

- Pray at home at least at one fixed time each day. Choose a brief rule of prayer, but keep it faithfully.
- Read the scriptures in the same brief yet regular way. You may wish to follow the Church's calendar, read a chapter of a given book on a daily basis, or simply read and reflect upon passages which you happen upon. In addition, meditate upon the following: I John; Romans 12-14; Matthew 5-7 and John 14-17.
- Be faithful to Christ's Gospel in every word, action, and thought - even the smallest or most insignificant.
- Participate in all of the weekly Lenten services, especially the Liturgy of the Pre-sanctified Gifts, Saturday evening Great Vespers, and the Sunday Divine Liturgy.

PEACE AND JOY

If we do these things, not in a spirit of gloomy self-denial or irritated self-pity, we will gain an awareness of genuine peace and joy in communion with God and those around us. This is guaranteed - and our participation in and celebration of the feast of Our Lord's resurrection will be cherished forever.



O brethren, as ye take up the spiritual fast, speak no deceit with your tongue, neither put a stumbling block in the way of your brother as an occasion for him to fall: but by repentance let us trim the lamp of our soul, that with tears we may cry unto Christ Forgive us our transgressions, since Thou art the Friend of man.

- Vespers of Great Lent

O Lord and Master of my life, give me not a spirit of laziness, meddling, lust for power and of vain talk.

But bestow upon me Your servant the spirit of chastity, meekness of mind, patience and love.

Yes, my Lord and King, grant that I may know my sins and my faults and not judge my brother, for You are blessed for ever to the ages of ages. Amen.

- Prayer of Saint Ephraim the Syrian

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WHAT SHOULD I DO DURING GREAT LENT?



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Most of us realise that prayer, fasting and almsgiving are the three basic Christian and Lenten necessities. However, we often realise as well that we cannot keep the strictest Lenten regulations of the Church which are, in fact, monastic rules. We know that we will not make a maximum effort, and so we sometimes feel frustrated, lost and without guidance.

DO WHAT YOU CAN

When seeking practical advice concerning Lenten practices, the only realistic guideline is *to do what you can*. You know the essentials are prayer, fasting, and almsgiving. Intensify your prayer. Fast as fully as possible. Give to others - asking nothing in return. Know as well that all of your fasting, prayer and almsgiving *must* be exercised *in secret*. The true purpose and goal of Great Lent is to enter into a deeper love for God and for those around us.

CERTAIN WEEKS

Another concrete yet traditional suggestion is to keep certain Lenten weeks in a stricter and more devoted way than others. For example, the first and third weeks of Great Lent, in addition to Holy Week, can be set aside for a greater, more concentrated Lenten effort.

Practically speaking, everyone can keep certain weeks, or at least one week, in a very special way. If this is done, there is no doubt the result will be very positive, and the time spent may prove to be the most inspiring and fruitful time of our entire life. We can only try it and see.



WHAT TO DO

Here are some concrete guidelines for making Great Lent more fulfilling and spiritually rewarding:

- Receive Holy Communion regularly.
- Confess your sins thoroughly and sincerely.
- Turn off the television, radio and stereo for the entire Lenten season, except for news and serious or educational programs.

- Do not visit or engage in outside activities for their own sake. Keep useless talking to a minimum. Do only necessary business, good works, and acts of charity.
- Examine and measure every aspect of your life - family, work, society, politics, economics, values, desires, etc - against the model set forth by the life and teaching of Jesus Christ.
- Question yourself in regard to love, truth, honesty, purity, humility, peace, forgiveness, justice, mercy, hungering and thirsting for God, wisdom and knowledge.
- In the name of Jesus Christ, forgive all who have offended you and seek forgiveness from those whom you have offended. If it will not be embarrassing or misinterpreted as an act of self-righteousness, express yourself as concretely as possible. Visit, make a phone call, etc.
- Set aside and give a sizeable portion of your resources to others - the parish, the poor, a social or educational agency. Tell no one what you have done. Ask no gratitude and forgo requesting a receipt. Do not advertise what you are doing.
- Fast strictly all the time. At a minimum, eat no meat. Suit your fast to your work, but avoid luxury. Again, tell no one. Do not advertise or discuss your fasting with anyone and avoid judging others who may not be fasting with you.