

**Catholic Candle note:** With Lent fast approaching, we are pleased to print an expanded version of an excellent article from a woman who has always been Traditional Catholic and who has been continually fighting liberalism since before Vatican II. We printed her original article in 2016.

## The Basics of the Church's Traditional Laws of Fast and Abstinence

In these days of shocking scandals in the conciliar church and creeping liberalism in the “new” SSPX, we sometimes forget one of the basic duties of a good Catholic: observing the Church's Rules of Fast and Abstinence. In the old days, our parish priests reminded us of them in a timely manner: four times a year (Ember Days approximately at the change of seasons) and Vigils of four Feast days.

However, it was not always easy to keep them clear in our minds. Thus, in the 1970s our (traditional Catholic) pastor put together and distributed a chart (included below, in a simplified form which more closely follows the 1917 code). It was a real plus for us traditional Catholic families. You may want to save this chart as well as copy it to give to others.

Having said that, it is worthwhile noting that the Church's obligatory laws of fast and abstinence have *always* required a bare minimum and not the recommended or ideal amount. We should do **much more** fasting and abstinence than what is required. “*Unless you do penance, you shall likewise perish.*” St. Luke, 13:5.

We are traditional Catholics and so we follow the “traditional rules” – not choosing the easier path as the conciliar church has. Further, we recommended that Catholics:

- Fast even after turning 59, if they can, to be more generous with Our Lord;
- Fast and abstain until Easter Sunday morning, rather than ending these Lenten observances at noon Holy Saturday; (the 1955 extension of fast and abstinence until midnight was historically connected with the 1955 changes in the Holy Week liturgy. The merits of those liturgical changes are a separate issue.)
- Have children begin to abstain from meat with the rest of the family, before the rules absolutely require it. This would send the right message to younger children (and not harm their health in the least). This shows them that a serious Catholic does not ask, “How little can I do?”

Two further points:

1. The traditional (pre-1983) rules required fasting beginning at 21 until turning 59, but the Church's fasting law is perhaps the only occasion when the new code is stronger (in a very narrow respect) – it requires fasting beginning at age 18 – although only on a (wimpy) two days per year. We need more fasting (and other penance), not less, and so it is a good thing we are **required** to begin fasting at 18. Because we recognize the validity of the pope who issued the law that fasting begins at 18 years old, we must obey that law because it does not oppose the Traditional Catholic Faith and morals.
2. Contrary to what the conciliar church does in practice, the new code of Canon Law (despite its countless flaws) **does** require abstinence on all Fridays. Although the 1983 Code of Canon Law – canon 1251 – does allow a national bishops' conference to substitute the penance of abstaining from a different food, we are not aware of any national conference of bishops which has done so.<sup>1</sup>

Indult groups like the “new” SSPX wrongly follow the soft conciliar practice of asserting that no abstinence is mandatory under pain of mortal sin, on most Fridays of the year. This soft practice ignores:

- a. the traditional law of the Church;

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<sup>1</sup> Further, promoting collective authority of the national conferences of “bishops” is a conciliar error and one of the countless evils of Vatican II (collegiality). This conciliar evil aims both to diminish the monarchical authority of the pope and to diminish the authority of individual “bishops” in their own dioceses.

Faithful and informed Catholics know that conciliar ordinations and consecrations are inherently doubtful and so must be *treated* as invalid. For an explanation why this is true, read these articles:

- <https://catholiccandle.neocities.org/faith/new-ordination-doubtful.html>
- <https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B49oPuI54eEGd2RRcTFSY29EYzg/view>
- <https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B49oPuI54eEGZVF5cmFvMGdZM0U/view>

Although there are inherent doubts concerning the “ordinations” and “consecrations” of conciliar “bishops”, this does not mean that those clergy do not possess the jurisdiction of their offices (for governing). For a full explanation of this principle, read this article: <https://catholiccandle.neocities.org/faith/against-sedevacantism.html#section-10>

- b. even the lax 1983 code of Canon Law they purport to follow; and
- c. the fact that the bishops' conferences have never specified any other food from which Catholics must abstain on Fridays instead of meat.

## Traditional Catholic Fast and Abstinence Recommendations

Based on the 1917 Code of Canon Law, §§1250-54, slightly revised to include later canonical requirements where they are *stricter*.

	<b>Abstinence: no meat or meat-sourced broth (binds persons who have turned 7 years old)</b>	<b>Fast: only one meal per day and two small meatless collations* (binds persons who have turned 18† and have not yet turned 59)</b>
<b>Fridays throughout the year (unless it is a holy day of obligation)</b>	✓	
<b>Ash Wednesday</b>	✓	✓
<b>Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays &amp; Thursdays between Ash Wednesday &amp; Easter</b>		✓
<b>Fridays &amp; Saturdays between Ash Wednesday and Easter‡</b>	✓	✓
<b>Ember Days</b>	✓	✓
<b>Day before Pentecost</b>	✓	✓
<b>October 31 (unless a Sunday)</b>	✓	✓
<b>December 7 (unless a Sunday)</b>	✓	✓
<b>December 24 (unless a Sunday)</b>	✓	✓

\* As a concession to human weakness, traditional rules allow two small meatless collations in addition to the meal. *The New Marian Missal*, by Silvester P. Juergens, S.M., Regina Press, NY, NY, 1961, p.11.

† The New Code of Canon Law (§1252) changes the 1917 Code by revising the beginning age from 21 to 18.

‡ Under the 1917 Code, fasting and abstaining ends at noon on Holy Saturday. Canon Law later extended this penance until mid-night. *Cf., New Marian Missal*, by Silvester P. Juergens, S.M., Regina Press, NY, NY, 1961, p.11.

## Appendix

**Catholic Candle note:** Above, is our recommendation for fasting and abstaining and the reasons for those recommendations. Below, is a historical analysis showing the weakening of the fasting/abstinence rules over the 1900s.

This weakening is important because fasting and abstaining is a strong defense against impurity and gluttony as well as all sins and heresies. The weakening in the Church’s fasting and abstaining laws grew much worse after Vatican II. But the weakening before Vatican II could have played some role in reducing Catholics’ readiness to resist the doctrinal and moral attacks beginning in the 1960s.

## How Catholic fasting law relaxed over the 1900s

	<u>Canons 1250-54</u> (1917)	<u>Dr Sylvester Juergens, The New Marian Missal for Daily Mass (ca. 1955)* (another source for same text)</u>	<u>Canons 97 §1, 1251-52</u> (1983)
<b>definition of abstinence</b>	no flesh or flesh-sourced broth	no flesh or flesh-sourced broth	no flesh
<b>definition of fasting</b>	one meal per day; one may take some additional food	one meal per day; one may take some additional food, so	undefined

	(aliquid cibi) at two other times in the day; the meal may not be in the morning		long as it is not flesh and does not add up to a second meal, at two other times in the day			
<b>how old one is when one must abstain</b>	7+		7+		14+	
<b>how old one is when one must fast</b>	21-58		21-58		18-58	
	<b>abstinence</b>	<b>fast</b>	<b>abstinence</b>	<b>fast</b>	<b>abstinence</b>	<b>fast</b>
<b>All Fridays</b>	✓		✓		✓	
<b>Ash Wednesday</b>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
<b>All days after Ash Wednesday and before Easter, except Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays</b>		✓		✓		
<b>Fridays between Ash Wednesday</b>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	

<b>and Easter, not including Good Friday</b>						
<b>Saturdays between Ash Wednesday and Easter, not including Holy Saturday</b>	✓	✓		✓		
<b>Good Friday</b>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
<b>Holy Saturday forenoon</b>	✓	✓	✓	✓		
<b>Holy Saturday afternoon</b>			✓	✓		
<b>Ember Fridays</b>	✓	✓	✓	✓		
<b>Ember Wednesdays and Saturdays</b>	✓	✓		✓		
<b>Eve of Whitsunday</b>	✓	✓		✓		

<b>August 14 (unless Sunday)</b>	✓	✓				
<b>October 31 (unless Sunday)</b>	✓	✓				
<b>December 7 (unless Sunday)</b>			✓	✓		
<b>December 24 (unless Sunday)</b>	✓	✓	✓	✓		

\* We would be grateful for a more authoritative source for tracking how the rules changed between the early 1950s and the early 1960s. It is hard to track Vatican legislation between codifications; some of it is online, but poorly organized and labeled even on the Vatican website. Dr. Juergens' book is difficult to date, because Pius XII's administration extended the Holy Saturday fast till midnight with the decree *Maxima Redemptionis nostrae mysteria* (16 Nov. 1955), but the administration had already abolished the Vigil of the Immaculate Conception, December 7, by the decree *Cum nostra hac aetate* (23 March 1955).