

KISS and the 1-1-1 Plan

Here's a helpful acronym to help you stay focused during Lent:

Keep • It • Simple • Sinner

The best Lent is one in which we enter the season wholeheartedly. All too often, people either take on too much or don't take on enough. The solution is to simplify our disciplines, focus our intentions and

concentrate more clearly on our spiritual goals.

To keep it simple this Lent, try the "1-1-1 Plan": one sin, one add-in, one give-up. Concentrate or focus on one sin or fault that is getting in the way of your relationship with God and with others. Add one positive activity that will deepen your prayer and spiritual life (especially if you think you are too busy to put anything more into an impossibly busy schedule!). Deny yourself something you really like or are attached to.



Shutterstock

One add-in

The next step in 1-1-1 Lent is to add one thing of God to your routine that you haven't been doing. Because we are all so busy, it's a good idea to not just pick an add-in, but to schedule a regular time when you put it on your calendar so you don't "forget."

Ideas for add-ins are pretty much endless, but some include:

- ▶ Go to Mass in the middle of the week
- ▶ Attend the Stations of the Cross as a family
- ▶ Read a Gospel
- ▶ Volunteer at a social ministry
- ▶ Get up early to pray

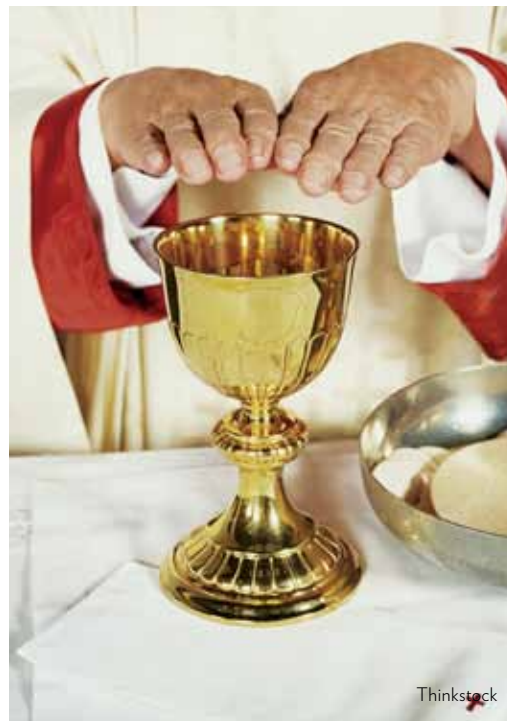


Thinkstock

One give up

Giving up something for Lent has been part of the Church almost since the beginning. While giving up sweets and alcohol are time-honored, consider giving up one thing that you really like or enjoy. Just make sure it is something that lets you feel the deprivation and is at least a little bit challenging. Make it difficult but doable.

- ▶ Fast from fault finding and nagging, and fast from a critical tongue or a closed mind.
- ▶ Give up impulse purchases.
- ▶ Give up an unhealthy habit, like smoking.
- ▶ Limit the time you watch television or surf the Web.
- ▶ Give up fast food and donate the money you save.



Thinkstock

One sin

Most of us, if we are honest, know at least one area of sin to focus on during Lent. If you aren't sure, or are having trouble narrowing it down, use the traditional seven deadly sins as a guide (at right). (Contrary to what one may gather from all the emphasis on sex these days, there are six deadly sins besides lust!) In fact, some of the other deadly sins are even deadlier, especially pride, or self-love, which St. Thomas Aquinas called, "the cause of every sin."

If you need help in identifying which sin to concentrate on this year, ask God in prayer to reveal it to you. If you still aren't sure, ask your family or close friends. Just be sure you are willing to listen to them and accept their assessment.



SCRIPTURE

"[But] take care not to perform righteous deeds in order that people may see them; otherwise, you will have no recompense from your heavenly Father. When you give alms, do not blow a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets to win the praise of others. Amen, I say to you, they have received their reward. But when you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right is doing, so that your almsgiving may be secret. And your Father who sees in secret will repay you."

— Matthew 6:1-4

"Lent is like a long 'retreat' during which we can turn back into ourselves and listen to the voice of God, in order to defeat the temptations of the Evil One. It is a period of spiritual 'combat' which we must experience alongside Jesus, not with pride and presumption, but using the arms of faith: prayer, listening to the word of God, and penance. In this way we will be able to celebrate Easter in truth, ready to renew the promises of our baptism."

— Pope Benedict XVI



The 7 Deadly Sins

The Catechism of the Catholic Church also refers to these sins as "capital sins" and explains why they are the most dangerous. "Vices can be classified according to the virtues they oppose, or also be linked to capital sins which Christian experience has distinguished, following St. John Cassian and St. Gregory the Great. They are called "capital" because they engender other sins, other vices. They are pride, avarice [greed], envy, wrath, lust, gluttony and sloth" (No. 1866).



1. PRIDE: an excessive love of self or the desire to be better or more important than others.

"Respect for the human person proceeds by way of respect for the principle that 'everyone should look upon his neighbor (without exception) as 'another self,' above all bearing in mind his life and the means necessary for living it with dignity'" (No. 1931).



2. LUST: an intense desire, usually for sexual pleasure, but also for money, power or fame.

"The God of promises always warned man against seduction by what from the beginning has seemed 'good for food ... a delight to the eyes ... to be desired to make one wise'" (No. 2541).



3. GLUTTONY: overconsumption, usually of food or drink.

"The virtue of temperance disposes us to avoid every kind of excess: the abuse of food, alcohol, tobacco or medicine" (No. 2290).



4. GREED: the desire for and love of possessions.

"Sin ... is a failure in genuine love for God and neighbor caused by a perverse attachment to certain goods" (No. 1849).



5. SLOTH (OR ACEDIA): physical laziness, also disinterest in spiritual matters or neglecting spiritual growth.

"Acedia or spiritual sloth goes so far as to refuse the joy that comes from God and to be repelled by divine goodness" (No. 2094).



6. ANGER OR WRATH: uncontrolled feelings of hatred or rage.

"Anger is a desire for revenge ... The Lord says, 'Everyone who is angry with his brother shall be liable to judgment'" (No. 2302).



7. ENVY: sadness or desire for the possessions, happiness, talents or abilities of another

"Envy can lead to the worst crimes. 'Through the devil's envy death entered the world'" (No. 2553).

THE BIG THREE

We aren't just spiritual beings. We are also physical entities and the way to the soul is through the body. That's why Lenten discipline has historically centered on the "big three" of fasting, almsgiving and prayer.



Fasting is not just a spiritual diet. By denying our bodies, our physical hunger reminds us of the hunger of our souls for God, our longing for a deeper relationship with our Lord.

Almsgiving teaches us to separate ourselves from material possessions. By freely giving of our money and possessions, we learn to trust the Lord more deeply for our own daily needs.

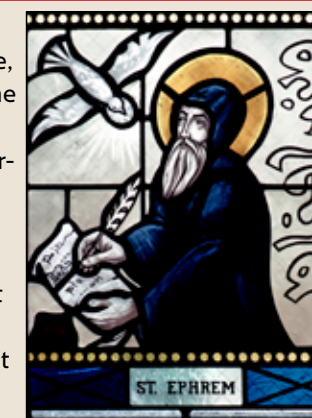
Finally, an emphasis on **prayer** during Lent is a way to stir up our love and ardor by having a deepening conversation with the Almighty. Remember that the light of God's love shines more brightly in the darkness of the recognition of our own sinfulness.

THE LENTEN PRAYER OF ST. EPHREM THE SYRIAN

O Lord and Master of my life, keep from me the spirit of indifference and discouragement, lust of power and idle chatter.

Instead, grant to me, Your servant, the spirit of wholeness of being, humble-mindedness, patience and love.

O Lord and King, grant me the grace to be aware of my sins and not to judge my brother; for You are blessed now and ever and forever. Amen.



Crosiers

"Lent offers us the practical and effective weapons of fasting and almsgiving as a means of combating an excessive attachment to money. Giving not only from our abundance, but sacrificing something more in order to give to the needy, fosters that self-denial which is essential to authentic Christian living. Strengthened by constant prayer, the baptized reveal the priority which they have given to God in their lives."

— Blessed Pope John Paul II

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Books

- "Running Hard, Finishing Strong: 7 Steps to Building Momentum in Your Spiritual Life," by Rick Sarkisian (Our Sunday Visitor, \$12.95).
- "Surrender! The Life-Changing Power of Doing God's Will," by Father Larry Richards (Our Sunday Visitor, \$14.95).
- "The Virtues," by Pope Benedict XVI (Our Sunday Visitor, \$14.95).

Websites

- Lent and Lent Resources: www.usccb.org/prayer-and-worship/liturgical-resources/lent/
- Lenten Prayer and Lent Resources: www.usccb.org/prayer-and-worship/liturgical-resources/lent/prayer-resources-for-lent.cfm
- Your Guide to a Catholic Lent: Our Sunday Visitor, www.osv.com/lent