

on the MOVE

Lenten observances then & now

Story by Mike Latona • Photograph by Matthew Scott

For Jennifer Wurtz and Amy Gontarek, Lent represents a blend of custom and innovation.

The custom part stems from the way Jennifer and Amy's families have observed church laws. For as long as either Nazareth Academy junior can remember, they have abstained from meat each Friday of Lent.

"We also don't eat desserts (in our family) during Lent," added Jennifer, 16, a parishioner at St. Helen's Church in Gates.

Meanwhile, the innovation portion is reflected in a growing number of outreach efforts in which both youths are participating.

Traditionally, abstinence from meat is among the most common forms of Lenten sacrifice for Catholics of all ages — even though the Catholic Church's 1983 Revised Code of Canon Law states that nobody under the age of 14 is bound to observe Lenten fast and abstinence obligations.

According to Joan Workmaster, diocesan director of the Office of Liturgy, Amy and Jennifer are among

many teens who have practiced abstinence from meat during Lent for many years.

"The family is doing it. And what's the mother going to do, cook a separate meal?" Workmaster remarked.

Current Lenten regulations stipulate that teens between the ages of 14 and 17 abstain from meat on Ash Wednesday, Good Friday and all other Fridays of Lent. Upon turning 18, they are required also to fast on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday — meaning they should not eat meat or eat between meals on those days. In addition, they are still required to continue abstaining from meat on Fridays during Lent.

Workmaster added that Lent is traditionally a period to focus not only on fasting, but also on three other dimensions of self-sacrifice: prayer, penance and almsgiving (donations of money, food or clothing).

And since the Second Vatican Council of the 1960s, the church has emphasized conducting these practices in group settings, Workmaster explained.

Jennifer, for example, participates in Operation Rice Bowl, a fundraising drive held in Catholic parishes across the country during Lent. Seventy-five percent of the proceeds benefit



Amy Gontarek (left) and Jennie Wurtz (right).

Upcoming Supplements

MILESTONES

Publication Date: April 17 - Deadline: April 3

This third-annual supplement will honor the significant achievements of priests and religious celebrating jubilees of their vocations, and of those who are retiring from active ministry. It will provide biographical sketches of those in the diocese celebrating such milestones, and will focus on their lives as models for others considering vocations.

TRAVEL & PILGRIMAGES

Publication Date: May 15 - Deadline: May 1

As readers look ahead to summer plans, this supplement will tempt them with choice locations while serving as a planning guide for domestic and foreign journeys. In addition to offering tips for choosing sites and making arrangements, this supplement will highlight shrines and other religious sites of special interest to Catholic travelers.

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