

# A summary of the Bishops' Instruction on Fasting and Abstinence

*Note: The following advice is copied from the Kalendar produced by the Scottish Episcopal Church in 1991. It is not believed that these comments have been updated since then though many now will be surprised at the notion that no-one could realistically be expected to live without eating meat.*

## DEFINITIONS

**Fasting:** A reduction in the quantity of food and drink consumed during the day.

**Abstinence:** Abstaining from some particular kind of food – traditionally meat.

**Note.** The Bishops consider that changing circumstances and social habits necessitate adjustments from time to time in the practise of these disciplines. Present circumstances tend to make abstinence from meat unreal, but this ought not to mean that Fasting and Abstinence should cease to be practised.

## THE BISHOP'S RECOMMENDATIONS

- i. That Fasting be observed by partaking of only one solid meal in the day; other meals to be of a light character.
- ii. That Abstinence be observed by abstaining from some form of food or drink which is normally enjoyed. It is to be noted that for this purpose tobacco and sweets may be considered as forms of food.
- iii. Ash Wednesday and good Friday are to be regarded by members of the Church as of obligation; and as days of Fasting and Abstinence.
- iv. That other days ought to be observed in a spirit of voluntary devotion. These are:

### **Days of Fasting:**

The Vigils of Christmas, Easter, and Whitsun.

The Fridays in the four Ember Season.

One of the Rogation Days.

### **Days of Abstinence:**

All other Fridays throughout the year, except Christmas Day, Epiphany and the Fridays in the Octaves of Christmas, Easter and the Ascension of our Lord.

- v. The whole of Lent, except the Sundays, is a time for special self-denial, which should find expression in Prayer, Fasting and Almsgiving. We encourage all members of the Church to make their own rule of general self-discipline to be observed throughout this season. Such a rule would include additional time for prayer and Bible reading, greater frequency in receiving Holy Communion, and increased giving to the service of Christ by spending less on self.