



Fast and Abstinence

A. Decree No. 8: Fast and Abstinence

In accordance with the prescriptions of Canon 1253, the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops hereby decrees that the days of fast and abstinence in Canada are Ash Wednesday and Good Friday.

Fridays are days of abstinence but Catholics may substitute special acts of charity or piety on this day.

This decree is effective immediately.

B. Commentary

Decree No. 8, approved by the Conference, October 23, 1984, was reviewed by the Apostolic See (letter of *Apostolic Nunciature*, Prot. No. 20506, March 8, 1985).

Canon 1249 reminds all Catholics of their obligation to do penance; this obligation comes from the divine law itself. However, to be joined in a common observance of penance, penitential days are prescribed in which the faithful in a special way pray, exercise works of piety and charity, and deny themselves by fulfilling their responsibilities more faithfully and especially by observing fast and abstinence from meat.

Ash Wednesday and Good Friday are days of fast and abstinence in Canada.

All persons who have completed their fourteenth year of age are bound by the law of abstinence. Those who have completed their eighteenth year of age are bound by the law of fasting up to the beginning of their sixtieth year.

Fridays are penitential days. However, instead of observing the universal law of abstinence from meat on Fridays, Catholics may substitute special acts of charity or piety on this day. The decree of the Episcopal Conference does not specify which particular acts of piety or charity are to be performed on Fridays; this is left to each Catholic to determine.

In virtue of Canons 87 and 88, the diocesan bishop may dispense from all or some of the specific provisions of this decree, if by so doing he would contribute to the spiritual well-being of the faithful.

Likewise, according to Canon 1245, the pastor in individual cases can dispense from the obligation to fast and abstain from meat on the appointed days or can commute the obligation to other pious works.