

Practical Tips for Lent

- 1. Pray more:** Christ spent 40 days in the desert to pray, to unite himself more intensely with His Father...Lent should be a time to re-ignite our love for Christ and this will only happen if he is on our daily calendar! What keeps you from spending time with Jesus? What is it? Whatever it is; even if it means giving up some of your time at the gym or tennis, do it for your relationship with the Lord. "Time spent in front of the Eucharist is always time well spent." (Pope John Paul II)
- 2. Spiritual fasting:** Starve your pride, starve your vanity or starve your laziness!
 - Choose one person in your family or your circle of friends who is a little more difficult and try to really be kind and patient to that person.
 - Try to put others at the center of attention in your conversations and talk about the topics that they enjoy.
 - Gossip less, praise others more.
 - Humble service without looking for recognition, praise or esteem.
- 3. Material Fasting:** try to offer this one up for a particular person who is in need of God's grace.
 - Something tangible that is both realistic and addresses an excessive attachment or dependency: alcohol, desserts, etc.
 - Unnecessary television shows that may be a distraction.
 - Limit spending on superfluous items - to buy only what you need and not what you want.
 - Give up some free time to perform a work of mercy as a family: visiting a nursing home, a homeless shelter, food bank, etc.
- 4. Purity of Intention:** "The Gospel highlights a typical feature of Christian almsgiving: it must be hidden: "Do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing," Jesus asserts, "so that your alms may be done in secret" (Mt 6,3-4). Just a short while before, He said not to boast of one's own good works so as not to risk being deprived of the heavenly reward (cf. Mt 6,1-2). The disciple is to be concerned with God's greater glory. Jesus warns: "In this way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven" (Mt 5,16). Everything, then, must be done for God's glory and not our own. This understanding, dear brothers and sisters, must accompany every gesture of help to our neighbor, avoiding that it becomes a means to make ourselves the center of attention. If, in accomplishing a good deed, we do not have as our goal God's glory and the real well being of our brothers and sisters, looking rather for a return of personal interest or simply of applause, we place ourselves outside of the Gospel vision...for this reason, the one, who knows that God "sees in secret" and in secret will reward, does not seek human recognition for works of mercy. (Pope Benedict XVI, Lenten Message, 2008)
- 5. Help support your family members and friends in their endeavors for Lent!**