



114 Practical Fasting Ideas for Lent

I found this list by Deacon Nik a few weeks ago. I asked my staff to go through and what other ideas they may have about “fasting” for Lent. I know we associate fasting with food, but there is a myriad of ways to fast. If you have other ideas, send them to us. Your particular way of “fasting” may be just the medicine another needs.

Fasting, praying and almsgiving are the three penitential practices that we are asked to engage in during Lent. In addition to fasting and abstaining with the rest of the Church on Ash Wednesday and the Fridays of Lent, we are also challenged to make individual sacrifices appropriate to our own spiritual condition. However, before we choose something to give up for Lent, it’s important to assess our current spiritual state:

- What habits do I engage in that are destructive to my spiritual health?
- To what material things am I too attached?
- What areas in my life are unbalanced?
- To what do I devote too much or not enough time?

Only after asking questions like these are we ready to decide what to give up or what to add to our lives during Lent. The following list is meant to be an aid in this process. Use it as you need based on your current circumstances.

“Through fasting and praying, we allow Him to come and satisfy the deepest hunger that we experience in the depths of our being: the hunger and thirst for God.”

–Pope Benedict, Lenten message, 2009

1-10: The Usuals:

1. Give up candy/sweets.
2. Give up television time.
3. Give up eating snacks between meals.
4. Give up or limit soda or coffee.
5. Give up or limit video games.
6. Spend more time with family.
7. Give to the poor
8. Do an extra chore each day.
9. Perform a random act of kindness daily
10. Spend more time in prayer.

11-24: Prayer

1. Commit to a daily five-minute prayer time
2. Pray a book of scripture using lectio Divina
3. Attend Mass on a weekday (every day if possible).
4. Pray the rosary each day, alone (driving home from work) or with your family.
5. Prayerfully read [Abandonment to Divine Providence](#).
6. Make a special prayer notebook and list all the people in your life who need prayers; pray for them each day. Add someone new every day.
7. Read *Time for God* by Jacques Phillippe
8. Learn to pray the [Liturgy of the Hours](#).
9. Make a commitment to attend [Eucharistic Adoration](#) regularly.
10. Commit to [examining your conscience](#) each evening.
11. Pray the [Jesus Prayer](#) throughout the day.
12. Pray the [Angelus](#) each day at noon.
13. Start a prayer journal
14. Read from the Bible daily and reflect on your reading each day.

25-34: For Those Addicted to Popular Culture

1. Switch from regular radio to Christian music radio or Catholic talk radio/TV.
2. Avoid shows with gratuitous sex or violence.
3. Give up or limit watching sports on television.
4. Listen to only classical music for the next 40 days.
5. Drive to work in silence each day.
6. Read a work of [classic literature](#).
7. Read a [Catholic classic](#).
8. Read a story to a child.
9. Sit in fifteen minutes of silence each day.
10. Write a letter to God each day.

35-45: For Tech Users

1. Set time limits on overall online time.
2. Limit social media time.
3. Limit Smartphone time.
4. Eliminate all gossip on any social media.
5. Share one spiritual video with your online network once a week.
6. Subscribe to a Catholic webs site such as, *Catholic Answers* or *Catholic Culture*
7. Add a spiritual blog to your blog reader.
8. Subscribe to a prayer podcast like [Pray As You Go](#).
9. Listen to a Catholic podcast daily such as *Word on Fire*
10. Download the *Formed* app and grow by exploring its content [our parish code is 5c247]
11. Limit Netflix and other media movie sites to once a week.

46-56: For Those Who Need to Be More Grateful

1. Each week, write a letter of thanks to a different member of the clergy, beginning with your bishop and parish priest.
2. Each week write a thank-you note to your parents.
3. Write a poem of praise for each person in your family.
4. Get a stack of sticky-notes and write one sentence of thanks each day and stick it to the bedroom door of each person in your family so that by Easter they each have 40 sticky-notes.
5. Find the psalms of thanksgiving or praise in the Bible and pray them.
6. Write a list of the ways God has blessed you and add to it each day. This could be done in a notebook or on a big poster hanging on your wall.
7. At dinner each evening, ask your family to share one thing for which they are grateful.
8. Make a playlist of praise and worship music and listen to it each day.
9. Make a point of saying "Thank You" a certain number of times per day.
10. Help your children write thank you letters to their teachers.
11. Once a week sleep on the floor while remembering those who have no bed.

57-69: For Those With Lives Out of Balance

1. Go for a walk each day with a loved one and talk about life and faith.
2. Take the kids to the park each week for some carefree time.
3. Give up eating out and give the money charity.
4. Exercise each day.
5. Call your parents or children if you cannot visit in person at least once a week.
6. Spend at least half an hour each day in meaningful conversation with your spouse.
7. Go on a Lenten retreat.
8. Re-evaluate your commitments.
9. Prayerfully consider simplifying your life (follow-up from #9).
10. Pray with [Sacred Space](#) each day.
11. Commit to a daily [3 Minute Retreat](#).
12. Begin the online [34-week Retreat for Everyday Life](#).
13. Give up your most unhealthy habit.

70-79: For Those Who Need Spiritual Nourishment

1. Read the documents of Vatican II, especially [Gaudium et Spes](#).
2. Read [The Catechism of the Catholic Church](#)
3. Sign up for adult formation classes at a local parish.
4. Join a Bible study.
5. Attend Stations of the Cross at a your parish.
6. Find a spiritual director.
7. Read [The Imitation of Christ](#).
8. Visit a Catholic Book Store in town or on-line and find a prayer you will use.
9. Read [Introduction to the Devout Life](#).

10. Read a spiritual autobiography (i.e., Augustine's [*Confessions*](#), [*Story of a Soul*](#), [*Journal of a Soul*](#), [*Witness to Hope*](#))

80-91: For Those Who Need to Increase Their Service to the Needy

1. Volunteer at a soup kitchen or other food program.
2. Coordinate a food drive at your parish, school or place of employment.
3. Find out who in your parish is sick and offer to visit them or bring them food.
4. Call your local [Catholic Charities](#) office and volunteer.
5. Begin making visits to a nursing home.
6. Visit a retired priest or religious.
7. Help an elderly or disabled person in your neighborhood with yard work or other difficult chores.
8. Become a hospital volunteer.
9. Become part of a prison ministry team.
10. Coordinate a clothing drive.
11. [Make rosaries and give them away.](#)
12. Carry a small bag with water, energy bar, small toiletries to give to the poor who solicit at the traffic lights.

92-103: For Those Who Need to Be More Active in Their Parish

1. Become a lector.
2. Volunteer to become an Extraordinary Minister of the Eucharist
3. Commit to a regular hour of adoration (especially late night or the very early hours)
4. Volunteer to help with the parish youth group.
5. After Mass go to coffee and donuts and introduce yourself to someone you don't know.
6. Join the [Knights of Columbus](#).
7. Offer to be a Confirmation sponsor for youth and in RCIA.
8. Volunteer to be an usher.
9. Offer to help with funeral dinners.
10. Help with the RCIA program.
11. Join one of the parish ministry teams – ACTS, Teams of our Lady, Compassion Ministry, CCE Teacher or Helper
12. Volunteer to do lawn work, cleaning or other needed maintenance for the parish.

104-114 Potpourri

1. Begin to receive the Sacrament of Penance weekly at least bi-monthly.
2. Give up foul language.
3. Give up gossiping.
4. Read and study [Healing the Culture](#).

5. Study the life of a different saint each day.
6. Cook dinner each night for your family if someone else normally does.
7. Pray the [Chaplet of Divine Mercy](#).
8. Carry extra food in your car, purse or backpack to give to street corner beggars.
9. Begin practicing [socially conscious investing](#).
10. Spend a week meditating on each of the [seven principles of Catholic social teaching](#).
11. Make breakfast each morning for your family.

Conclusion

Lent is a tremendous opportunity for spiritual growth. I hope these suggestions re-energize you on your spiritual journey. If you try one or more of these ideas, or if you'd like to share your own Lenten practices, please leave a comment