

Teacher Quick Guide Card



JANUARY HABIT



OBSERVE NO-FRILLS FRIDAYS



SKIP DESSERT OR A SECOND HELPING EVERY FRIDAY OF THE YEAR.



MAKE REGULAR PERIODS OF SILENCE EVERY FRIDAY OF THE YEAR.



EAT NO MEAT EVERY FRIDAY OF THE YEAR (BESIDES LENT).

The Background

A practice gradually emerged in the first centuries of the Church of Christians observing certain days and seasons of the year as times of penance for sins committed. Fasting (not eating) and abstaining (not eating certain foods) was one means of observing the penitential times.

Fasting and abstaining came to be seen as a powerful remedy for sinful tendencies and as a means to put our wayward appetites under the gentle control of our reason. This is what it means to grow in the virtue, or good habit, of temperance. Temperance is much like self-restraint and as we grow in temperance, we also grow in freedom and joy.

Regular fasting and abstaining was viewed as so important for discipleship and growing in holiness that the Church established a precept, or a commandment of the Church, that all Catholics are obligated to observe the set days and seasons of penance that occur throughout the year.

Most Catholics are familiar with the Season of Lent as a time of penance, with special emphasis on the Fridays of Lent as days of abstinence from meat. However, many are not aware that every Friday of the year is also, with few exceptions, a day of penance. Abstaining from meat on Fridays outside of Lent was made optional shortly after the Second Vatican Council, but the obligation to do some act of penance (if one did not give up meat) was retained and is still in force.

Fridays were one of the days the early Christians used to mark with a spirit of penance because it is the day of the Crucifixion of Jesus. To call to mind the offering of the flesh of Christ, Christians refrained from eating fleshy meat on Fridays. For various reasons, fish was not considered flesh meat. Meat was also, and still is for many, a luxury item such that consuming it was such a lavish act of celebration that it had no place on the day of the death of Christ.

Skipping desserts, sweets, second helpings, and meat is one way of observing the day of penance. Cultivating silence in our noisy world can also be a real sacrifice for many who find silence to be uncomfortable. If the ways of making a sacrifice listed above are not practical, other means of sacrifice are possible. The point is to freely go without something that we consider to be an "extra" out of love for Jesus.

Useful texts:

The "Adoramus te, Christe:"

"We Adore you O Christ and we praise you/ Because by your Holy Cross you have redeemed the world."

The entire Chaplet of Divine Mercy is a fitting prayer for Fridays.

Or, these phrases from the Chaplet prayers are fitting all on their own:

"Eternal Father, I offer you the Body and the Blood, Soul and Divinity, of your dearly beloved Son, in atonement for our sins, and for those of the whole world."

"For the sake of His sorrowful Passion, have mercy on us and on the whole world."

"Holy God, Holy Mighty One, Holy Immortal One: Have Mercy on Us and on the whole world."

Holy Habit Pledge:

"I pledge, together with my brothers and sisters in Christ, to make the Holy Habits Challenge, and to run so as to win the crown of righteousness."

A Saint for the Habit:

- **Saint Aloysius of Gonzaga:** A youthful saint who from early on in life chose to practice fasting out of love for Jesus.
Feast Day: June 21st

Classroom Tips:

- Incorporate the January Habit and Logo on a classroom board.
- Discourage sugary snacks and treats on Fridays in the school or classroom as much as possible.
- Talk about ways that students can make sacrifices on Friday other than with food.
- Incorporate silent times for prayer on Fridays, or, another day of the week if students do not meet on Fridays.
- Contrast the popular ideas of Fridays as the celebration day that begins the weekend against the Christian view of the day as sacred because of Christ's sacrifice.
- Incorporate language about practicing self-restraint into classroom rules for behavior.

Catechism Connection:

- See *Catechism of the Catholic Church* section 1809 on the virtue of Temperance.
- See *Catechism of the Catholic Church* section 2043 on the Fifth Precept of the Church, to observe days of penance.

