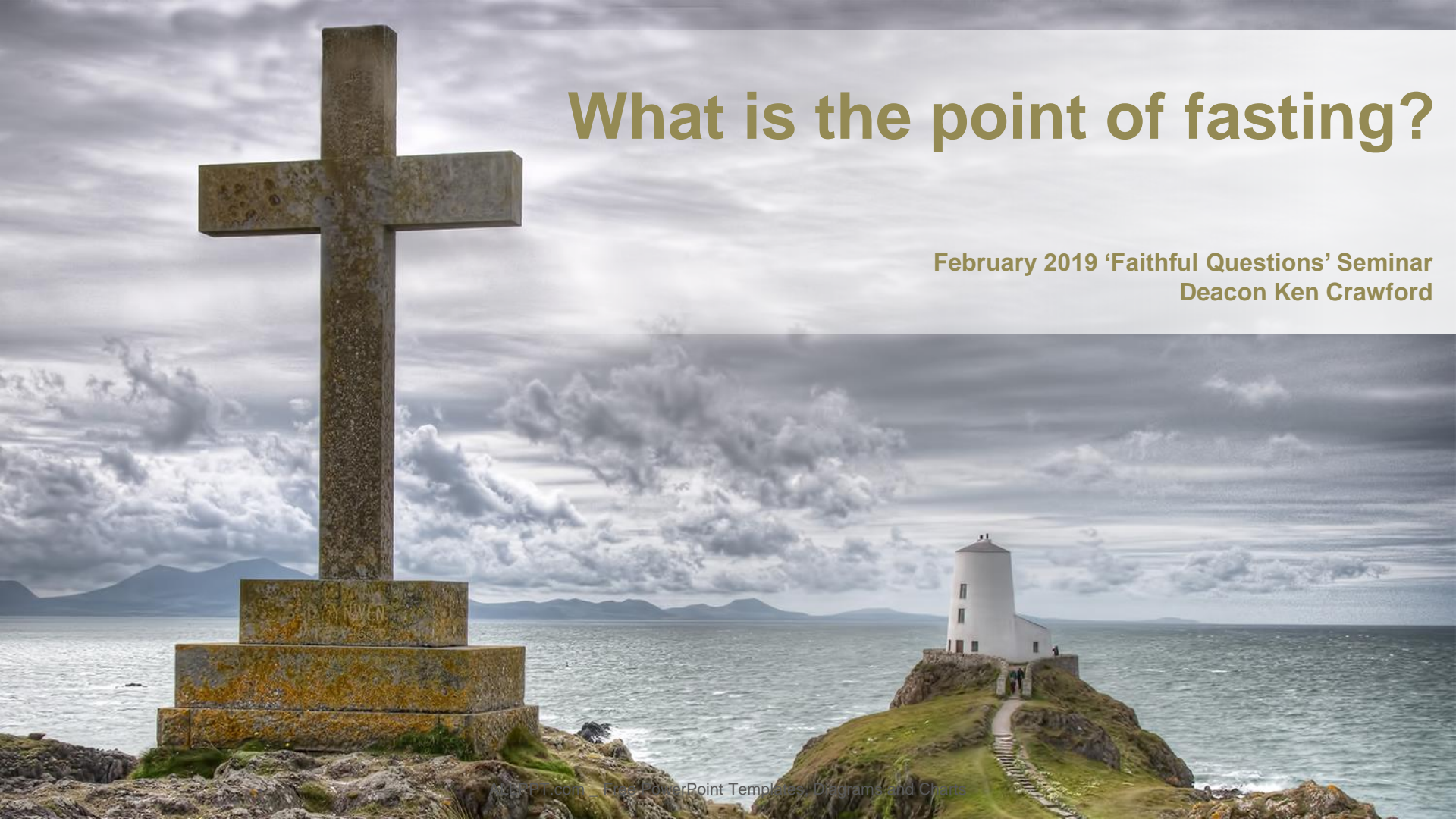


What is the point of fasting?

February 2019 'Faithful Questions' Seminar
Deacon Ken Crawford





NO!

(in the sense of self-denial)

Session overview

- Definition of fasting (general)
- Catechism reason
- USCCB: 7 reasons for fasting
- Value of Self Denial
- Adding something back
- 5 Precepts (Catechism)
- Requirements of Lent (USCCB)
- Deacon Ken's ideas for Lent
 - Prayer
 - Fasting
 - Almsgiving



Definition of fasting

- From dictionary.com
 - to abstain from all food.
 - to eat only sparingly or of certain kinds of food, especially as a religious observance.
- Also can be non-food related self-denial of material things



Catechism

- Penance!
- CCC 1434: The interior penance of the Christian can be expressed in many and various ways. Scripture and the Fathers insist above all on three forms, fasting, prayer, and almsgiving, which express conversion in relation to oneself, to God, and to others. Alongside the radical purification bought about by Baptism or martyrdom they cite as means of obtaining forgiveness of sins: efforts at reconciliation with one's neighbor, tears of repentance, concern for the salvation of one's neighbor, the intercession of the saints, and the practice of charity "which covers a multitude of sins."





Seven reasons for Fasting

1. From the beginning, God commanded some fasting, and sin entered into the world because Adam and Eve broke the fast.
2. For the Christian, fasting is ultimately about fasting from sin.
3. Fasting reveals our dependence on God and not the resources of this world.
4. Fasting is an ancient way of preparing for the Eucharist—the truest of foods.
5. Fasting is preparation for baptism (and all the sacraments)—for the reception of grace.
6. Fasting is a means of saving resources to give to the poor.
7. Fasting is a means of **self-discipline**, chastity, and the restraining of the appetites.

Source: <http://www.usccb.org/prayer-and-worship/liturgical-year/lent/catholic-reflection-on-lenten-fasting-father-daniel-merz.cfm>

Value of self denial

- “Exercises” important skills
 - Saying no to things
 - Fortitude
 - Humility
- These skills can liberate ourselves from addiction
 - Particularly pseudo addiction
- Share in Christ’s suffering
 - We believe there is value in suffering
- Heightens the contrast of feasting
- Creates a place for adding new positive things in our lives



Adding something back

- If self-denial is ‘giving something up’, we should also consider ‘adding something back’
- Fasting creates a “hole” in our life
- Hopefully that hole is where there used to be something that was NOT for our own good
- We should take that opportunity to fill that hole with something positive



5 precepts of the Church

- 2042 The first precept ("You shall attend Mass on Sundays and holy days of obligation.") ...
 - The second precept ("You shall confess your sins at least once a year.") ...
 - The third precept ("You shall humbly receive your Creator in Holy Communion at least during the Easter season.") ...
- 2043 The fourth precept ("You shall keep holy the holy days of obligation.") ...
 - The fifth precept ("You shall observe the prescribed days of fasting and abstinence.") ...
 - The faithful also have the duty of providing for the material needs of the Church, each according to his abilities.



Requirements of Lent (USCCB)

- **Ash Wednesday and Good Friday are obligatory days of fasting and abstinence** for Catholics. In addition, **Fridays during Lent are obligatory days of abstinence**.
- For members of the Latin Catholic Church, the norms on fasting are obligatory from age 18 until age 59. When fasting, a person is permitted to eat one full meal, as well as two smaller meals that together are not equal to a full meal. The norms concerning abstinence from meat are binding upon members of the Latin Catholic Church from age 14 onwards.
- Members of the Eastern Catholic Churches are to observe the particular law of their own sui iuris Church.
- If possible, the fast on Good Friday is continued until the Easter Vigil (on Holy Saturday night) as the "paschal fast" to honor the suffering and death of the Lord Jesus, and to prepare ourselves to share more fully and to celebrate more readily his Resurrection.

Source: <http://www.usccb.org/prayer-and-worship/liturgical-year/len/catholic-information-on-lenten-fast-and-abstinence.cfm>



Deacon Ken's ideas for Lent

- Come up with 2 actions for each of 3 themes of Lent
 - Prayer
 - Fasting
 - Almsgiving



Prayer Ideas

- Stations of the Cross... but some place new!
- Go somewhere unusual to pray (Cathedral, Monastery, Retreat Center, Mountain Top, etc.)
- Try a (re)new(ed) form of prayer (Taizé, Divine Office, Adoration, Examen, Lectio Divina, Daily Mass, Rosary, Divine Mercy Chaplet, Daily Reflection book, etc.)
- Watch religiously themed movies
- Read good Catholic books (perhaps by the saints)



“Fasting” Ideas

- Consider a full “36” hour fast
 - Nothing crosses your lips from going to sleep day 1 until waking day 3
- Consider fasting throughout Triduum
- Restrict your media consumption
- Go without music in the car
- Have a “silent” hour during the day (or a day a week!)
- Don’t go to stores on Sundays
- Walk or ride bike to places you often drive
- Don’t buy anything but necessities for some period
- Fast from alcohol or caffeine



Almsgiving Ideas

- Think Alms-doing!
- Create “lunchboxes” to keep in the car to give to poor people
- Go serve the poor (St. Vincent, Loaves and Fishes, St. Philomene's, etc.)
- Sign-up for Amazon Smile with CRS or similar
 - Other charitable pass-through giving opportunities
- Do the CRS rice-bowl and actually calculate your fasting food savings
- Investigate 5 new charities to consider donating to and then pray about which one(s) to give to this Lent/year



Next month

- 3rd Tuesday – March 19th
- 7:30 PM in the Morris Hall
 - As always
- Topic
 - Were the Jews responsible for the death of Jesus?
- Future month topics
 - April: What do eggs and bunnies have to do with the Resurrection?
 - Always looking for suggestions for more topics
 - Perhaps pre-submitted Q&A session for May?



Materials

- <http://deaconken.org>
- Slides available on blog
- Check <http://deaconken.org/blog>
- Audio/Video may be available at a later date.

