

MAKING LENT COUNT!

Forty Days Really Count! How are there forty days to Lent? If Ash Wednesday is day one, and you skip Sundays, then Holy Saturday is the fortieth day of Lent. Try this on your calendar, but you will miss the whole point about counting in regard to Lent. It is not how you count the forty days of Lent that is important. What really matters is how you make Lent count, that is, how you use it to make a difference in your life. This paper is all about making Lent count. So, let us count the ways together!

Lenten Penance. Everyone who has made their First Communion should do some form of Lenten Penance. These penances should be adapted for work-related, medical, and personal issues. You are really never too old to not need to do some form of Lenten Penance. All Lenten Penance should be done in a spirit of prayer, charity, and sacrifice. Use Lent as a time for spiritual spring cleaning and personal renewal of your faith.

Lenten Fasting. On Ash Wednesday and Good Friday, try to go hungry as much as you can. Taking into consideration your health and work needs, test your limits in this regard. For some people, just skipping snacks between meals is a big deal. Don't just do your best. Do more! Or eat foods that you don't like but are actually good for you. Develop and increase your will power through prayerful fasting, especially during Lent.

Lenten Abstinence. On Ash Wednesday and all the Fridays during Lent, give up meat as a special form of fasting. Go vegetarian for a day or eat foods that you do not like. Go further by abstaining from other things besides meat in a spirit of Lenten penance and self-mastery in the ways of Christ. When we empty ourselves through fast and abstinence, especially during Lent, we open our hearts to being filled with the Spirit of Christ!

Lenten Prayer. Consider coming to morning Mass on weekdays during Lent. Develop or deepen a prayer habit during Lent: find a time, find a place, and find a prayer! For example, try the Stations of the Cross, Lectio Divina, the Rosary, Adoration, and Spiritual Reading. Then continue these devotions even after Lent for a more balanced spiritual life. Reconnect with Christ through deeper prayer this Lent and keep it going after Easter!

Lenten Charity. Don't just give up something for Lent – give it up for good, and then let Lent be the transition point to your better self. Volunteer for some charitable organization during Lent and continue volunteering even after Lent. Support the spiritual, educational, and charitable programs of your parish community. Participate in parish charity drives throughout the year, but especially during Lent.

Lenten Confession. Last, but not least, come to Confession during Lent! Discern your predominant fault, and then work on its corresponding virtue, both during Lent and beyond. Do some spiritual spring cleaning in your life, and then fill your heart and mind with everything that is true, good, and beautiful in life because of our faith in Jesus Christ. Let Lent be a great spiritual reset for your faith life and complete it with your special Easter Communion!

THE FOUR SPIRITUAL LAWS FOR CATHOLIC CHRISTIANS

The message of salvation involves four points that we can take to heart: Purpose, Problem, Provision, and Pathway. As part of our ongoing conversion of life, review this core message often.

God's Purpose: God created us to be good, with the purpose of sharing his love and his happiness with us forever.

Our Problem: We rejected God's plan through sin, and thus we lost our way both in this world and in the life to come.

God's Provision: God provided a sacrifice for the forgiveness of our sins through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Our Pathway: We are on the way to heaven when we personally commit our lives to Jesus Christ in the community of his Church.

Once you understand and embrace this basic message of salvation, you can faithfully commit your whole life to Jesus Christ, using these or similar heartfelt words of prayer:

**Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner.
Fill me with your Spirit, so that I may live a new life.
Help me to know you, to love you, and to serve you in this world,
so that I may be happy with you both now and for all eternity.
Thank you, Lord. Amen.**

Thank you for sincerely reciting this powerful prayer. Your new life in Christ has begun. Now, please go to Confession and Communion to seal your commitment to Christ as your God. Please know that your parish community is here to support you in your spiritual journey with Christ!

SOME ONLINE SPIRITUAL RESOURCES FOR LENT

The Abbot's Daily from St. Procopius Abbey: Procopius.org (scroll down for subscriptions)

Daily Mass Readings from the American Bishops: bible.usccb.org/daily-bible-reading#subscribe

Daily Gospel Reflections from My Catholic Life: mycatholic.life/email-subscription/

Daily Meditations from Dynamic Catholic: dynamiccatholic.com/daily-reflections.html

Daily Meditations from the Society of Jesus: loyolapress.com/general/newsletters/

Spiritual Message of the Day from Opus Dei: opusdei.org (scroll down for subscriptions)

Daily Meditations from the Legionnaires of Christ: regnumchristi.org/en/daily-meditation/

Daily Meditations from The Catholic Digest: catholicdigest.com/email-subscription/

CatholicsComeHome.org | Catholic.com | ChristLife.org | Renewal Ministries.net

WordonFire.org | Formed.org | HeartOfTheFather.com | ForYourMarriage.org