

**FROM CONQUEST TO COMMUNITY, FROM VIOLENCE TO REVERENCE,
AN INTERFAITH FAST TO END THE WAR IN IRAQ**

We call on all Americans to join in fasting from dawn to dusk on Monday, October 8, the day officially known as "Columbus Day," to call for an end to the Iraq War. On this day, people of faith in local communities across our nation will act as catalysts to transform the meaning of the day from one of conquest to community and from violence to reverence.

Why:

This war must end!

We must end the shattering of Iraqi and American lives by offering American generosity and support – but not control – for international and nongovernmental efforts to assist Iraqis in making peace and rebuilding their country, while swiftly and safely bringing home all American troops.

Just as Isaiah called the People Israel to hear the Yom Kippur fast as God's call to feed the hungry, just as Jesus fasted in the wilderness, just as Christians through Lenten fasting and Muslims through Ramadan fasting have focused on spiritual transformation, just as Mahatma Gandhi, Cesar Chavez and others drew on fasting to change the course of history, so we call on all our communities of faith to draw now on fasting as a path toward inner spiritual transformation and outward social transformation.

American culture, society, and policy are addicted to violence at home and overseas. The day we officially call "Columbus Day" is overlaid with a history of violence and conquest. In our time, the hope of a decent future is endangered by an unnecessary, morally abhorrent, and disastrous war.

Ending this war can become the first step toward a policy that embodies a deeper, broader sense of generosity and community at home and in the world.

Who:

Millions of faithful Americans in local communities across the nation who believe in changing the course of our nation's priorities from conquest to community and from violence to reverence.

This fall, in an unusual convergence, many of our faith traditions share a season of sacred self-assessment and self-transformation. This holy season includes the month of Ramadan and the Night of Power (Islam); the High Holy Days and Sukkot (Judaism); the Feast Day of Francis of Assisi and Worldwide Communion Sunday (Christianity), Pavarana / Sangha Day (Buddhism) and Mahatma Gandhi's birthday.

Since each of our traditions recognizes the power of fasting as a spiritual discipline, we call on all people of faith to join in a fast from dawn to dusk on Monday, October 8.

How:

Pre-Events:

- We invite individuals or small groups to begin the discipline by fasting one day a week, in the weeks prior to October 8.
- Sundown, Sunday, October 7: Gather in intentionally interfaith events across the United States to pray and to break bread together.

On Monday, October 8th

- Have a simple meal before dawn, committing to fast throughout the day as a sign of your commitment to move our core values from conquest to community and from violence to reverence.
- While fasting, many of us in cities as New York, Chicago, San Francisco and in local communities across the United States will take part in public vigils, inviting community leaders and elected officials and candidates for the presidency to join us as we commit to take immediate action to end the war. In Washington DC, religious leaders will gather to fast together and engage in a public action to draw attention to the nation-wide events that will take place that day.
- At sunset: We will eat together once again to break bread in public places as a sign of our commitment to work together for peace and an end to violence. This shared meal will be a sign of our covenant with one another – as individuals and as communities - to stand against the war in Iraq, and to work with one another to stand against violence in our communities and around the world. (Communities should be aware that for Muslims, later in the evening there will be large-scale gatherings for the Night of Power, commemorating the first revelation of the Quran. Shared break-fast meals should be scheduled so as to take account of these gatherings.)

Post Events -- A Season of Commitment:

- As a practice of our covenant, we encourage local communities to continue in regular fasting, praying and holding vigils for peace and to take specific actions through the election cycle to stand together against the war in Iraq and against all of the ways in which violence is destroying our communities.
- We encourage participants to continue to reach out to elected officials and candidates for congress and the presidency, inviting them to fast with us, break bread with us, pray with us, vigil with us, and publicly express their commitment to end this war.

- We encourage those who live in states in which primary elections are held to use that opportunity to engage with the presidential candidates in their public appearances about their commitment to end the war

The Invitation:

We, religious leaders from several traditions, invite you to join with millions of other Americans by organizing joint interfaith events in your local community on October 7 and 8th, for the breaking of bread, fasting, and breaking our fast together as we covenant together to live out the deepest calling in each of our traditions – the desire for justice and for peace for all people.

We offer these suggestions to communities that desire to deepen their witness:

- Following the gathering on Oct 7th evening, plan events such as Teach-Ins that may extend to all night events to pray, study nonviolence in our different faith traditions, study sacred texts together, and witness to our opposition to war and violence.
- Extend the fast to twenty-four hours – beginning with our interfaith meal together on Sunday evening, or for Christians, beginning on Sunday morning with the celebration of World Communion.
- Gather on Monday morning, October 8th, for an inspirational public event that will both highlight the issues and provide motivation as we begin the fast.
- Broaden our witness to insist that we stand against all use of torture, as well as to highlight our grave concerns about the growing violence on the streets of our cities and in mass shootings across the country, and about the way in which the media's obsession with grotesque acts of violence undercuts the most fundamental values of our faith.