

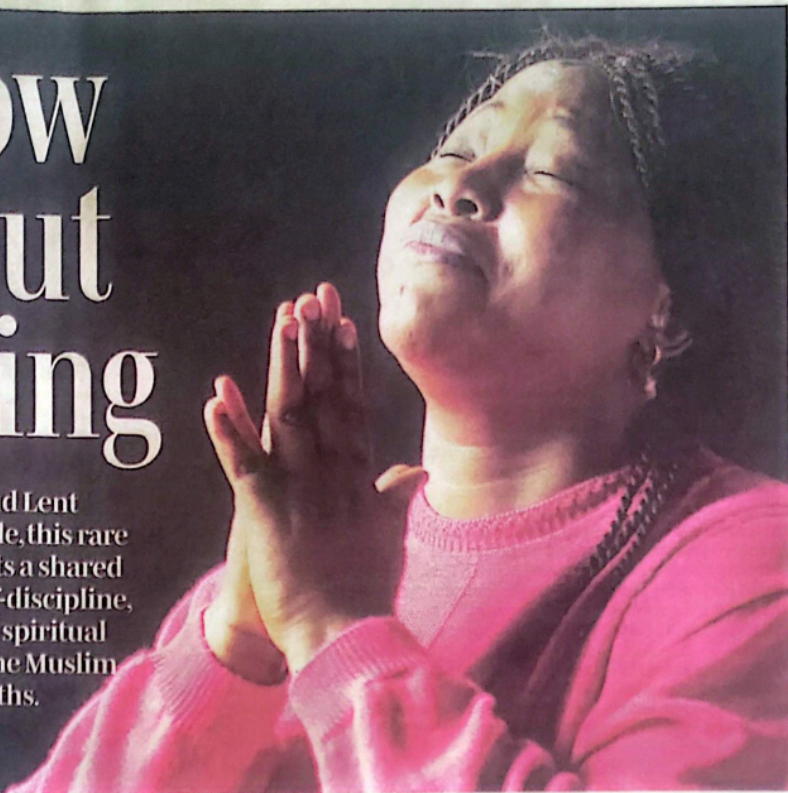
QUICK
FACTS

Two cents

Caution. It is advisable to avoid scheduling lunches or food-centred notes that if someone provokes or speaks rudely to a fasting person, "I am fasting," as a way of maintaining self-control, preventing director of Shariya at the Uganda Muslim Supreme Council (U

Know about fasting

As Ramadhan and Lent unfold side by side, this rare overlap highlights a shared call to prayer, self-discipline, compassion, and spiritual renewal across the Muslim and Christian faiths.



BY GEOFFREY OYET OKWERA

This year's fasting season presents a rare and beautiful spiritual moment, as both Muslims and Christians enter into prayer and fasting at the same time.

For Muslims, the holy month of Ramadhan is a period of dawn-to-sunset fasting, increased prayer, charity, and deep reflection. It is a time to strengthen one's relationship with Allah, cultivate discipline, and extend compassion to the less fortunate.

At the same time, Christians across the world are observing Lent, a solemn 40-day journey of prayer, fasting, and repentance in preparation for Easter. It is a season that calls believers to spiritual renewal, self-denial, and acts of love and charity.

The convergence of these two sacred seasons is more than a calendar coincidence; it is a powerful reminder of shared values such as faith, self-control, generosity, humility, and devotion to God.

The Rev Fr Francis Xavier Mayanja, Parish Priest under the Masaka Diocese, says this fasting season presents an opportune moment for Christians to recommit themselves to God through earnest prayer, aided by fasting in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

According to Fr Mayanja, during the Lenten period it is important to emphasise showing mercy under the auspices of unconditional love.

"Love supersedes all things because God demonstrated His love by giving us His only Son, Jesus Christ when we spiritually fell short of His glory by sinning, beginning with the disobedience of Adam and Eve who ate the forbidden fruit. In this season, therefore, Christians are encouraged to prioritise unconditional love," he says.

The Rev Fr Mayanja draws from biblical teaching that emphasises God's sacrificial love for humanity. According to Christian belief, humanity's fall ushered in sin, but God's redemptive plan through Jesus Christ restored hope and reconciliation through love.

He adds that acts of love should include the use of respectful language, even in online spaces and across social media platforms. Christians are advised to refrain from passing quick judgment on others and instead preach the Word of God and deepen their study of Scripture.

All Christians, he says, are called to practice endurance by sacrificially embracing the fasting season, for it nurtures a spirit of unity and oneness among believers. By denying themselves food and other comforts, Christians exercise obedience and discipline, an act that draws them closer to God and deepens their spiritual commitment.

Love above all

Fasting is not merely about abstaining from meals; it is about surrendering the flesh to strengthen the spirit. This sacred period invites believers to reflect, repent, and realign their lives with God's will.

Above all, love should transcend everything during this season. Jesus Christ embodied perfect love and brought that love to humanity. Christians are therefore encouraged to emulate Him at all times—walking in love, practising forgiveness, showing kindness, and extending grace to others. In doing so, the true meaning of the fasting season is fulfilled.

Meanwhile, Salim Bbosa, the director of Shariya at the Uganda Muslim Supreme Council (UMSC), explains that

QUICK NOTE.

Non-observers. Sheikh Bbosa advises non-Muslims and those who are not fasting to be considerate and respectful during Ramadhan. He encourages them to avoid eating or drinking in front of those who are fasting during daylight hours as a sign of courtesy and solidarity. Non-observers are also urged to be understanding if colleagues, friends, or employees appear tired or request flexible working arrangements due to the demands of fasting. Offering polite greetings such as "Ramadan Mubarak" (Blessed Ramadan) is appreciated, as it reflects goodwill and respect.

during Ramadhan Muslims fast from dawn until sunset, abstaining from food, drink, smoking, and intimate relations.

He notes that the fast is meant to strengthen believers' connection with Allah, cultivate self-control and discipline, and deepen empathy for those who are less fortunate.

Sheikh Bbosa explains that during this Islamic fasting period, Muslims are called to observe clear spiritual guidelines. They should devote more time to prayer—including the special nightly prayers known as *Taraweeh*—and read the Quran frequently, as Ramadhan is a period of heightened reflection and devotion.

High ethics

As a minimum requirement, observers must refrain from eating and drinking, including water, between dawn (*Fajr*) and sunset (*Maghrib*).

Since Ramadhan calls for high ethical standards, Sheikh Bbosa says Muslims should avoid lying, swearing, arguing, gossip, anger, and fighting. It is a time to practise patience, kindness, and generosity, coupled with giving to those in need through *Zakat*, alongside additional acts of charity such as feeding the hungry and assisting the elderly.

Believers are also urged to maintain constant awareness of Allah and treat Ramadhan as a time for spiritual purification and self-discipline. Muslims observe the pre-dawn meal (*Suhoor*) and break their fast at sunset (*Iftar*), traditionally beginning with dates.