



This Lent, we are calling Redemption Church to a 40 day fast. We'd love for everyone to participate together in the communal fasting days of Ash Wednesday (3/6) and Good Friday (4/19), but also to chose 1 additional day during Lent to fast. Using Sign Up Genius, we will fill the 38 days outside of the communal days with at least 1 person fasting.

The following information will give you a rationale for fasting as well as answer questions about fasting. If you have more questions, please contact Fr. Jason.

Why I Fast

by Fr. Jason

For many people fasting is a strange concept. Why would I intentionally starve myself? Why would I willingly give up the blessings that God has put into my life? What is the purpose? I can understand these concerns. I have not always practiced or understood fasting, but over the last decade this practice has become an important element of my spiritual growth.

First, from a purely biblical perspective, Jesus did it and assumed his disciples would do it. Jesus fasted forty days and forty nights. What some do not realize is that Jesus spoke of fasting as if it were a given for his disciples after he ascended into heaven. Consider Matthew 6:16 where Jesus says, "*When you fast*" Notice he does not say "if" you fast. He assumes they will. In Matthew 9:15 when Jesus is asked why his disciples do not fast, he explains the reason, but ends by saying they will fast once he is taken from them. Fasting was an expectation of a disciple of Christ. This should not surprise us. If we are followers of Christ, and he fasted, it would be natural for us to fast as well.

Second, fasting has practical benefits. Here are a few. It helps us focus on God. When you fast, every meal you forgo, every hunger pain you feel and every item of food you see that you desire, turns your thoughts to God. Not only that, but it builds time into your schedule at every meal time to pray and read the scriptures. It also helps us practice self-denial. When you fast, you are saying "no" to yourself. You are putting into practice what Jesus said in Matthew 16:24, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself" In fasting, we learn to tell ourselves "no" so that when we come to a time of sin, and we *need* to say "no" to ourselves, it is not a foreign concept. Finally, it helps us to see those things that have more control over our lives than we would like. It shows us how much material things really mean to us. I never realized how much I food or TV meant to me until I sought to give them up for a period. I do not want material things to have that kind of control over my life.

Fasting Q & A

There are many questions about fasting. Some of the questions arise because it is not a typical practice for many Americans and, thus, we have little experience with this discipline. Our culture is one that, by and large, eats often and eats a lot. In the Dallas area, there are restaurants everywhere, and many of these are packed on a regular basis. Fasting challenges this way of living. More importantly, it offers the opportunity to draw us closer to God and to open our lives to the amazing work of the Holy Spirit.

"What is fasting?"

To fast means to abstain from food and sometimes drink. This might mean giving up a single meal or abstaining from food for an entire day. I would encourage you not to give up water unless you are experienced in fasting and this is a regular discipline in your life. Even then, if you are planning to fast without water, you should consult your physician.

"What kind of fast are we doing as a church?"

I encourage everyone to try a 24-hour fast that gives up two main meals. For example: begin your fast Tuesday evening (1/1) following dinner. Continue fasting from all food until the following evening (1/2). Remember to drink water throughout the day.

"How do I break a fast?"

If you skip a single meal, just eat normally after that. If you participate with us in a 24-hour fast, let your first meal be a little smaller than normal, filled with fruits and vegetables, and avoid foods containing a lot of saturated fat (e.g. burgers, pizza, or cheesecake). Consider options like a fruit smoothie, a grilled chicken breast or whole grains to break the fast.

"How do I use my time when I am fasting?"

Typically, a person spends a minimum of one hour every day engaged in eating. When the act of eating is taken away, it provides the opportunity to devote oneself to prayer and reading the Scriptures.

"How do I do it in secret when the entire congregation is participating?"

When Jesus says we are to fast for our Father in secret, the point has more to do with not drawing attention to yourself. If you let everyone know how much you have been fasting and how hard it has been, but how you are being so faithful to God throughout, then that's drawing attention to yourself. Jesus says to act normally. Basically, act like you are not fasting.

In fact, it can be an encouragement for a husband and wife or a few friends to fast together. They can inspire one another throughout the day. They can look out for one another. That way, the wife won't cook a wonderful meal for the whole family that would tempt the fasting husband or vice versa. They can instead do the fast together.

"What if I am diabetic or have other health issues?"

You may want to consult your physician before attempting a fast. You may want to abstain from something else like television or the internet. For some, while you give up food, you may need to drink fruit juice or a smoothie during the day. Fasting should not be something that puts you at risk. A normal person can very safely fast, but if you have health problems, please be safe and wise about how you fast.