

**LENT:
IT JUST ISN'T THA' STUFF IN YOUR DRYER**

Lent begins on Ash Wednesday, February 17, 2010. We will have a 6:30 p.m. service with the Imposition of Ashes and Holy Communion as we begin this season of introspection and action. In the Ash Wednesday service we are invited to celebrate a holy Lent by fasting, prayer and Bible Study, and almsgiving. What do we mean by that?

When we hear the term fasting during Lent we normally have a couple of responses. One response is "I'm not going to do that. That isn't Protestant or Methodist." Well maybe it isn't Protestant but Jesus said, "When you fast . . ." So let's consider it a Christian practice since Jesus did not say *if* but *when*. He assumed his followers would fast. So okay, I'll fast. I'll give up Brussel Sprouts and Leeks. I don't like them anyway. When we give up something we don't care for anyway, it trivializes the idea of fasting. You don't have to fast from food. You can fast from anything that has an inordinate control on your life. For many of us that is food. Our stomachs rule us. The Early Church Fathers said when we learn to control our stomachs then we could learn to control the other things that rule our lives. With that philosophy, let me make a few suggestions to you on how to fast this Lenten season.

Level One (for people who have never fasted before)

Try taking one day (the traditional days are Wednesday and Friday) and do not eat any meat or chicken that day.

Level Two (just a little harder)

Try not eating animal products (yes, go vegan) on a Wednesday or Friday.

Level Three (the next step)

On Ash Wednesday and/or Good Friday abstain from eating until after church.

Eat no animal products on Wednesday and Fridays in Lent

Level Four

Abstain from food on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday

Eat no animal products during Lent

It does not matter if you are at Level One or Level Four, fasting of any type opens us up to our sinfulness and to God's grace. It is a struggle on any level to fast or abstain from eating. The goal is to use the extra money we aren't spending on food as alms, to give that money away. The extra time not spent cooking is to be spent in prayer, meditation, and/or devotional reading.

Doing this is keeping a holy Lent. Its rewards: an Easter like you have never experienced.

Blessings,

Greg