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## Prayer and Spiritual Fasting for the Sake of Justice: An Introduction

*We ask that you consider entering into a commitment to pray and fast that our hearts will be changed and our current unjust immigration system will be transformed.*

Fasting and prayer are common to many faith traditions. Muslims abstain during the holy month of Ramadan. Jews often fast in observance of Yom Kippur. Members of the Bahá'í faith fast during the month of 'Ala.' Buddhists, Christians, and Hindus commonly combine fasting with prayer.

Our traditions offer multiple examples of faith leaders who fasted in the face of suffering, violence, or injustice. They fasted and prayed in the hope of breaking open their own hearts and touching the hearts of others. They denied their own needs to focus attention on the needs of those oppressed by systems in which they understood that they were too often complicit.

Fasting can be a profoundly transformative action for those engaged in the fast and for the larger community. Fasting, when coupled with prayer, turns our attention away from our own needs and toward God as it calls us into deeper solidarity with our suffering brothers and sisters. By taking on their suffering we help to expose injustice and communicate to the heart of our communities the urgent need for profound conversion and systemic change.

A spiritual fast involves abstaining from something in order to focus more fully on prayer and the community. This can mean refraining from snacks between meals, skipping one or two meals a day, abstaining only from certain foods, or a total fast from all food for an entire day or longer. It may also mean fasting from something other than food, for example from television or Facebook, or something else that distracts us from communion with God and with God's people. In truth, people of faith can fast from anything.

**Please Note:** Fasting, especially from food, should be limited to a determined length of time. Fasting for too long can cause harm to the body and the soul. Please seek medical and spiritual counsel before beginning a prolonged fast from food.