



# Keeping Watch

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In the ancient world the soldier who kept the night watch was said to be on station. He neither slept nor ate but kept his whole attention on looking out for friend or foe who might approach the gates of the city or camp. The church took over this vocabulary. Stational Liturgy, when the bishop presides at the Eucharist of the local church, is the fullest form of communal prayer for us. Its derivative form will take place in every parish where the pastor presides at the sacraments of initiation at the Easter Vigil. For centuries the candidates, the ministers, and the rest of the local church fasted together and saw their fasting as a necessary element of the celebration.

The original Lenten fast was that of Holy Saturday and through the night which opened onto Easter morning. To that was added the fast of Good Friday. The fast of this Holy Week was not so much an

acceptance of physical pain in order to know the suffering of Jesus. It is much more an entrance into a state of heightened awareness triggered by our hunger. The pain in the belly calls us to be on the lookout for the glorious coming of Christ into the lives of those whom God has called to join our number. For those who have observed the Lenten fast, as well as for those who have done little or no fasting, the closing days of this week call us all to stand and watch.

How faithful have I been to fasting this Lent?

How can I redouble my efforts in these last days?

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