



# Raquette Lake Chapel Sunday Blast February 25, 2024

*“Empty Ritual vs. Heartfelt Practice”*

*“Yet on the day of your fasting, your fasting ends in quarreling and strife,  
and in striking each other with wicked fists.  
You cannot fast as you do today and expect your voice to be heard on high.”  
(Isaiah 58:3-4 NIV)*



**Fasting is a traditional Lenten practice of abstaining from some food and drink** for a certain period of time and is practiced in some form by Christians from Ash Wednesday until Easter. Fasting can have various spiritual purposes, all of which carry the connotation of “giving up something for Lent”:

*developing spiritual strength, humility, and self-mastery from over-indulging; enhancing and increasing prayer; developing righteousness and avoiding sinful deeds.*

Yet, recently we can find many articles about fasting written from a secular perspective where fasting carries a different purpose. A recent scientific article I found discusses the historical evolution, medical applications, and potential health benefits of various fasting practices, emphasizing the need for medical supervision

and further research of the long-term impact on human health.

(<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC8838777/>, accessed 2-23-2024)

**Let’s not forget the Christian purpose of fasting!** In the Isaiah passage about fasting (*Isaiah 58:1-9*), the prophet delivers a powerful message to Judah. He criticizes them for their superficial ritualistic observances and urges them to genuine, heartfelt practice. We should fast with our hearts, not with our stomachs.

**“What we give up makes us who we are”** In a recent NYT opinion piece, Dr. Molly Wharton discusses how some Christians, particularly younger generations, are reinterpreting the traditional Lenten practices of reflection, repentance, and self-denial. Dr. Wharton presents an approach to Lent as self-care and self-respect, and suggests instead of the conventional fasting from food, she suggests practices like healthier eating and mindfulness of habits that contribute to health. She believes this type of “fasting” will help people suffering from a lack of self-worth to seeing themselves as made in God’s image.

(<https://www.nytimes.com/2024/02/17/opinion/lent-christinity-easter.html>, accessed 2/21/2024)

**A Final Comment:** “Fasting” and Lent in general is focused on self. But let’s not lose ourselves in ourselves and forget Isaiah’s admonition to care for others during Lent: *“Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen: to loose the chains of injustice and untie the cords of the yoke, to set the oppressed free and break every yoke? Is it not to share your food with the hungry and to provide the poor wanderer with shelter— when you see the naked, to clothe them...”* May it be so! Amen! – blessings, Vance

**Prayer Box:** pray for healing for Joanne, Debbie, Manuel, Joycelyn, Maggie, Vance; pray for Michael’s soul and his grieving family; all struggling couples; peace in Ukraine and the Middle East.

Lord, hear our prayers!