

To Keep a True Lent

Robert Herrick (1591–1674)

Is this a fast, to keep
The larder¹ lean?
And clean
From fat of veals and sheep?

Is it to quit² the dish 5
Of flesh,³ yet still
To fill
The platter high with fish?

Is it to fast an hour, 10
Or ragg'd to go,
Or show
A downcast look and sour?

No; 'tis a fast to dole 15
Thy sheaf of wheat,
And meat,
Unto the hungry soul.

It is to fast from strife, 20
From old debate
And hate;
To circumcise thy life.

To show a heart grief-rent;
To starve thy sin,
Not bin;⁴
And that's to keep thy Lent.

¹ larder: pantry

² quit: empty

³ flesh: meat

⁴ bin: cupboards