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**Fasting** - by Carl E Beyer

This will be my last teenage year of Lent. Those who know me are saying I did not think Carl was that young. Well I am; it will be twenty years ago this June that I was baptized.

During my first Lenten season I was introduced to fasting by my wife and I was amazed. In my young baptism age and my naïve country background I thought fasting was to go completely without food. My wife had informed me that a considerable number of Roman Catholics fasted during Lent. Just the thought of going without one meal sends shivers down my spine to my ever-increasing waistline. Upon being educated a little more about what fasting encompass in relation to Lent, I bought a book to better understanding fasting.

Let me remind those that had forgotten that fasting has been intertwined in this nation since its beginning. Tuesday, the 24th of May 1774, the Journal of the House of Burgesses of Virginia stated; *“This House, being deeply impressed with Apprehension of the great Dangers, to be derived to British America, from the hostile Invasion of the City of Boston, in our Sister Colony of Massachusetts Bay, whose Commerce and Harbour are, on the first Day of June next, to be stopped by an armed Force, deem it highly necessary that the said first Day of June be set apart, by the Members of this House, as a Day of Fasting, Humiliation, and Prayer, devoutly to implore the Divine Interposition, for averting heavy Calamity which threatens Destruction to our civil Rights, and the Evils of civil War; to give us one Heart and one Mind to oppose, by all just and proper Means, every injury to America Rights.....”*. Can you image our current President or any President of recent age asking for the people to have a Day of Fasting, Humiliation, and Prayer?

In biblical references to fasting this usually referred to either a 24-hour period of fasting or from sunrise to sunset. When Jesus went into the desert and fasted for forty days and forty nights, he was not eating one full meal and two optional small meals, not to be larger than the full meal of that day.

From the Merriam-Webster dictionary.

*Fast*

1. *To abstain from food : omit to take nourishment in whole or in part : go hungry*
2. *To practice abstinence from food voluntarily for a time as a religious exercise or duty <to counsel men to fast and pray>*
3. *To restrict one's diet by eating sparingly or by abstaining from certain foods <fast in Lent>*

We obviously think of the third definition of fast during the Lenten season. Not to abstain from food but to restrict one's diet and abstain from certain food. No less noble is the third definition of fasting than the first definition. What often is not understood about fasting is the reason to fast. To fast is not so God can look down upon us and smile because we are hungry. God is not looking for a bunch of skinny followers. No, the meaning goes back to the three actions mention previously; Fasting, Humiliation, and Prayer. Lent is the season to combine these three actions to grow closer to God.

Fasting is to remind us that our earthly needs can impede our prayer life. Fasting is a means of cleansing the body from the common bad items we put into our earthen shells.

Common items that people give up are items related to caffeine or sugar. In my case I will be combining these two by giving up my much beloved Pepsi. Fasting of certain items remind us that these items are not really needed in our life. We are able to survive without our coffee, sodas, candy, tobacco, alcohol, etc. While we need food to survive, we are able to survive on much less food than we Americans commonly eat. By fasting we tend to sharpen our minds to be able to have a better, clearer prayer life.

Humiliation has become a bad word. After all who want to be humiliated? But in a prayerful reference, it means to humble oneself. Many of us tend to like to stand on a soap box and instruct others on bettering themselves while being unable to see our own failings. Only by humbling, self humiliation, do we step back, step down and see our failings. Some failings we can work on, some we may just have to accept but acknowledge. My favorite failing is impatience. The trap of praying for patience is being sent more lessons to be patience in and it goes on and on. So, I accept that I am impatience. Are you done yet, are you ready, are you .... These are words I need to avoid so my patience doesn't have to be tested. Other failings can be worked on. Being judgmental is one I work on. Simple judgments such as wondering why that parent in front of me in Church is not teaching their kids reverence in Church. No, I need to be thankful that the parent and her kid are in Church. I step back and off my soap box and see the blessing that the parent and kids are at Church and Father can gently mention proper protocols to be followed.

Prayer is an easy one but easy in a number of ways; easy to get busy and forget to make time for...; easy to make repetitious and therefore meaningless; easy to make short; easy to remember when we need things; easy in hard times; easy during major events. What is not always easy is to remember how and what to pray for. If saying St. Michael's prayer gives strength to you and St. Michael to battle evil, then you fulfilled that prayer. If you forget the meaning and just say the words then it is not a prayer. If all your prayers center around yourself and what is in it for you, then again your prayers will not be fulfilling. Jesus said to pray for ones enemies. Prayers specific for one family and community members are great, but they should also be combined for all those in need. Generally, for us lay persons, it is recommended we pray morning and night. I find nights prayers easy and mornings difficult because I wake up and think of all the things I want to accomplish and forget the prayers. Nights are easy because I am winding down and give God thanks for the day.

In short, during Lenten season please try to fast. Fast not for the sole purpose of fasting but for the combination of Fasting, Humiliation and Prayer. Fasting cleanse the body. Fast to clean the mind. Fast as a sacrifice to our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Remember Matthew 6:16-18: *"When you fast, do not look somber as the hypocrites do, for they disfigure their faces to show men they are fasting. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full. But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, so that it will not be obvious to men that you are fasting, but only to your Father, who is unseen; and your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you."*

Go forth in the name of our Lord. May this be the best Lenten season ever for you and our

community. May God smile with your abundance of prayer sent his way. God Bless You.