from God after fasting for three weeks. Thirdly, in order to satisfy for sins: wherefore it is written: ‘Be converted to Me with all your heart, in fasting and in weeping and in mourning.’ The same is declared by Augustine in a sermon: ‘Fasting cleanses the soul, raises the mind, subjects one's flesh to the spirit, renders the heart contrite and humble, scatters the clouds of concupiscence, quenches the fire of lust, kindles the true light of chastity.’”

St. Basil the Great also affirmed the importance of fasting for protection against demonic forces: “The fast is the weapon of protection against demons. Our Guardian Angels more really stay with those who have cleansed our souls through fasting.”

The Baltimore Catechism echoes these sentiments: “The Church commands us to fast and abstain, in order that we may mortify our passions and satisfy for our sins” (Baltimore Catechism #2 Q. 395). Concerning this rationale, Fr. Thomas

Kinkead in “An Explanation Of The Baltimore Catechism of Christian Doctrine” published in 1891 writes, “Remember it is our bodies that generally lead us into sin; if therefore we punish the body by fasting and mortification, we atone for the sin, and thus God wipes out a part of the temporal punishment due to it.”

Pope St. Leo the Great in 461 wisely counseled that fasting is a means and not an end in itself. For those who could not observe the strictness of fasting, he sensibly said, “What we forego by fasting is to be given as alms to the poor.” To simply forgo fasting completely, even when for legitimate health reasons, does not excuse a person from the universal command to do penance (cf. Luke 13:3).

To Love Fasting

The Rule of St. Benedict written in 516 AD by the illustrious St. Benedict states in part: “O Lord, I place myself in your hands and dedicate myself to you. I pledge myself to do your will in all things: To love the Lord God with all my heart, all my soul, all my strength. Not to kill. Not to steal...To chastise the body. Not to seek after pleasures. To love fasting...”

How can we love fasting? Fr. Adalbert de Vogue, OSB explains, “To love fasting one must experience it, but to experience it one must love it. The way to get out of this circle is easy: trust in the word of God, in the example of the saints, in the great voice of tradition? and trusting in this witness, try it.”

To love fasting is our goal. Fasting should never be performed without an increase in prayer or almsgiving. It should not be performed grudgingly and in anger. Likewise, it should not be performed for the vain purpose of losing

weight or even the natural good of improving one's health. Fasting must have God as its end.

A History of Catholic Fasting

Fasting is one of the chief means of penance we can perform to make satisfaction for sin. Understanding the decline of fasting over time in the Church should inspire us to observe these older customs and to encourage other Catholics to do so for the purpose of making satisfaction for sin.

The history of fasting in the Catholic Church, like other disciplines, has undergone considerable changes throughout the centuries. Unlike dogma, which is unchangeable, disciplines like fasting may change over time. While the purpose of fasting has remained the same, how fasting is observed has changed. As more Catholics seek to rediscover the traditions of earlier centuries and voluntarily observe these traditions, they are often confused by the changing disciplines and exceptions for certain times, places, and circumstances. St. Francis de Sales remarked, "If you're able to fast, you will do well to observe some days beyond what are ordered by the Church."

Fasting in Apostolic Times

And the disciples of John and the Pharisees used to fast; and they come and say to him: Why do the disciples of John and of the Pharisees fast; but thy disciples do not fast? And Jesus saith to them: Can the children of the marriage fast, as long as the bridegroom is with them? As long as they have the bridegroom with them, they cannot fast. But the days will come when the bridegroom shall be taken away from them; and then they shall fast in those days (Mark 2:18-20).

Fasting has been a part of the Catholic Church since the time of the Apostles who instituted fasting shortly after our Redeemer's Ascension into Heaven. Fasting in the Apostolic Age constituted two primary fasting periods: the weekly devotional fasts and the Lenten Fast.

Weekly Fasting

In the Early Church, fasting (which included abstinence as part of it) was widely observed each week on Wednesday and Friday. This practice is kept by some pious Catholics and Eastern Catholics.

The Didache, the Teaching of the Apostles, written by the end of the first century states in chapter 8: "But let not your fasts be with the hypocrites; for they fast on the second and fifth day of the week; but fast on the fourth day and the Preparation." Since Sunday is the first day of the week, the fourth day referred to Wednesday and the day of Preparation referred to Friday. The phrase "day of preparation" preceding the sabbath on Saturday occurs in the Scriptures in Matthew 27:62; Mark 15:42; Luke 23:54; and John 19:14,31,42. All such instances unequivocally confirm that it refers to Friday.

On the rationale for fasting on these days, St. Peter of Alexandria, Patriarch of Alexandria until his death in 311 AD, explains: "On Wednesday because on this day the council of the Jews was gathered to betray our Lord; on Friday because on this day He suffered death for our salvation." Likewise, the 1875 Catechism of Father Michael Müller adds: "This practice began with Christianity itself, as we learn from St. Epiphanius, who says: 'It is ordained, by the law of the Apostles, to fast two days of the week.'"

Some places added Saturday fasting as well, as noted by St. Francis de Sales who writes, "The early Christians selected Wednesday, Friday and Saturday as days of abstinence."

Saturday fasting eventually became extended to the entire Church in the early 400s by Pope Innocent I who wrote: "Reason shows most clearly that we should fast on Saturday, because it stood between the sadness [of Good Friday] and the joy [of Easter Sunday]." The Douay Catechism written in 1649 explains the rationale for Saturday abstinence, which was then still universally practiced, even though the weekly fast on Saturday had long ended by that time: "To prepare ourselves for a devout keeping of the Sunday, as also in honor of the blessed Virgin Mary, who stood firm in the faith on that day, the apostles themselves wavering."

The Apostolic Origin of the Lenten Fast

The great liturgical Dom Gueranger writes that the fast which precedes Easter originated with the Apostles themselves:

"The forty days' fast, which we call Lent, is the Church's preparation for Easter, and was instituted at the very commencement of Christianity. Our blessed Lord Himself sanctioned it by fasting forty days and forty nights in the desert; and though He would not impose it on the world by an express commandment (which, in that case, could not have been open to the power of dispensation), yet He showed plainly enough, by His own example, that fasting, which God had so frequently ordered in the old Law, was to be also practiced by the children of the new...The apostles, therefore, legislated for our weakness, by instituting, at the very commencement of the Christian Church, that the solemnity of Easter should be preceded by a universal fast..."

The Catechism of the Liturgy by a Religious of the Sacred Heart published by The Paulist Press, New York, 1919 affirms the apostolic origin of the Lenten fast: “The Lenten fast dates back to Apostolic times as is attested by Saint Jerome, Saint Leo the Great, Saint Cyril of Alexandria and others.” In the 2nd century, St. Irenaeus wrote to Pope St. Victor I inquiring on how Easter should be celebrated, while mentioning the practice of fasting leading up to Easter.

Initially the Lenten fast was practiced by catechumens preparing for their Baptism with a universal fast for all the faithful observed only during Holy Week, in addition to the weekly fasts that were devotionally practiced. But early on, the baptized Christians began to join the catechumens in fasting on the days immediately preceding Easter. The duration of the fast varied with some churches observing one day, others several days, and yet others observing intensive 40 hour fasting, in honor of the forty hours that the Lord spent in the time. By the third and fourth centuries, the fast became forty days in most places. St. Athanasius in 339 AD referred to the Lenten fast as a forty day fast that “the whole world” observed.

Shortly after the legislation of Christianity in the Roman Empire, the bishops at the Council of Nicea in 325 AD fixed the date of Easter as the first Sunday after the first full moon after the vernal equinox. The canons emerging from that council also referenced a 40-day Lenten season of fasting.

The Lenten fast was not a merely devotional fast but one of precept under penalty of sin. Father Stephen Keenan's Catechism from 1846 quotes St. Augustine (who lived from 354 – 430 AD) as saying: "Our fast at any other time is voluntary; but during Lent, we sin if we do not fast."

One Meal A Day After Sunset

To the Early Christians, fasting was performed until sundown, in imitation of the previous Jewish tradition. Dom Gueranger's writings affirm, "It was the custom with the Jews, in the Old Law, not to take the one meal, allowed on fasting days, till sun-set. The Christian Church adopted the same custom. It was scrupulously practiced, for many centuries, even in our Western countries. But, about the 9th century, some relaxation began to be introduced in the Latin Church."

Fasting included abstinence from meat and all animal products (e.g. dairy and eggs). And notably in the Early Church, fasting also included abstinence from wine, taking man back to the same diet that mankind practiced before God permitted Noah to eat meat or drink wine. For this reason, even in the Eastern Catholic Churches today some fasting periods prohibit wine.

Advent

While not as ancient as the Holy Week fast, the Advent fast originated in the Early Church by at least the fourth century. The Catechism of the Liturgy describes the fast leading up to Christmas: "In a passage of St. Gregory of Tours' History of the Franks we find that St. Perpetuus, one of his predecessors in the See, had decreed in 480 AD that the faithful should fast three times a week from the feast of St. Martin (November 11th) [up] to Christmas... This period was called St. Martin's Lent and his feast was kept with the same kind of rejoicing as Carnival." In historical records Advent was originally called *Quadragesimal Sancti Martini* (Forty Days Fast of St. Martin).

The Catechism of the Liturgy notes that this observance of fasting likely lasted until the 12th century. Remnants of this fast remained in the Roman Rite through the 19th century when Wednesday and Friday fasting in Advent continued to be mandated in most countries.

The Apostles Fast

The observance of a fast leading up to the Feast of Ss. Peter and Paul also originated in the Early Church under Pope St. Leo the Great around the year 461. At the time of St. Jerome, it was known as “Summer Lent,” though it was not practiced under obligation like the fast of Lent itself. While it subsequently fell out of observance in the Roman Catholic Church, the Eastern Catholic Church still observes this fast to some extent.

The Roman Catholic Church though maintained the summer Ember Days during this time, in addition to the traditional fast on the Vigil of Sts. Peter and Paul, until modern times. As a result, only a fragment of the fasting that was originally practiced persisted.

The Lenten Fast Developed in the Middle Ages

As mentioned previously, the Lenten fast began under the Apostles themselves and was practiced in various forms. St. Augustine in the fourth century remarked, “Our fast at any other time is voluntary; but during Lent, we sin if we do not fast.” At the time of St. Gregory the Great at the beginning of the 7th century, the fast was universally established to begin on what we know as Ash Wednesday. While the name “Ash Wednesday” was not given to the day until Pope Urban II in 1099, the day was known as the “Beginning of the Fast.”

Regarding Holy Saturday's fast in particular, Canon 89 of the Council in Trullo in 692 AD provides an account of the piety and devotion of the faithful of that time: "The faithful, spending the days of the Salutatory Passion in fasting, praying and compunction of heart, ought to fast until the midnight of the Great Sabbath: since the divine Evangelists, Matthew and Luke, have shewn us how late at night it was [that the resurrection took place]." That tradition of fasting on Holy Saturday until midnight would last for centuries.

Historical records further indicate that Lent was not a merely regional practice observed only in Rome. It was part of the universality of the Church. Lenten fasting began in England, for instance, sometime during the reign of Earconberht, the king of Kent, who was converted by the missionary work of St. Augustine of Canterbury in England. During the Middle Ages, fasting in England, and many other then-Catholic nations, was required both by Church law and the civil law. Catholic missionaries brought fasting, which is an integral part of the Faith, to every land they visited.

Collations Are Introduced on Fasting Days

The rules on fasting remained largely the same for hundreds of years. Food was to be taken once a day after sunset. By midnight, the fast resumed and was terminated only after the sun had once again set on the horizon. But relaxations were to soon begin.

By the eighth century, the time for the daily meal was moved to the time that the monks would pray the Office of None in the Divine Office. This office takes place around 3 o'clock in the afternoon. As a consequence of moving the meal up in the day, the practice of a collation was introduced. The well-researched Father Francis Xaier Weiser summarizes this major change with fasting:

"It was not until the ninth century, however, that less rigid laws of fasting were introduced. It came about in 817 when the monks of the Benedictine order, who did much labor in the fields and on the farms, were allowed to take a little drink with a morsel of bread in the evening...Eventually the Church extended the new laws to the laity as well, and by the end of the medieval times they had become universal practice; everybody ate a little evening meal in addition to the main meal at noon."

By the fourteenth century, the meal had begun to move up steadily until it began to take place even at 12 o'clock. The change became so common it became part of the Church's discipline. In one interesting but often unknown fact, because the monks would pray the liturgical hour of None before they would eat their meal, the custom of called midday by the name "noon" entered into our vocabulary as a result of the fast. With the meal moved up, the evening collation remained.

How was Lenten Abstinence Observed?

In 604, in a letter to St. Augustine of Canterbury, Pope St. Gregory the Great announced the form that abstinence would take on fast days. This form would last for almost a thousand years: "We abstain from flesh meat and from all things that come from flesh, as milk, cheese, and eggs." When fasting was observed, abstinence was likewise always observed.

Regarding this point there are important exceptions to note as the Church has always exercised common sense. Father Weiser in his "Christian Feasts and Customs" classic writes: "Abstinence from lacticinia which included milk, butter, cheese, and eggs, was never strictly enforced in Britain, Ireland, and Scandinavia because of the lack of oil and other

substitute foods in those countries. The Church using common sense granted many dispensations in this matter in all countries of Europe. People who did eat the milk foods would often, when they could afford it, give alms for the building of churches or other pious endeavors."

Through the writings of St. Thomas Aquinas, we can learn how Lent was practiced in his own time and attempt to willingly observe such practices in our own lives. The Lenten fast as mentioned by St. Thomas Aquinas constituted of the following:

- The prohibition of any meat or animal products.
- Abstinence from the forbidden foods remained on Sundays of Lent.
- Ash Wednesday & Good Friday were days of black fast. No food was to be taken on these days
- Holy Week was a more intense fast that consisted only of bread, salt, water, and herbs.
- The meal was taken at mid-day and a collation was allowed at night, except on days of the black fast

The Lenten fast included fasting from all lacticinia (Latin for milk products) which included butter, cheese, eggs, and animal products. From this tradition, Easter Eggs were introduced, and therefore the Tuesday before Ash Wednesday is when pancakes are traditionally eaten to use leftover lacticinia. And similarly, Fat Tuesday is known as Carnival, coming from the latin words *carne levare* – literally the farewell to meat.

Rogation Days

The Rogation Days occur on four days each year: the Major Rogation (i.e. Greater Litanies) on April 25th and the Minor

Rogation Days (i.e. Lesser Litanies) on the Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday before Ascension Thursday. These days have virtually disappeared now as only Traditional Catholic priests keep them. However, for those who do keep these days, they are days to pray in a special way. The Litany of the Saints is especially prayed on these days and crops and field are blessed.

Concerning the Major Rogation, Dom Gueranger, writing in the late 1800s, mentions the ancient custom of abstinence but not fasting for the Major Rogation:

Abstinence from flesh meat has always been observed on this day at Rome; and when the Roman Liturgy was established in France by Pepin and Charlemagne, the Great Litany of April 25 was, of course, celebrated, and the abstinence kept by the faithful of that country. A Council of Aix-la-Chapelle, in 836, enjoined the additional obligation of resting from servile work on this day: the same enactment is found in the Capitularia of Charles the Bald. As regards fasting, properly so called, being contrary to the spirit of Paschal Time, it would seem never to have been observed on this day, at least not generally. Amalarius, who lived in the ninth century, asserts that it was not then practiced even in Rome.

Dom Gueranger likewise continues with an account of how fasting and abstinence were kept on the Minor Rogation Days:

Their observance is now similar in format to the Greater Litanies of April 25th, but these three days have a different origin, having been instituted in Gaul in the fifth century as days of fasting, abstinence and abstention from servile work in which all took part in an extensive penitential procession, often barefoot. The whole western

Church soon adopted the Rogation days. They were introduced into England at an early period; as likewise into Spain and Germany. Rome herself sanctioned them by herself observing them; this she did in the eighth century, during the pontificate of St. Leo III. With regard to the fast which the Churches of Gaul observed during the Rogation days, Rome did not adopt that part of the institution. Fasting seemed to her to throw a gloom over the joyous forty days, which our risen Jesus grants to His disciples; she therefore enjoined only abstinence from flesh-meat during the Rogation days.

While Rome never adopted fasting on Rogation days, fasting can certainly be done by the Faithful. The Church did though require abstinence from meat, illustrating that even during Pascaltide it is appropriate that we perform penance.

Ember Days

Like Rogation Days, Ember Days developed early in these times, taking the form that would continue for centuries. The Catholic Encyclopedia explains:

At first the Church in Rome had fasts in June, September, and December; the exact days were not fixed but were announced by the priests. The "Liber Pontificalis" ascribes to Pope Callistus (217-222) a law ordering the fast, but probably it is older. Leo the Great (440-461) considers it an Apostolic institution.

By the time of Pope Gregory I, who died in 601 AD, they were observed for all four seasons though the date of each of them could vary. In the Roman Synod of 1078 under Pope Gregory VII, they were uniformly established for the Wednesday, Friday, and Saturday after December 13th (St. Lucia), after

Ash Wednesday, after Pentecost Sunday, and after September 14th (Exaltation of the Cross).

Spirituality of the Ember Days

The purpose of the specific purpose of Ember Days is to “thank God for the gifts of nature, to teach men to make use of them in moderation, and to assist the needy” (Catholic Encyclopedia). As a result, their focus differs from the precise focus of the Rogation Days to which they are often compared.

In addition, the author of Barefoot Abbey provides specific intentions for each of these seasons so that we can render thanks to Almighty God for the fruits of the earth which specifically become instruments of His grace through the Sacraments:

Winter or Advent Ember Days are after the Feast of St. Lucy (December 13th): Give thanks for the olives that make holy oils for Unction.

Spring or Lenten Ember Days are after Ash Wednesday: Give thanks for the flowers and bees that make blessed candles as in for Baptism and upon the altar.

Summer or Whit Ember Days are after the Solemnity of Pentecost: Give thanks for the wheat used to make the Eucharist hosts.

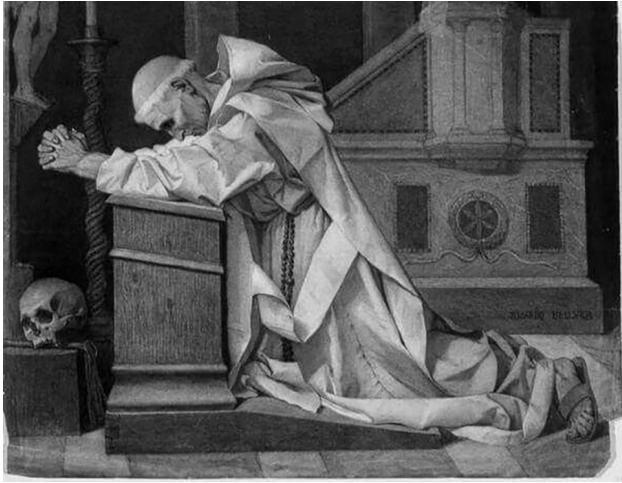
Autumn or Michaelmas Ember Days are after the Feast of Exaltation of the Holy Cross (September 14): Give thanks for the grapes that make wine for the Precious Blood of Christ.

Advent Fast

Likewise, the Advent Fast which began in the Early Church developed over these centuries. The fast which began in 480 began to adopt the same rigor of Lent by the end of the 6th century when the fast was extended to the whole Church and priests were instructed to offer Mass during St. Martin's Lent, as it was then called, according to the Lenten rite.

By the 700s, the Lenten observance was shortened in the Roman Rite to four weeks, though other Rites maintained the longer observance. By the 1100s, the fast had begun to be replaced by simple abstinence. In 1281, the Council of Salisbury held that only monks were expected to keep the fast; however, in a revival of the older practice, Pope Urban V in 1362 required abstinence for all members of the papal court during Advent. However, the custom of fasting in Advent continued to decline as we will learn in upcoming installments.

We could do our part at rediscovering Advent by observing the Nativity Fast, as it is still practiced to some extent in the Byzantine Catholic Church, starting on the Feast of St. Martin (i.e. Martinmas) on November 11th. Some Byzantine traditions will refer to the feast as the Quadragesima of Saint Philip, since it begins immediately after their feastday in honor of the Apostle St. Philip.



Fasting in the New World

As the Middle Ages ended and the Renaissance emerged, the piety and devotion of many souls likewise became tempered. The Church underwent significant trials in these centuries including the Protestant Revolt and the loss of hundreds of thousands of souls, yet She also found new children in lands previously undiscovered.

This section is based on the American Catholic Quarterly Review, Volume 11 published in 1886. Fasting and abstinence, along with Holy Days of Obligation, were in practice highly varied depending on each nation and territory. We see this liturgical diversity in the various colonies.

For instance, Catholics in the colonies in Florida and Louisiana observed these fasting days: "The fasting days were all days in Lent; the Ember days; the of eves of Christmas, Candlemas, Annunciation, Assumption, All Saints, the feasts of the Apostles except St Philip and St James and St John, nativity of St John the Baptist; all

Fridays except within twelve days of Christmas and between Easter and Ascension, and the eve of Ascension."

For abstinence from meat, they would have observed: "All Sundays in Lent, all Saturdays throughout the year, Monday and Tuesday before Ascension, and St Mark's day were of abstinence from flesh meat."

The western colonies under Spanish rule in modern day Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, and California observed as fast days: "...all days in Lent except Sunday; eves of Christmas, Whit Sunday, St Mathias, St John the Baptist, St Peter and St Paul, St James, St Lawrence, Assumption, St Bartholomew, St Matthew, St Simon and St Jude, All Saints, St Andrew, and St Thomas."

It should be noted that in 1089 Pope Urban II granted a dispensation to Spain from abstinence on Fridays, in virtue of the Spanish efforts in the Crusades. After the Battle of Lepanto in 1571, Pope St. Pius V expanded that privilege to all Spanish colonies. That dispensation remained in place in some places as late as 1951 when the Archdiocese of Santa Fe, the last territory to invoke it, rescinded the privilege.

There was a distinction made between Native Americans and European settlers. The papal bull "Altitudo Divini Concilii" of Pope Paul III in 1537 reduced the days of penance and those of hearing Mass for the Native Americans out of pastoral concern due to the physically demanding lifestyle that they lived and also largely due to the fact that they fasted so much already. As a result, the only fasting days required under sin for the Native Americans were the Fridays in Lent, Holy Saturday, and Christmas Eve.

The Protestant Attack on Penance

In the Middle Ages, abstinence from meat on Fridays and during Lent was not only Church law – it was civil law as well. And people gladly obeyed these laws out of respect for the teaching authority of the Church. Yet after the Protestant revolt which began in 1517 and continued through the middle of the 1600s, this was to change.

The same occurred in England which followed the revolt of Luther and his peers. King Henry VIII, who was previously given the title “Defender of the Faith” by Pope Leo X for his defense against Luther, succumbed to heresy and schism when he broke from Lord’s established Church on earth in 1533 to engage in adultery. Church property was seized. Catholics were killed. Catholicism was made illegal in England in 1559 under Queen Elizabeth I, and for 232 years, except during the brief reign of the Catholic King James II (1685-1688), the Catholic Mass was illegal until 1791. Yet the Anglicans at least kept the Catholic customs of abstinence for some years.

English Royalty proclamations supporting abstinence of meat continued to occur in England in 1563, 1619, 1625, 1627, and 1631. The same likewise occurred in 1687 under the King James II. After the Revolution in 1688 and the overthrow of Catholicism by William III and Mary II, the laws were no longer enforced and officially removed from the law books by the Statute Law Revision Act in 1863. Similar changes occurred throughout Europe as Protestants reviled the fast.

The Example of St. Charles Borromeo

It was the saintly archbishop, St. Charles Borromeo (1538 – 1584), the champion of the Counter Reformation against the Protestants, who championed fasting and penance.

Rogation Days, which we covered in the previous installment, have been observed for centuries even if the Catholic Church in our modern era has virtually forgotten them. A similar situation occurred before in the Diocese of Milan. It was St. Charles who restored them and enhanced them in the Diocese of Milan. Interestingly, even though Rome never mandated fasting on the Rogation Days, since they occur during the Easter Season, St. Charles Borromeo mandated them in his own diocese.

Dom Gueranger in the Liturgical Year provides us with a holy example which should show us the spirit of penance which should animate all of our lives on the Rogation Days:

St. Charles Borromeo, who restored in his diocese of Milan so many ancient practices of piety, was sure not to be indifferent about the Rogation days. He spared neither word nor example to reanimate this salutary devotion among his people. He ordered fasting to be observed during these three days; he fasted himself on bread and water. The procession, in which all the clergy of the city were obliged to join, and which began after the sprinkling of ashes, started from the cathedral at an early hour in the morning, and was not over till three or four o'clock in the afternoon. Thirteen churches were visited on the Monday; nine, on the Tuesday; and eleven, on the Wednesday. The saintly archbishop celebrated Mass and preached in one of these churches.

St. Charles Borromeo did not only encourage the Rogation Days. He ministered personally to thousands of plague-stricken victims when the civil authorities had fled Milan. He offered Masses, administered the Sacraments, consistently led processions, and offered an authentic Catholic response to a pandemic.

The fast of Advent which had continued to decline had taken the form of only Wednesday and Friday penance. To stir the people to observe the true spirit of penance, even beyond the letter of the law, St. Charles also strongly urged those in Milan to fast on the Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays of each week of Advent. In one key distinction, Milan keeps the Ambrosian Rite, which differs in several aspects from the Roman Rite. One of those key differences is that Advent in the Ambrosian Rite always begins on the Sunday after the feast of Saint Martin of Tours, alluding back centuries before to St. Martin's Lent as it was practiced in the Roman Rite.

Fasting in the Early Modern Period

At this point, the Church mandated four three primary categories of fasts: the Lenten fast, the Ember Days, and the Vigils of certain feasts. Likewise, to these both Friday and Saturday abstinence was observed as the 1649 Douay Catechism affirms.

Lenten Fast is Dramatically Changed

Some of the most significant changes to fasting would occur under the reign of Pope Benedict XIV who reigned from 1740 – 1758.

On May 31, 1741, Pope Benedict XIV issued *Non Ambiginius* which granted permission to eat meat on fasting days while

explicitly forbidden the consumption of both fish and flesh meat at the same meal on all fasting days during the year in addition to the Sundays during Lent. Beforehand, the forty days of Lent were held as days of complete abstinence from meat. The concept of partial abstinence was born even though the term would not appear until the 1917 Code of Canon Law. Yet even with these changes, Pope Benedict XIV implored the faithful to return to the devotion of earlier eras:

"The observance of Lent is the very badge of the Christian warfare. By it we prove ourselves not to be enemies of the cross of Christ. By it we avert the scourges of divine justice. By it we gain strength against the princes of darkness, for it shields us with heavenly help. Should mankind grow remiss in their observance of Lent, it would be a detriment to God's glory, a disgrace to the Catholic religion, and a danger to Christian souls. Neither can it be doubted that such negligence would become the source of misery to the world, of public calamity, and of private woe."

Sadly, Lent would only continue to wane in the centuries to come.

Fasting & Abstinence Weaken throughout the 1800s

Changes likewise occurred early on in America's history. At the time of America's founding, the fast days observed by the new Republic consisted of the Ember Days; the forty days Lent; Wednesdays and Fridays in Advent; and the vigils of Christmas, Whitsun Sunday (i.e. Pentecost), Sts Peter and Paul, and All Saints. Abstinence was practiced on all Fridays and Saturdays of the year, unless a Holy Day of Obligation were to occur on them.

The Third Provincial Council of Baltimore in 1837, with approval of Pope Gregory XVI, began to reduce these practices. The Council dispensed from fast and abstinence the Wednesdays of Advent, except for the Ember Wednesday in Advent.

At this time, complete abstinence was still observed on all Saturdays but over the course of the 19th century, the dispensations from Saturday abstinence became universal. Mara Morrow, author of *Sin in the Sixties*, summarizes these changes:

"In 1840 the Fourth Provincial Council of Baltimore asked for a perpetual renewal of an indult dispensing from abstinence on Saturdays, and this indult was renewed for twenty years by Pope Gregory XVI. In 1866, the Second Plenary Council asked that all dispensations granted to the diocese of Baltimore be extended to other American dioceses, but Pope Pius IX preferred individual requests from each bishop in the United States. In 1884, the U.S. bishops who were meeting at the Third Plenary Council decided it would be difficult to pass uniform legislation on the subject of fast and abstinence and hence left it to the authority of provincial councils to determine what was best for their territories. Leo XIII in 1886 granted U.S. bishops the authority to dispense each year from abstinence on Saturdays."

Similarly, Pope Gregory XVI in a rescript from June 28, 1831, granted a dispensation to all Catholics of Scotland from abstinence on Saturdays throughout the year, except on Saturdays that were also days of fasting. Dispensations were granted in many nations, illustrating a weakening in discipline not only in America.

With the growing number of Irish immigrants to America in the early 1800s, special attention was given to dispense from the law of abstinence when St. Patrick's Day fell on a Friday. This was done for the members of the Charitable Irish Society of Boston in 1837 and would become customary in the United States.

Pope Leo XIII Continues the Relaxation of Discipline:

Throughout the centuries covered thus far, abstinence included not only abstinence from meat but also generally from eggs and dairy products, though exceptions were granted in various localities.

The laws of abstinence also required abstinence from fish at the meals where meat was eaten on a fast day as well as on Sundays in Lent, as Pope Benedict XIV had decreed in 1741. This too began to change. Father Anthony Ruff relates in his article "Fasting and Abstinence: The Story" the changes made by Pope Leo XIII in the document entitled *Indultum quadragesimale*:

"In 1886 Leo XIII allowed meat, eggs, and milk products on Sundays of Lent and at the main meal on every weekday [of Lent] except Wednesday and Friday in the [United States]. Holy Saturday was not included in the dispensation. A small piece of bread was permitted in the morning with coffee, tea, chocolate, or a similar beverage."

While the evening collation had been widespread since the 14th century, the practice of an additional morning collation was introduced only in the 19th century as part of the

gradual relaxation of discipline. Morrow in *Sin in the Sixties* elaborates on the concessions given by Leo XIII:

"It also allowed for the use of eggs and milk products at the evening collation daily during Lent and at the principal meal when meat was not allowed. [It] further allowed a small piece of bread in the morning with a beverage, the possibility of taking the principal meal at noon or in the evening, and the use of lard and meat drippings in the preparation of foods. Those exempt from the law of fasting were permitted to eat meat, eggs, and milk more than once a day."

Consequently, the Baltimore Manual published by the Third Plenary Council of Baltimore in 1884 states: "Only one full meal is allowed, to be taken about noon or later. Besides this full meal, a collation of eight ounces is allowed. If the full meal is taken about the middle of the day, the collation will naturally be taken in the evening; if the full meal is taken late in the day, the collation may be taken at noon. Besides the full meal and collation, the general custom has made it lawful to take up to two ounces of bread (without butter) and a cup of some warm liquid - as coffee or tea - in the morning. This is important to observe, for by means of this many persons are enabled - and therefore obliged - to keep the fast who could not otherwise do so."

The Catechism of Father Patrick Powers published in Ireland in 1905 mentions that abstinence includes flesh meat and "anything produced from animals, as milk, butter, cheese, eggs." However, Father Patrick notes, "In some countries, however, milk is allowed at collation." The United States was one of those nations whereas Ireland and others were not granted such dispensations. The use of eggs and milk during Lent was to drastically change in a few years with the 1917 Code of Canon Law.

In 1895, the workingmen's privilege gave bishops in the United States the ability to permit meat in some circumstances. Mara Morrow summarizes that these circumstances occurred when there was "difficulty in observing the common law of abstinence, excluding Fridays, Ash Wednesday, Holy Week, and the Vigil of Christmas. This workingmen's privilege (or indult) allowed only for meat once a day during Lent, taken at the principal meal, and never taken in conjunction with fish. This particular indult was extended not only to the laborer but to his family, as well. The motivation of such an indult was no doubt to allow for enough sustenance such that the many Catholic immigrants to the United States who worked as manual laborers could perform their difficult, energy-demanding physical work without danger to their health" (Sin in the Sixties).

Fasting Changes in the Early 1900s:

The Catholic Encyclopedia from 1909 in describing that fast immediately before the changes to occur under St. Pius X enumerates them as follows: "In the United States of America all the days of Lent; the Fridays of Advent (generally); the Ember Days; the vigils of Christmas and Pentecost, as well as those (14 Aug.) of the Assumption; (31 Oct.) of All Saints, are now fasting days. In Great Britain, Ireland, Australia, and Canada, the days just indicated, together with the Wednesdays of Advent and (28 June) the vigil of Saints Peter and Paul, are fasting days."

The days of obligatory fasting as listed in the 1917 Code of Canon Law were the forty days of Lent (including Ash Wednesday, Good Friday, and Holy Saturday until noon); the Ember Days; and the Vigils of Pentecost, the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, All Saints, and Christmas. Partial abstinence, the eating of meat only at the principal meal, was

obligatory on all weeks of Lent (Monday through Thursday). And of course, complete abstinence was required on all Fridays, including Fridays of Lent, except when a holy day of obligation fell on a Friday outside of Lent.

Saturdays in Lent were likewise days of complete abstinence. Fasting and abstinence were not observed should a vigil fall on a Sunday as stated in the code: "If a vigil that is a fast day falls on a Sunday the fast is not to be anticipated on Saturday, but is dropped altogether that year."

Effective per the 1917 Code of Canon law, the Wednesdays and Fridays of Advent were no longer fast days for the Universal Church. Wednesdays of Advent had previously been abrogated as fast days in America in 1837. Now Fridays in Advent likewise ceased being required days of fast not only in America but universally. The Vigil of St. Peter and Paul also ceased as a fast day on the Universal Calendar, although it had already been abrogated in the United States. And eggs and milk (i.e. lacticinia) became universally permitted.

But additional changes quickly ensued. Mara Morrow, writing on the fasting days around this time, states, "In 1917 Pope Benedict XV granted the faithful of countries in World War I the privilege of transferring Saturday Lenten abstinence to any other day of the week, excepting Friday and Ash Wednesday. In 1919 Cardinal Gibbons was granted his request of transferring Saturday Lenten abstinence to Wednesday for all bishops' dioceses in the U.S. This permission, as well as the workingmen's privilege, were frequently renewed, but, after 1931, this permission was only on the basis of personal requests from individual bishops."

Further, in 1931 Cardinal Fumasoni Biondi, the Apostolic Delegate to the United States, addressed the following to the

American Bishops: "The Sacred Congregation of the Council, in a letter dated 15 Oct 1931, informs me that, in view of the difficulties experienced by the faithful in observing the laws of fast and abstinence on civil holidays, His Holiness, Pius XI, in the audience of 5 Oct. 1931, granted to all the Ordinaries of the United States, ad quinquennium, the faculty to dispense their subjects from the laws in question whenever any of the civil holidays now observed occurs on a day of fast and abstinence, or of abstinence."



Reductions in Fasting Intensify under Pope Pius XII:

Pope Pius XII accelerated the changes to fasting and abstinence as Father Ruff relates: "In 1941 Pope Pius XII allowed bishops worldwide to dispense entirely from fast and abstinence except on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday, provided that there was abstinence from meat every Friday, and fast and abstinence on these two days and the vigil of the Assumption and Christmas. Eggs and milk products were permitted at breakfast and in the evening."

On January 28, 1949, the United States bishops issued a modified the regulations on abstinence in America again after receiving a ruling from the Sacred Congregation of the Council. Partial abstinence replaced complete abstinence for Ember Wednesdays, Ember Saturdays, and the Vigil of Pentecost.

Before 1951, Bishops were able to dispense laborers and their family members from the laws of abstinence, if necessary, under the workingmen's privilege that was introduced in 1895. This privilege of eating meat though excluded Fridays, Ash Wednesday, Holy Week, and the Vigil of Christmas. In 1951, the abstinence laws in America were again revised as Father Ruff summarizes:

"In 1951 the U.S. bishops standardized regulations calling for complete abstinence from meat on Fridays, Ash Wednesday, the vigils of Assumption and Christmas, and Holy Saturday morning for everyone over age seven. On the vigils of Pentecost and All Saints, meat could be taken at just one meal. Fast days, applying to everyone between 21 and 59, were the weekdays of Lent, Ember days, and the vigils of Pentecost, Assumption, All Saints, and Christmas. On these fast days only one full meal was allowed, with two other meatless meals permitted which together did not make up one full meal. Eating between meals was not permitted, with milk and fruit juice permitted. Health or ability to work exempted one."

As a result, the Vigil of All Saints (Halloween) was reduced to partial abstinence for American Catholics only in 1951.

In 1954, Pope Pius XII issued a special decree granting bishops the permission to dispense from Friday abstinence for the Feast of St. Joseph which that year fell on a Friday. A March 26, 1954 article of the Guardian elaborates:

"Bishops throughout the world have been granted the faculty to dispense their faithful from the law of abstinence on the Feast of St. Joseph, Friday, March 19. The power was granted in a decree issued by the Sacred Congregation of the Council, which said it acted at the special mandate of His Holiness Pope Pius XII. The decree was published in *L'Osservatore Romano* made no mention of a dispensation from the Lenten fast."

1955 saw some of the most significant changes to the Church's Liturgy since the Council of Trent. Pope Pius XII in "*Cum nostra hac aetate*" on March 23, 1955, abolished 15 Octaves in addition to the Octave for the Dedication of a Church, and particular octaves for patrons of various religious orders, countries, dioceses, etc. He also abolished roughly half of all vigils, leading to the removal of the liturgical vigils of the Immaculate Conception, Epiphany, All Saints, and All apostles except Ss. Peter and Paul. The total number of liturgical vigils was now reduced to 7.

Uncertainty existed on whether or not fasting was still required on October 31st, the Vigil of All Saints (commonly called Halloween). The US Bishops requested an official determination from Rome on whether the custom of fasting and abstinence on the suspended Vigil of All Saints had also been terminated. They received a pre-printed notice in a response dated March 15, 1957, stating: "The Decree of the Sacred Congregation of Rites...looks simply to the liturgical part of the day and does not touch the obligation of fast and abstinence that are a penitential preparation for the following feast day." The US Bishop thereafter dispensed both the fast and partial abstinence law for the Vigil of All Saints.

In 1956, Holy Saturday was commuted from complete to partial abstinence. Furthermore, the fast which previously

ended at noon was extended to the midnight between Holy Saturday and Easter Sunday, on account of the Holy Week changes enacted by Pius XII. And on July 25, 1957, Pope Pius XII commuted the fast in the Universal Church from the Vigil of the Assumption to the Vigil of the Immaculate Conception on December 7, even though he had previously abrogated the Mass for the Vigil of the Immaculate Conception.

Fasting Changes Under John XXIII

On October 9, 1958, Pope Pius XII died. John XXIII was elected and under him, as under his predecessor, changes to Church discipline continued. In 1959, Pope John XXIII permitted the Christmas Eve fast and abstinence to be transferred to 23rd. While the United States, Great Britain, and Ireland kept the penance on December 24, other nations including Canada and the Philippines transferred it to December 23.

The Fasting Requirements of 1962:

By 1962, the laws of fasting and abstinence were as follows as described in "Moral Theology" by Rev. Heribert Jone and adapted by Rev. Urban Adelman for the "laws and customs of the United States of America" copyright 1961:

“Complete abstinence is to be observed on all Fridays of the year, Ash Wednesday, the Vigils of Immaculate Conception and Christmas.

“Partial abstinence is to be observed on Ember Wednesdays and Saturdays and on the Vigil of Pentecost.

“Days of fast are all the weekdays of Lent, Ember Days, and the Vigil of Pentecost.” If a vigil falls on a Sunday, the

law of abstinence and fasting is dispensed that year and is not transferred to the preceding day.”

Father Jone adds additional guidance for the Vigil of the Nativity fast: "General custom allows one who is fasting to take a double portion of food at the collation on Christmas Eve (*jejunium gaudiosum*)."

Fasting Changes Post Vatican II

Shortly after the close of the Second Vatican Council, Pope Paul VI an apostolic constitution on fasting and abstaining on February 17, 1966, called *Paenitemini*, whose principles were later incorporated into the 1983 Code of Canon Law. *Paenitemini* allowed the commutation of the Friday abstinence to an act of penance at the discretion of the local ordinaries and gave authority to the episcopal conferences on how the universal rules would be applied in their region. Abstinence which previously began at age 7 was modified to begin at age 14. Additionally, the obligation of fasting on the Ember Days and on the remaining Vigils was abolished. *Paenitemini* maintained the traditional practice that "abstinence is to be observed on every Friday which does not fall on a day of obligation."

The US Bishops issued a statement on November 18, 1966. Abstinence was made obligatory on all Fridays of Lent, except Solemnities (i.e. First Class Feasts), on Ash Wednesday, and on Good Friday. Abstinence on all Fridays throughout the year was "especially recommended," and the faithful who did choose to eat meat were directed to perform an alternative penance on those Fridays outside of Lent. The document stated in part: "Even though we hereby terminate the traditional law of abstinence binding under pain of sin, as the sole prescribed means of observing Friday, we ... hope that the Catholic community will ordinarily continue to

abstain from meat by free choice as formerly we did in obedience to church law." And finally, fasting on all weekdays of Lent was "strongly recommended" but not made obligatory under penalty of sin.

The 1983 Code of Canon Law largely took Paul VI's apostolic constitution aside from the modification of the age at which fasting binds. Per the 1983 Code of Canon Law, the age of fast was changed to begin at 18 - previously it was 21 - and to still conclude at midnight when an individual completes his 59th birthday. Friday penance is required per these laws on all Fridays of the year except on Solemnities, a dramatic change from the previous exception being only on Holy Days of Obligation.

Per the 1983 Code of Canon Law, fasting and complete abstinence per these rules are required only on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday. The notion of "partial abstinence," introduced under Pope Benedict XIV in 1741, was also removed along with nearly all fast days.

Why We Follow Fasting Days

In the observance of the two precepts, namely attending Holy Mass on prescribed days and fasting and abstaining on commanded days, we obey them because the Church has the power by Christ to command such things. We do not abstain from meat on Fridays for instance because the meat is unclean or evil. It is the act of disobedience which is evil. As Fr. Michael Müller remarks in his Familiar Explanation of Christian Doctrine from 1874: "It is not the food, but the disobedience that defiles a man." To eat meat on a forbidden day unintentionally, for instance, is no sin. As the Scriptures affirm it is not what goes into one's mouth that defiles a man but that disobedience which comes from the soul (cf. Matthew 15:11).

Yet, even with such a distinction, the Church has historically been wise to change disciplines only very slowly and carefully. As Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen once remarked, "It is a long-established principle of the Church never to completely drop from her public worship any ceremony, object or prayer which once occupied a place in that worship." The same may be said for matters concerning either Holy Days of Obligation or fast days. What our forefathers held sacred should remain sacred to us in an effort to preserve our catholicity not only with ourselves but with our ancestors who see God now in Heaven.

Perhaps we need to ask ourselves and our own families what we can do, even if not mandated by Church law, to recover these former holy days of obligation and fasting days. Fasting and/or abstaining from meat and animal products on the forty days of Lent, the days of Advent, the Vigils of feasts, Ember Days, Rogation Days, and Saturdays year-round would be commendable. In a similar manner, observing the Apostles Fast or the Assumption Fast, which are still kept in the Eastern Churches, would also be praiseworthy for a Roman Catholic.

Rediscover A Love of Fasting

The Church has over time reduced the requirements required under penalty sin, but She still implores the Faithful to do more than the mere minimum. St. Francis de Sales remarked, "If you're able to fast, you will do well to observe some days beyond what are ordered by the Church."

What days can you add? How can you better observe the feast days of the Apostles or the feasts of our Lord or our Lady? How can we fast better - both in terms of the number of days as well as by limiting the food we consume on fast days? Can you for instance fast and abstain from meat

voluntarily on Saturdays in honor of our Lady and for the purpose of doing penance?

Chapter 3: Confess Sins Once a Year



The third precept of the Church is to confess our sins at least once a year. While we are only required under the penalty of mortal sin to confess our sins sacramentally once a year, we are encouraged (and most of us need) to go much more frequently. It is most highly recommended for the Faithful to go to Confession every two weeks. Frequent Confession restores sanctifying grace in our souls (if we were in a state of mortal sin before our Confession), absolves all sin (venial and mortal), and strengthens our resolve and encourages us in virtue.

While the value and necessity of Confession is outlined in our lesson on Confession, this lesson focuses instead on the third precept: to confess our sins at least once a year.

Pope St. Pius X, in *Quam singulari*, explicitly states the importance of Confession for even children. After all, everyone older than the age of reason is bound to observe this precept of the Church:

I. The age of discretion for both Confession and Communion is the time when a child begins to exercise his reason. This is normally around the seventh year, more or less. From this time also begins the duty of keeping the precept of Confession and Communion.

II. For first Confession and first Communion it is not necessary to have a fully complete knowledge of Christian doctrine. Afterwards, however, the child should gradually learn the whole catechism according to his mental capacity.

III. The religious knowledge required of a child for suitable preparation before first Communion is the following. He should understand, according to his ability, the mysteries of faith necessary for salvation, and be sufficiently able to distinguish the Eucharistic from ordinary corporeal bread, to approach the most holy Eucharist with such devotion as can be expected at his age.

IV. The preceptive duty, affecting the child, to receive Confession and Communion, mainly falls on those responsible for his care. This means the parents, the confessor, teachers and the pastor. It is the father's right, or of those who take his place, and the confessor's -

according to the Roman Catechism - to admit a child to first Communion.

VI. Those who have charge of children are most urgently to ensure that, after their first Communion, these children often approach the Holy Table. If possible, they should receive even daily, as Christ Jesus and mother Church desire; and that they do so with such devotion of spirit as corresponds to their age.

VII. The custom of not admitting children to Confession or of never absolving them, once they have reached the age of reason, is absolutely condemned (*omnino reprobanda*). Consequently, local ordinaries are to make sure, even using juridical means, that this abuse is completely rooted out.

Some may falsely think that the precepts are relatively new for the Church – or at least that the precept for annual Confession is new. In fact, it is not. As stated in the Catholic Encyclopedia found on New Advent:

They came to be regarded as special Commandments of the Church. Thus in a book of tracts of the thirteenth century attributed to Celestine V (though the authenticity of this work has been denied) a separate tractate is given to the precepts of the Church and is divided into four chapters, the first of which treats of fasting, the second of confession and paschal Communion, the third of interdicts on marriage, and the fourth of tithes.

In the fourteenth century Ernest von Parduvitz, Archbishop of Prague, instructed his priests to explain in popular sermons the principal points of the catechism, the Our Father, the Creed, the Commandments of God and of the Church (Hafner, *loc. cit.*, 115).

A century later (1470) the catechism of Dietrick Coelde, the first, it is said, to be written in German, explicitly set forth that there were five Commandments of the Church. In his "Summa Theologica" (part I, tit. xvii, p. 12) St. Antoninus of Florence (1439) enumerates ten precepts of the Church universally binding on the faithful.

These are: to observe certain feasts, to keep the prescribed fasts, to attend Mass on Sundays and Holy Days, to confess once a year, to receive Holy Communion during paschal time, to pay tithes, to abstain from any act upon which an interdict has been placed entailing excommunication, to refrain also from any act interdicted under pain of excommunication *latæ sententiæ*, to avoid association with the excommunicated, finally not to attend Mass or other religious functions celebrated by a priest living in open concubinage.

In the sixteenth century the Spanish canonist, Martin Aspilcueta (1586), gives a list of five principal precepts of obligation, to fast at certain prescribed times, to pay tithes, to go to confession once a year and to receive Holy Communion at Easter (*Enchiridion, sive manuale confessoriorum et poenitentium*, Rome, 1588, ch. xxi, n. 1).

At this time, owing to the prevalence of heresy, there appeared many popular works in defense of the authority of the Church and setting forth in a special manner her precepts. Such among others were the "Summa Doctrinæ Christianæ" (1555) of St. Peter Canisius and the "Doctrinæ Christiana" of Bellarmine (1589).

It is plain, however, that the precepts of the Church, as a particular and distinct body of laws were recognized long before the sixteenth century; the contention that they

were first definitely formulated by St. Peter Canisius is unwarranted.

Fr. John Flader in an article for *The Catholic Weekly* stated in part the following, that is a wise source of meditation:

The Code of Canon Law places the obligation of confessing mortal sins once a year in relation with the general obligation to confess these sins. The preceding canon states: “The faithful are bound to confess, in kind and number, all grave sins committed after baptism, of which after careful examination of conscience they are aware, which have not yet been directly pardoned by the keys of the Church, and which have not been confessed in an individual confession” (Can. 988 §1).

Thus, the Code is indicating that someone with mortal sins on their soul should confess those sins at least within a year. But considering the harm to the soul of being in the state of mortal sin, it is always advisable to confess such sins as soon as possible after committing them. Thirdly, the precept of annual confession in itself has nothing to do with Lent and Easter. Unlike the [other] precept – “You shall receive the sacrament of the Eucharist at least during the Easter season” (CCC 2042) – th[is] precept can be fulfilled at any time of the year. Nonetheless, it is good to fulfil it as a preparation for Easter, even if one does not have mortal sins on one’s soul. Finally, it would be foolish to excuse oneself from fulfilling the second precept on the grounds that one has no mortal sins to confess, since the sacrament of Penance brings so many benefits to the soul.

The Catechism mentions that the precepts are meant to ensure the bare minimum in the spiritual life: “The precepts of the Church are set in the context of a moral

life bound to and nourished by liturgical life. The obligatory character of these positive laws decreed by the pastoral authorities is meant to guarantee to the faithful the very necessary minimum in the spirit of prayer and moral effort, in the growth in love of God and neighbor” (CCC 2041).

Remember, it is a spiritual work of mercy to encourage those who have been long away from the Sacraments to return. Suggest to your family members or friends, who may have drifted away from the Sacrament of Confession, to return to it. Afraid of what they might say or how they might react? Why not post something on Facebook to encourage Confession in general. Or buy a few inexpensive guides to Confession and pass them out to those who may need the encouragement.

Chapter 4: Receive Holy Communion During Easter



The fourth precept of the Church requires us to receive our Divine Savior in Holy Communion at least once a year, and unlike the precept on Confession, the reception of Holy Communion must take place during the Easter Season. The precept of confessing your sins at least once a year may take place at any point in the calendar year.

The Easter Season in this regard refers not only to the 50 days of Easter that immediately follow the Triduum and Lent, but they include all of Lent, Passiontide, and Easter. In fact, the obligation can be met by receiving Holy Communion anytime between the First Sunday in Lent and the Sunday after Pentecost, which is called Trinity Sunday.

Fr. Jim Achacoso in an online article entitled *The Easter Eucharistic Precept and the Law of Annual Confession* discusses the importance and history of this precept:

“Due to a widespread neglect of the sacrament of the Eucharist in the Middle Ages, various Church Councils, from the 6th Century onward, enacted laws obliging the faithful to receive the Holy Eucharist, especially on the principal feasts. The IV Lateran Council (1215) established a general law for the Latin Church requiring the reception of Communion at least once a year at Easter by those who had attained the age of discretion. This law, which was confirmed by the Council of Trent, was incorporated in the 1917 Code of Canon Law. The actual Code of 1983 retains the annual precept, with some modifications....”

To further explain the history, the *Catholic Encyclopedia of New Advent* states:

“Paschal Tide is the period during which every member of the faithful who has attained the year of discretion is bound by the positive law of the Church to receive Holy Communion (Easter duty). During the early Middle Ages from the time of the Synod of Agde (508), it was customary to receive Holy Communion at least three times a year — Christmas, Easter, and Pentecost. A positive precept was issued by the Fourth Lateran Council (1215) and confirmed by the Council of Trent (Sess. XIII, can. ix). According to these decrees the faithful of either sex, after coming to the

age of discretion, must receive at least at Easter the Sacrament of the Eucharist (unless by the advice of the parish priest they abstain for a while). Otherwise during life they are to be prevented from entering the church and when dead are to be denied Christian burial. The paschal precept is to be fulfilled in one's parish church. Although the precept of the Fourth Lateran to confess to the parish priest fell into disuse and permission was given to confess anywhere, the precept of receiving Easter Communion in the parish church is still in force where there are canonically-erected parishes....”



Last Supper showing the Communion of the Apostles by Tintoretto

When May the Easter Duty Be Fulfilled?

The 1962 *Rituale Romanum* states:

"The time within which the Easter communion must be received commences on Palm Sunday and terminates on

Low Sunday. But it is the right of the local Ordinary, if circumstances of persons or place demand, to extend this time for all the faithful, however, not earlier than the fourth Sunday in Lent nor later than Trinity Sunday. The faithful should be persuaded to fulfill this obligation, everyone in his own parish church. Whoever fulfills it in another church must see to it that he inform his own pastor of the fact. The precept of Easter communion still continues to be binding if one has neglected it during the time prescribed, no matter for what reason."

The Catholic Encyclopedia clarifies though some important exceptions that will impact most people:

"In the United States upon petition of the Fathers of the First Provincial Council of Baltimore Paschal Tide was extended by Pius VIII to the period from the first Sunday in Lent to Trinity Sunday (II Plen. Coun. Balt., n. 257); in England it lasts from Ash Wednesday until Low Sunday; in Ireland from Ash Wednesday until the octave of SS. Peter and Paul, 6 July (O'Kane "Rubrics of the Roman Ritual," n. 737; Slater, "Moral Theology" 578, 599); in Canada the duration of the Paschal Tide is the same as in the United States."

For instance, Father Patrick Power's Catechism (III) from 1905 published in Dubin mentions this precept as such: "To receive worthily the Blessed Eucharist at Easter, or within the time appointed; that is, from Ash-Wednesday to the octave day of the Feast of St. Peter and St. Paul, inclusive."

These are exceptions from the standard time mentioned in the *Rituale Romanum*. This is affirmed in the Baltimore Catechism #1354: "The Easter time is, in this country [the United States], the time between the first Sunday in Lent and Trinity Sunday."

Pope St. Pius X said, "Holy Communion is the "shortest and safest way to Heaven." While the Church encourages all to receive the Blessed Sacrament regularly — even daily — it must be stated that at no time and for no reason may the Faithful receive Holy Communion in a state of mortal sin. You must attend Sacramental Confession prior to receiving Holy Communion. This precept of the Church does not mandate, require, condone, or support the reception of Holy Communion in the state of sin.

Chapter 5: To contribute to the Support of the Church



The Charity of St. Elizabeth of Hungary

The fifth precept of the Church requires us to support the Church by our contributions to Her. Firstly, because of the false protestant ideology, some Catholics wrongly think that they are required to tithe a certain percentage of their earnings in order to fulfill this precept. Responding to this

issue, we immediately begin by turning to an online article by Fr. Peter Scott on tithing:

“The obligation of offering a tenth part of the produce as an offering to God and to His ministers is one of the legal prescriptions of the Mosaic law (Dt. 14:22) that Our Lord did away with when He came to fulfill the law in His own person. It is certainly true that under the new law, as under the old, the faithful owe support to the ministers of the altar. However, since the new law is interior, it is left to the generosity of the faithful in the practice of the virtues of justice and charity to determine the quantity.

“In fact, the Church has declared that support is strictly owed in justice to the ministers of the Church, and that it is not pure alms that can be withdrawn at will. The contrary opinion was one of the errors of John Wycliffe condemned at the Council of Constance in 1415 (Dz, 598). This is indeed a part of the natural law, that requires that those who minister receive a commensurate remuneration. It is also according to the divine law, as taught by Our Lord, "for the workman is worthy of his meat" (Mt. 10:10) and by St. Paul:

“Know you not, that they who work in the holy place, eat the things that are of the holy place; and they that serve the altar, partake with the altar. So also the Lord ordained that they who preach the gospel should live by the gospel. (I Cor. 9:13,14)

“Thus, it is that the Waldensian heretics had to recant the denial of this when being received back into the Church in 1208 by professing: "We believe that tithes and first fruits and oblations should be paid to the clergy, according to the Lord's command." (Dz, 427). Consequently those who refuse to contribute to the support of the Church and the clergy are guilty of two sins: they are guilty of injustice, by refusing the

support that they owe, and they are guilty of a sin against religion by not contributing according to their means to the support of the Church.

“In many places during the Middle Ages it became custom and particular law for the 10% figure to become obligatory, especially in the East. Bouscaren & Ellis in their *Canon Law: A Text and Commentary*, have this to say: "(This) has long since become obsolete except in a few churches which have kept the ancient custom by reason of local statutes" (p. 747). Consequently, the Church's law gives no precision about the quantity of the donations that are to be given in support of the clergy. The current mind of the Church on the matter is reflected in canon 1502 of the 1917 Code of Canon Law: "Local statutes as well as laudable customs regarding tithes and first fruits are to be respected."

“When speaking of this issue, St. Thomas Aquinas explains why it is that the Church does not demand the 10% tithe, and why it would be dis-edifying and inappropriate to revive this local custom:

“The ministers of the Church ought to be more solicitous for the increase of spiritual goods in the people, than for the amassing of temporal goods: and hence the Apostle was unwilling to make use of the right given him by the Lord of receiving his livelihood from those to whom he preached the Gospel, lest he should occasion a hindrance to the Gospel of Christ....In like manner the ministers of the Church rightly refrain from demanding the Church's tithes, when they could not demand them without scandal, on account of their having fallen into desuetude, or for some other reason. Nevertheless, those who do not give tithes in places where the Church does not demand them are not in a state of damnation, unless they be

obstinate, and unwilling to pay even if tithes were demanded of them. (ST, IIa IIae, Q. 87, A. 1 ad. 5)

“This judicious balance of the Angelic Doctor is remarkable. The principle of contributing to the support is maintained, but the Church is not so small-minded as to insist on a certain sum or proportion, although it has the right to do so. It leaves all this in God’s hands, knowing that God will provide for all the needs of His true Church, and of the clergy who have consecrated their lives to its service. Protestants who demand a tithe err by acting as if the Mosaic law were still in vigor, by a very materialist conception of the law, centered upon temporal goods, and by failing to give due priority to the Church’s true mission —the salvation of souls.

“Consequently, no Catholic should feel under any kind of moral obligation to give 10% to the support of the Church, and most importantly if it would mean sacrificing the necessities of food, clothing, shelter and transportation. Yet every Catholic is under the moral obligation to give according to their means, whether their farthing be 1%, or whether, perhaps, if they are comfortably established in life, it be closer to 20% or even more. It is for each person to decide before God what is a reasonable proportion to contribute to the support of the Church, and the Church’s charitable works, concealing his generosity, so that, figuratively at least, the right hand does not know what the left hand is doing. Nevertheless, if he is prudent he will also include this proportion, whatever he decides upon, in his budget for the month.”



We conclude this chapter by praying the Prayer for the Church and Civil Authorities composed by Archbishop Carroll, taken from *Manual of Prayers* by The Third Plenary Council of Baltimore, published by P.J. Kennedy & Sons in 1888.

We pray Thee, O Almighty and Eternal God, who through Jesus Christ hast revealed Thy glory to all nations, to preserve the works of Thy mercy; that Thy Church, being spread through the whole world, may continue, with unchanging faith, in the confession of Thy name.

We pray Thee, who alone art good and holy, to endow with heavenly knowledge, sincere zeal, and sanctity of life our chief bishop, N., the Vicar of our Lord Jesus Christ in the government of His Church; our own Bishop, (or Archbishop,) N., (if he is not consecrated, our Bishop-elect); all other Bishops, Prelates, and Pastors of the Church ; and especially those who are appointed to exercise among us the

functions of the holy ministry, and conduct Thy people into the ways of salvation.

We pray Thee, O God of might, wisdom, and justice, through whom authority is rightly administered, laws are enacted, and judgments decreed, assist, with Thy Holy Spirit of counsel and fortitude, the President of these United States, that his administration may be conducted in righteousness, and be eminently useful to Thy people, over whom he presides, by encouraging due respect for virtue and religion; by a faithful execution of the laws in justice and mercy; and by restraining vice and immorality. Let the light of Thy divine wisdom direct the deliberations of Congress, and shine forth in all the proceedings and laws framed for our role and government; so, that they may tend to the preservation of peace, the promotion of national happiness, the increase of industry, sobriety, and useful knowledge, and may perpetuate to us the blessings of equal liberty.

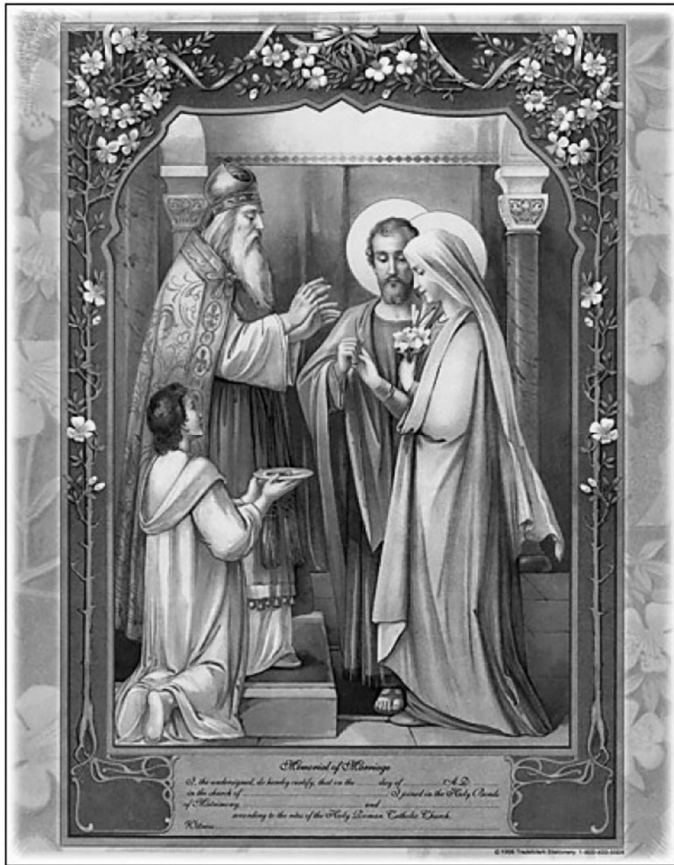
We pray for his Excellency the Governor of this State, for the members of the Assembly, for all Judges, Magistrates, and other officers who are appointed to guard our political welfare; that they may be enabled, by Thy powerful protection, to discharge the duties of their respective stations with honesty and ability.

We recommend likewise to Thy unbounded mercy all our brethren and fellow-citizens, throughout the United States, that they may be blessed in the knowledge, and sanctified in the observance of most holy law; that they may be preserved in union, and in that peace which the world cannot give; and, after enjoying the blessings of this life, be admitted to those which are eternal.

Finally, we pray Thee, O Lord of mercy, to remember the souls of Thy servants departed who are gone before us with

the sign of faith, and repose in the sleep of peace: the souls of our parents, relations, and friends; of those who, when living, were members of this congregation; and particularly of such as are lately deceased; of all benefactors who, by their donations or legacies to this Church, witnessed their zeal for the decency of divine worship, and proved their claim to our grateful and charitable remembrance. To these, O Lord, and to all that rest in Christ, grant, we beseech Thee, a place of refreshment, light, and everlasting peace, through the same Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior. Amen.

Chapter 6: Observe the Laws of Holy Matrimony



The sixth precept of the Church requires Catholics to observe all of the laws of the Church on Matrimony. This chapter will examine some of the many errors, especially in our modern times, that attack the Sacrament of Matrimony. We as Catholics are bound to reject these errors and observe all that the Church teaches. This is what is required by the 6th Commandment of the Church.

Artificial Contraception

Pope Pius XI on the condemnation of artificial contraception:

No reason, however grave, may be put forward by which anything intrinsically against nature may become conformable to nature and morally good. Since, therefore, the conjugal act is destined primarily by nature for the begetting of children, those who in exercising it deliberately frustrate its natural power and purpose sin against nature and commit a deed which is shameful and intrinsically vicious. Small wonder, therefore, if Holy Writ bears witness that the Divine Majesty regards with greatest detestation this horrible crime and at times has punished it with death ...the Catholic Church ...through Our mouth proclaims anew: any use whatsoever of matrimony exercised in such a way that the act is deliberately frustrated in its natural power to generate life is an offense against the law of God and of nature, and those who indulge in such are branded with the guilt of a grave sin (Casti Connubii, Pauline Books, pp.28, 29).

In 1968, Pope Paul VI issued his landmark encyclical letter *Humanae Vitae* (Latin for "Human Life") which reemphasized the Church's constant teaching that it is always intrinsically evil to use contraception to prevent new human beings from coming into existence. Simply put, artificial contraception is contrary to the will of God.

Contraception is "any action which, either in anticipation of the conjugal act [sexual intercourse], or in its accomplishment, or in the development of its natural consequences, proposes, whether as an end or as a means, to render procreation impossible" (*Humanae Vitae* 14). This includes sterilization, condoms and other barrier methods,

spermicides, coitus interruptus (withdrawal method), the Pill, and all other such methods..."Artificial contraception is wrong because it is opposed to the natural law of God. Some argue we need contraception to cut down on unwanted pregnancy and abortion. But, there should be no sex outside of marriage - fornication - because it is a mortal sin. Even looking at a woman/man lustfully is a sin (Matthew 5:29). Sex outside of marriage is mortally sinful. Only sexual activity between a husband and wife is permissible, and a husband and wife must be open to the transmission of human life. Artificial contraception destroys marital bonds.

Some forms of contraception (such as the morning after pill) can even produce an abortion. These forms of contraception kill upwards of 12 million lives in the US each year.

The effects of artificial contraception as outlined in the encyclical "Humanae Vitae" are worth mentioning and evaluating:

1. General lowering of moral standards
2. A rise in infidelity and illegitimacy
3. Reduction of women to objects used to satisfy men
4. Government coercion in reproductive matters

Contraception has become commonplace in our culture. Whether in the form of the birth control pill, injections, implants, or condoms, the purpose of contraception is to prevent procreation, or the creation of a child. But while contraception may be readily available in pharmacies, supermarkets, and doctors' offices that does not mean that it is morally acceptable.

Since contraception is designed to prevent the development of a new human life, it is anti-life in nature. Therefore, it opposes the Will of God, the Divine Author of Life. As Pope

Paul VI stated in the encyclical *Humanae Vitae*, “Every action which, whether in anticipation of the conjugal act, or in its accomplishment, or in the development of its natural consequences, proposes, whether as an end or as a means, to render procreation impossible” is intrinsically evil.

The Catholic Church recognizes a definite link between contraception and abortion. To begin with, some contraceptives, known as abortifacients, cause chemical abortions. Both IUDs and the birth control pill can kill tiny human embryos. In his book, *A Consumer's Guide to the Pill and Other Drugs*, author John Wilks noted that the birth control pill is contraceptive in nature when it prevents ovulation or blocks the sperm from reaching the egg. If, however, the pill prevents the implantation of the fertilized egg, it is, in fact, causing a chemical abortion, since life begins at fertilization, or conception.

From a simple compare and contrast point of view, there is little room to doubt that society over the past 60 years has become degenerate in its moral standards. Look no further than the media. What is permissible for a child to say or be exposed to and what is allowed to be discussed in public are abhorrent. The list is long and as Paul VI predicted, society has become more and more lacking in morals in the years since artificial contraception became prevalent in society.

As to his second point, the number of children being born to parents who are not married is staggering. The percentage of first births to cohabiting women tripled from 9% in 1985 to 27% for births from 2003 to 2010. This rise in first births to cohabiting women parallels increases in first births to unmarried women overall. Of first births from 2006-10, 46% were to unmarried mothers, compared with 38% in 2002. (Source: National Center for Health Statistics, National Survey of Family Growth 2006-2010). Infidelity is the act of

cheating on a spouse. Statistics show the rate of infidelity in the US rose drastically over the last 25 years. The divorce rate has risen from 20% in 1960 (that is population wide and not only Catholics who at the time were virtually zero) to over 50%!

For those who continue to claim that contraception reduces abortion, the statistics over the past fifty plus years shows this to be far from true. An article in LifeSiteNews by journalist Peter Baklinski states:

“Most abortions result from failed contraception,” admitted Joyce Arthur, founder and executive director of the Abortion Rights Coalition of Canada, earlier this year.

...The United States’ highest court had no difficulty in seeing the causal link between contraception and abortion in a 1992 ruling that confirmed *Roe v. Wade*, the 1973 decision that brought legal abortion to America.

In *Planned Parenthood v. Casey*, the Supreme Court argued that in some critical respects abortion is of the same character as the decision to use contraception: “...for two decades of economic and social developments, [people] have organized intimate relationships and made choices that define their views of themselves and their places in society, in reliance on the availability of abortion in the event that contraception should fail.”

What the Supreme Court pointed out is that in a contracepting society, abortion not only becomes a necessity, but it becomes the ultimate fail-safe method of birth control. In the mind of the court, contraception doesn’t lessen the need for abortion, but on the contrary, contraception precipitates abortion.

...

Dr. Janet Smith, a professor, author, and national speaker, agrees with Dr. Irving: "Contraception leads us to believe that sex can be a momentary encounter, not a life-long commitment. It has brought about the concept of 'accidental pregnancy.'"

"The connection between contraception and abortion is primarily this: contraception facilitates the kind of relationships and even the kind of attitudes and moral characters that are likely to lead to abortion," she wrote. Put differently, contraception radically changes the meaning and purpose of sex. Contraception turns the sexual act between a man and a woman that is biologically ordered towards the creation of a new life into a parody of the act, where a newly created life can suddenly be viewed as an uninvited and unwelcome guest. Abortion becomes the easy solution by which the parent permanently and violently disinvents the unwelcome guest.

With the Governmental mandate forcing individuals and companies to provide contraceptive coverage to their employees, and with other anti-information initiatives including ObamaCare, we see again the prediction of Paul VI coming true.

Contraceptives are destroying marriages, killing lives, increasing violence against women, and destroying society. It would be in the best interest of us – not only from a spiritual but even from a secular point of view – to eliminate contraceptives altogether.

Sterilization

Pope Pius XI condemned sterilization:

"Furthermore Christian doctrine establishes, and the light of human reason makes it most clear, that private individuals have no power over the members of their bodies than that which pertains to their natural ends; and they are not free to destroy or mutilate their members, or in any other way render themselves unfit for their natural functions, except when no other provision can be made for the good of the whole body" (ibid. pp.35, 36).

In Vitro Fertilization

In vitro fertilization is not permitted in the Catholic faith for any reason; instead adoption is encouraged and there are morally acceptable options for infertile couples. Six million embryos, human beings like us, have died because of this procedure. That is roughly 80-90% of all embryos created in IVF [LifeSite on Nov. 26, 2003]. In the US, 170,000 embryos die each year [LifeSite on Nov. 22, 2002]

From the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*:

2377 Techniques involving only the married couple (homologous artificial insemination and fertilization) are perhaps less reprehensible yet remain morally unacceptable. They dissociate the sexual act from the procreative act. The act which brings the child into existence is no longer an act by which two persons give themselves to one another, but one that "entrusts the life and identity of the embryo into the power of doctors and biologists and establishes the domination of technology over the origin and destiny of the human person. Such a

relationship of domination is in itself contrary to the dignity and equality that must be common to parents and children." "Under the moral aspect procreation is deprived of its proper perfection when it is not willed as the fruit of the conjugal act, that is to say, of the specific act of the spouses' union Only respect for the link between the meanings of the conjugal act and respect for the unity of the human being make possible procreation in conformity with the dignity of the person."

2378 A child is not something owed to one but is a gift. The "supreme gift of marriage" is a human person. A child may not be considered a piece of property, an idea to which an alleged "right to a child" would lead. In this area, only the child possesses genuine rights: the right "to be the fruit of the specific act of the conjugal love of his parents," and "the right to be respected as a person from the moment of his conception."

2379 The Gospel shows that physical sterility is not an absolute evil. Spouses who still suffer from infertility after exhausting legitimate medical procedures should unite themselves with the Lord's Cross, the source of all spiritual fecundity. They can give expression to their generosity by adopting abandoned children or performing demanding services for others.

Mixed Marriages

For consideration of "mixed marriages", which are marriages between a Catholic person and a non-Catholic person, we refer to the following well written article care of the Fish Eaters website:

If a Catholic gets a dispensation to marry someone who is baptized but belongs to a schismatic or heretical sect,

they are said to enter into a "mixed marriage." Despite the fact that mixed marriages are not, in themselves, true vocations and are inherently flawed, the Church sometimes does grant a dispensation to such a couple for

the same reason that a prudent mother would prefer to see a wayward daughter do a bad thing than a worse thing. What parent would not prefer to see a child sick than dead? There is some hope for the life of a man hanging over a precipice and clinging even to a handful of grass, but there is no hope when his brains are dashed out on the rocks beneath. When persons have fully made up their minds to enter mixed marriage, they are so blinded by their passions and preferences that, if the Church should not tolerate their step, many of them would marry out of the Church, and thus commit mortal sin, and in most cases incur excommunication. The only difference, then, is this: There is at least a possible hope of salvation when mixed marriages are tolerated by the Church; whereas, if these persons should die in their rebellion against the Church, their damnation would be certain. The Church, like a prudent mother, would prefer the less of these two evils. ("Vocations Explained: Matrimony, Virginitly, The Religious State, and the Priesthood," Benziger Brothers, 1897).

Traditionally the Church requires three conditions for the issuing of a dispensation for a mixed marriage: that the Catholic party be allowed free exercise of religion; that all the offspring are to be brought up Catholic; and that the Catholic party promise to do all that is possible to convert the non-Catholic.

The 1983 Code of Canon Law, though, gives the three conditions as: the Catholic party is to declare that he or she is prepared to remove dangers of defecting from the faith, and

is to make a sincere promise to do all in his or her power in order that all the children be baptized and brought up in the Catholic Church; the other party is to be informed in good time of these promises to be made by the Catholic party, so that it is certain that he or she is truly aware of the promise and of the obligation of the Catholic party; both parties are to be instructed about the purposes and essential properties of marriage, which are not to be excluded by either contractant. *Casti Connubii* of Pope Pius XI provides further guidance on the topic of mixed marriages:

81. This religious character of marriage, its sublime signification of grace and the union between Christ and the Church, evidently requires that those about to marry should show a holy reverence towards it, and zealously endeavor to make their marriage approach as nearly as possible to the archetype of Christ and the Church.

82. They, therefore, who rashly and heedlessly contract mixed marriages, from which the maternal love and providence of the Church dissuades her children for very sound reasons, fail conspicuously in this respect, sometimes with danger to their eternal salvation. This attitude of the Church to mixed marriages appears in many of her documents, all of which are summed up in the Code of Canon Law: "Everywhere and with the greatest strictness the Church forbids marriages between baptized persons, one of whom is a Catholic and the other a member of a schismatical or heretical sect; and if there is, add to this, the danger of the falling away of the Catholic party and the perversion of the children, such a marriage is forbidden also by the divine law." If the Church occasionally on account of circumstances does not refuse to grant a dispensation from these strict laws (provided that the divine law remains intact and the dangers above mentioned are provided against by

suitable safeguards), it is unlikely that the Catholic party will not suffer some detriment from such a marriage.

83. Whence it comes about not unfrequently, as experience shows, that deplorable defections from religion occur among the offspring, or at least a headlong descent into that religious indifference which is closely allied to impiety. There is this also to be considered that in these mixed marriages it becomes much more difficult to imitate by a lively conformity of spirit the mystery of which We have spoken, namely that close union between Christ and His Church.

For another Encyclical that deals explicitly with mixed marriages, see Pope Gregory XVI's *Summo Iugiter Studio*, published in 1832.

Annulments

Continuing the Fish Eaters article, we examine the use of annulments in the Church and their abuse in recent years so far as to make them appear as valid excuses for divorce:

Marriages that take place between two unbaptized people or between a baptized and an unbaptized person are said to be non-sacramental "natural marriages" which do not bring forth sanctifying grace. Once one is *sacramentally* married, it is for life, but merely *natural* marriages, which are in and of themselves good, can *sometimes* be dissolved with what is known as the "Pauline Privilege" or the "Petrine Privilege."

The Pauline Privilege

The Pauline Privilege is exercised when: both parties are unbaptized at the time of marriage, one of the parties becomes baptized, and the unbaptized party leaves. This sort of case, which is handled by the local Bishop, is outlined in I Corinthians 7:10-15

The Petrine Privilege

The Petrine Privilege is exercised when: one of the parties was unbaptized at the time of the marriage, they separate without the baptized party being at fault (or plan to separate and the unbaptized party refuses Baptism and will not live peaceably with the baptized party), and the baptized party now wants to marry a Catholic (see I Esdras 10-14). Unlike the Pauline Privilege which is handled by the local Bishop, this sort of case is sent to Rome to be adjudicated by the Pope himself.

Note that the exercise of the Petrine or Pauline Privileges is not a declaration of nullity (an "annulment"). A declaration of nullity is the finding that a marriage was merely putative and never existed at all; the Petrine and Pauline Privileges dissolve non-sacramental natural marriages. Truly sacramental marriages -- marriages joined together by God Himself -- that are ratified and consummated can be dissolved by no one (cf. Matthew 19:3-9)

The number of annulments from 1952 to 1956 number 359 worldwide. Following Vatican II in 1968, there were 450 in the US alone! In 1997, there were more than 73,000 annulments worldwide. An annulment means that a marriage was never valid. It is egregious to think that so many invalid "marriages" have taken place in our society in

recent years. The misuse of annulments – as well as the use of divorce which can never be permitted for a Catholic – is a grave assault on the Sacrament of Holy Matrimony.

Other Grave Violations Against Marriage

Besides the abuse, the Church also condemns abandonment of a marriage, adultery, artificial insemination, bigamy, “common-law” marriages, dowry, euthanasia, fornication, cohabitation, forced marriages, homosexuality, lust, masturbation, pornography, sex changes, sodomy, tubal ligation, and vasectomy to name only some.

It is required of us Catholics to learn what the Church teaches, to observe it, and to spread that teaching to others.

Chapter 7: Participate in the Evangelization of Souls



St. Bernard preaching the Second Crusade by Émile Signol

At last we come to the final chapter in this book on the Precepts of the Faith. While most lists do not contain a seventh precept, some do. And even if this command is not generally listed as a precept, it is still a responsibility of ours as a Catholic.

To serve as an example for us, we consider the life of Blessed Augustine Thevarampil of India.

Father Augustine Thevarparampil (1891-1973), known as the *apostle of the untouchables*, was born in Ramapuram, India on April 1, 1891. At the age of 33, on Dec. 17, 1921, he was ordained by the Servant of God Mar Tommaso Kurialacherry. He was commonly called "Kunjachan" which means "little priest". In 1923 he was sent as vice parish priest for the Church of St. Sebastian in Kadanad, but his poor health forced him to return to his former village in 1926.

During this time of illness, Father Augustine became aware of the miserable living conditions of the untouchables - the lowest caste of the Indian society forced to perform degrading works. Father Augustine devoted his life to evangelization and fighting for better treatment of the poor including the untouchables. He baptized over 6,000 people during his life.

Father Augustine rose at 4 AM each day, celebrated the Traditional Latin Holy Mass, and then he went out into the world for Christ. He helped resolve disputes, preached the Gospel, and cared for the sick. Father Augustine would particularly love to visit children. The children would flock to his side when he visited their village, and he would give them any sweets that he had on him.

Father Augustine lived modestly and entirely spiritually. He was a servant of God. His will begins: "I possess neither land nor money, and I owe no one anything. I want my funeral to be a very simple one." On October 16, 1973, at age 82, Father Augustine, the priest that cared for the poorest of the poor, died. His tomb attracts thousands of pilgrims.

Evangelization is at the heart of our lesson today on this final precept of the Church. While not contained on many lists of the "Precepts of the Church," we still have a responsibility to participate in the Church's mission of Evangelization. As

such, we begin our studies by examining the need for organized religion, the need for the Catholic Faith for salvation, and the errors of some non-Catholics. We bear a responsibility to bring about the conversion of souls.

Organized Religion

Many people live in the misguided opinion that organized religion is not necessary. They believe in the here and the now while rejecting the calling of God to live as a community of faith, in communion together. Those who think they can be "spiritual but not religious" are living in an illusion.

The entire purpose of the Catholic Church is to be the means of salvation for the entire world. The Church was created by Jesus Christ Himself (cf. Matthew 16:18) and founded on St. Peter, the first Pope. Fr. John Laux in "Catholic Apologetics Book IV" explains:

The work of Redemption consisted in the discharge of this threefold office (of Priest, Prophet, and King). On the eve of His departure from this world Christ delegated His powers to His Apostles: "All power is given to Me in heaven and on earth: going therefore, teach ye all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and behold I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world" (Matthew 28:18-20).

From this commission of Christ, it is evident that His followers form an organized society under the leadership and guidance of the Apostles and their successors, with the right to teach and to command on one side, and the duty to be taught and to obey on the others.

Everything is visible about His great institution: Baptism, which is necessary for membership, the other Sacraments which He commanded His followers to receive, the rulers and lawgivers whom the faithful must obey, the tribunal before which the faithful are judged and to which they have a right to appeal.

It is not possible to be spiritual and not religious. Jesus Christ, God-made man, instituted a visible, organized religion. It is not possible to follow Him without religion. And it is not possible to be pleasing to God in any other religion than the Catholic Religion.



St. Francis Xavier labored for the conversion of pagan souls

There is No Salvation Outside of the Catholic Church

The Church has always taught that **there is no salvation outside of the Church** (*Extra Ecclesiam nulla salus*). All

peoples are saved by being a part of the Catholic Church. Some may be saved at the moment of death where to our eyes they may appear to have died as a non-Catholic but through extraordinary graces and visions, they may have become a Catholic in those moments and thus been saved. But no one who dies outside of the Church with hatred for the Church can be saved.

Pope Innocent III: "There is but one universal Church of the faithful, outside which no one at all is saved." (Fourth Lateran Council, 1215.)

Pope Boniface VIII: "We declare, say, define, and pronounce that it is absolutely necessary for the salvation of every human creature to be subject to the Roman Pontiff." (Unam Sanctam, 1302.)

Pope Eugene IV: "The most Holy Roman Church firmly believes, professes and preaches that none of those existing outside the Catholic Church, not only pagans, but also Jews and heretics and schismatics, can have a share in life eternal; but that they will go into the eternal fire which was prepared for the devil and his angels, unless before death they are joined with Her; and that so important is the unity of this ecclesiastical body that only those remaining within this unity can profit by the sacraments of the Church unto salvation, and they alone can receive an eternal recompense for their fasts, their almsgivings, their other works of Christian piety and the duties of a Christian soldier. No one, let his almsgiving be as great as it may, no one, even if he pour out his blood for the Name of Christ, can be saved, unless he remain within the bosom and the unity of the Catholic Church." (*Cantate Domino*, 1441.)

Pope Pius IX: "It is to be held of faith that none can be saved outside the Apostolic Roman Church . . . but

nevertheless it is equally certain that those who are ignorant of the true religion, if that ignorance is invincible, will not be held guilty in the matter in the eyes of the Lord" (Solemn Allocution Singulari Quadam, December 9, 1854). "We all know that those who are invincibly ignorant of our religion and who nevertheless lead an honest and upright life, can, under the influence of divine light and divine grace, attain to eternal life; for God who knows and sees the mind, the heart, the thoughts, and the dispositions of every man, cannot in His infinite bounty and clemency permit any one to suffer eternal punishment who is not guilty through his own fault" (QUANTO CONFICIAMUR, August 10, 1863).

Now those documents all clearly state that the Church is the one means of salvation. So those that reject the Catholic Church, reject Jesus Christ. But those that have never heard the Gospel can still be saved.

Aren't Lutherans Basically the Same as Catholics?

One key figure in the Protestant Reformation was Martin Luther, a Catholic monk, who, led astray by private judgment, set himself against the Faith held for 1500 years. He decided that all Christians before him had been in error. Is it possible to believe that Jesus founded a Church to mislead the world, and then after 1500 years approved of over 500 contradictory church denominations founded by men? But, you may say, the Protestant Church is the Church of Christ, purified of error, and only this purified form dates from Luther. I answer that you must choose between Luther and Christ. Jesus said His Church would never teach error (John 14:26); Luther says it did teach error. If Luther is right, Christ is wrong; if Christ is right, Luther and all his followers are wrong.

Luther's chief errors are contained in the following propositions: (1) There is no supreme teaching power in the Church. (2) The temporal sovereign has supreme power in matters ecclesiastical. (3) There are no priests. (4) All that is to be believed is in the Bible. (5) Each one may interpret Holy Scripture as he likes. (6) Faith alone saves, good works are superfluous. (7) Man lost his free will by original sin. (8) There are no saints, no Christian sacrifice, no sacrament of confession, and no purgatory.

And after Luther, hundreds of various other denominations have formed all teaching a contradictory set of teachings. But they can not all be true. 1 + 1 does equal 2. If one group says that it is 3 and another believes it is 4, that does not make it true. Religion is no difference. It is not a matter of opinion. It is based on objective truths.

Will All Catholics Go to Heaven?

No! It is not enough to be a Catholic to get to Heaven. One has to be a good Catholic. "Many Catholics will be lost, because they are only nominal, not practical, Catholics, and because they reject some doctrines of the Catholic Church, especially such as oppose their inclinations and passions. Remember, he who rejects even one doctrine proposed to our Faith by the Church will certainly be lost (James 2:10), even though he should lead a good life." (From THE PULPIT ORATOR, Volume VI.)

Our Lord said, "He who believes shall be saved" (Mark 16:16)
~ But God said many other things as well:

"If you love me, keep my commandments" (John 14:15); and
"If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments" (Matt. 19:17).

"He that blasphemeth the name of the Lord, dying let him die" (Lev. 24:16).

"Keep you my Sabbath: for it is holy unto you. He that shall profane it, shall be put to death. Everyone that shall do any work on this day shall die" (Exodus 31:1-15).

"Know you not that the unjust shall not possess the kingdom of God? Do not err: neither idolaters, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor railers, nor extortioners, shall possess the kingdom of God" (1 Cor. 6:9-10).

"A thief is better than a man that is always lying: but both of them shall inherit destruction" (Ecclus. 20:27).

"Neither fornicators nor adulterers . . . shall possess the kingdom of God" (1 Cor. 6:9). "You have heard that it was said to the Ancients, 'Thou shalt not commit adultery.' But I say to you that anyone who so much as looks with lust at a woman has already committed adultery with her in his heart." (Matt. 5:27-28). "Keep thyself chaste" (1 Tim. 5:22). "Blessed are the clean of heart for they shall see God" (Matt. 5:8).

"There is not a more wicked thing than to love money, for such a one setteth even his own soul at stake."(Ecclus. 10:10).

"If anyone says that the commandments of God are, even for one that is justified and constituted in grace, impossible to observe, let him be anathema" (Council of Trent, Canon 18 on Justification). "If anyone says that a man who is justified and however perfect is not bound to observe the commandments of God and the Church, but only to believe, as though the Gospel were a bare and absolute promise of eternal life without the condition of obeying the

commandments, let him be anathema" (Council of Trent, Canon 20 on Justification).

Therefore, although it is true that Catholics alone profess the true faith "without which," as St. Paul assures us, "it is impossible to please God" (Heb. 11:6); nevertheless, as St. James concludes: "Faith, without good works, is dead" (James 1:22:27).

"Sometimes people say 'It is better to be a good Protestant than a bad Catholic.' That is not true. That would mean at bottom that one could be saved without the true Faith. No, a bad Catholic remains a child of the family - although a prodigal; and however great a sinner he may be, he still has the right to mercy. Through his faith, a bad Catholic is nearer to God than a Protestant is, for he is a member of the household, whereas the Protestant is not. And how hard it is to make him become one!" (St. Peter Julian Eymard, 1811-1868).



The Conversion of Guillaume d'Aquitaine by Bernard de Clairvaux

Conclusion

And so, armed with the knowledge of the necessity of the Catholic Faith for salvation and aware of our own responsibility to take up our crosses and spread the Gospel, let us start anew in our efforts to spread the Gospel of Christ to other souls.

Do you know of any Protestants? It's very likely that you do! It's important that we actively work to bring about the conversion of their souls, lest they be lost and damned for all eternity. To start you on the process of knowing the errors of protestants, please consider looking up these resources online from St. Paul's Street Evangelization and share them. Live out the Faith. Live out the Precepts.