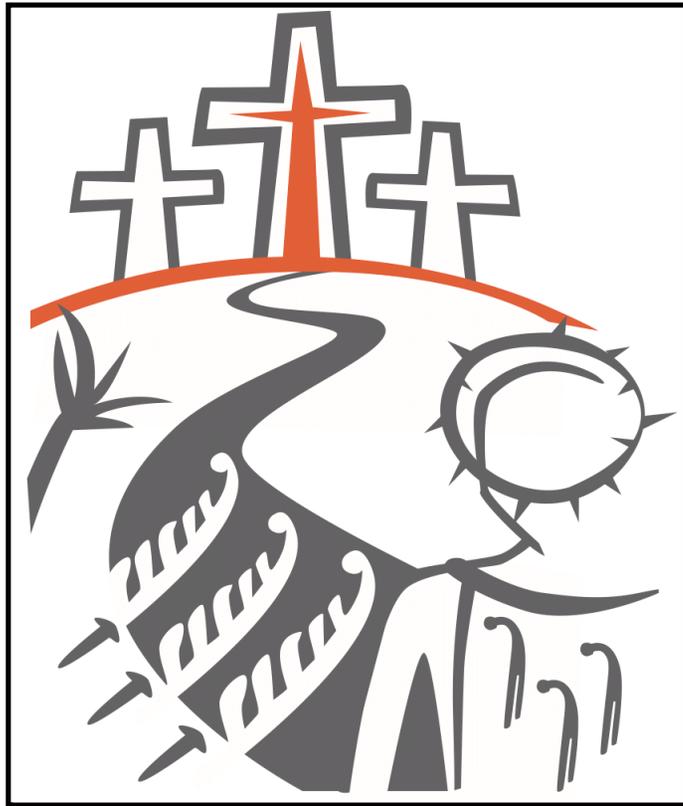


TEN THINGS TO REMEMBER ABOUT LENT



Journey To The Foot Of The Cross: 10 Things To Remember During Lent



1. **Remember the formula.** The Church does a good job capturing certain truths with easy-to-remember lists and formulas: 10 Commandments, 7 Sacraments, 3 Persons in the Trinity. For Lent, the Church gives us almost a slogan—Prayer, Fasting and Almsgiving—as the three things we need to work on during the season.

2. **It's a time of prayer.** Lent is essentially an act of prayer spread out over 40 days. As we pray, we go on a journey, one that hopefully brings us closer to Christ and leaves us changed by the encounter with Him.

3. **It's a time to fast.** With the fasts of Ash Wednesday and Good Friday, meatless Fridays, and our personal disciplines interspersed, Lent is the only time many Catholics actually fast these days. Maybe that's why it gets all the attention. "What are you giving up for Lent? Hotdogs? Beer? Jellybeans?" It's almost a game for some of us, but fasting is actually a form of penance, which helps us turn away from sin and toward Christ.

4. **It's a time to work on discipline.** The 40 days of Lent are also a good, set time to work on personal discipline in general. In addition to giving something up, we should try to do something positive. "I'm going to exercise more. I'm going to pray more. I'm going to be nicer to my family, friends and co-workers."

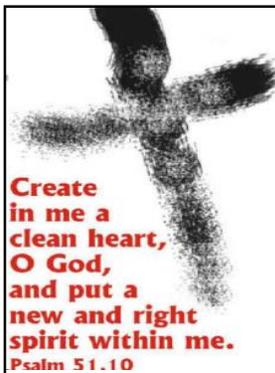
5. **It's about dying to yourself.** The more serious side of Lenten discipline is that it's about more than self-control; it's about finding aspects of yourself that are less than Christ-like and letting them die. The suffering and death of Christ are foremost on our minds during Lent, and we join in these mysteries by suffering and dying with Christ, and being resurrected in a purified form.

6. Don't do too much. It's tempting to make Lent some ambitious period of personal re-invention, but it's best to keep it simple and focussed. There's a reason the Church works on these mysteries year after year. We spend our entire lives growing closer to God. Don't try to cram it all into one Lent. That's a recipe for failure.

7. Be aware of our weaknesses. Of course, even when we set simple goals for ourselves during Lent, we still have trouble keeping them. When we fast, we realize we're all just one meal away from hunger. In both cases, Lent shows us our weakness. This can be painful, but recognizing how helpless we are makes us seek God's help with renewed urgency and sincerity.

8. Be patient with yourself. When we're confronted with our own weakness during Lent, the temptation is to get angry and frustrated. "What a bad person I am!" But that's the wrong lesson. God is calling us to be patient and to see ourselves as He does, with unconditional love.

9. Reach out in charity. As we experience weakness and suffering during Lent, we should be renewed in our compassion for those who are hungry, suffering or otherwise in need. The third part of the Lenten formula is almsgiving. It's about more than throwing a few extra dollars in the collection plate; it's about reaching out to others and helping them without question as a way of sharing the experience of God's unconditional love.



10. Learn to love like Christ. Giving of ourselves in the midst of our suffering and self-denial brings us closer to loving like Christ, who suffered and poured Himself out unconditionally on the cross for all of us. Lent is a journey through the desert to the foot of the cross on Good Friday, as we seek him out, ask His help, join in His suffering, and learn to love like Him.

17 THINGS YOU MIGHT CONSIDER GIVING UP THIS LENT:

- 1. Guilt** – I am loved by Jesus and He has forgiven my sins. Today is a new day and the past is behind me.
- 2. Fear** – God is on my side. In Him I can conquer all.
- 3. The need to please** – I can't please everyone anyways. God is the only one I need to strive to please.
- 4. Envy** – I am blessed. My value is not found in my possessions, but in my relationship with my Heavenly Father.
- 5. Impatience** – God's timing is the perfect timing.
- 6. Sense of entitlement** – The world does not owe me anything. God does not owe me anything. I live in humility and grace.
- 7. Bitterness and Resentment** – The only person I am hurting by holding onto these, is myself.
- 8. Blame** – I am not going to pass the buck. I will take responsibility for my actions.
- 9. Gossip and Negativity** – I will try harder to think constructively when it comes to other people.
- 10. Comparison** – I have my own unique contribution to make and there is no one else like me.
- 11. Fear of failure** – You don't succeed without experiencing failure. Just make sure you fail forward.
- 12. A spirit of poverty** – Believe with God that there is always more than enough and never a lack.
- 13. Feelings of unworthiness** – Believe you are loved by God. You are here for a reason. You have a purpose to influence others for Christ.
- 14. Doubt** – Believe God has a plan for you that is beyond anything you could imagine.
- 15. Self-pity** – God comforts us in our sorrow so that we can comfort others.
- 16. Lack of counsel** – Wise decisions are rarely made in a vacuum.
- 17. Pride** – Blessed are the humble.
- 18. Worry** – God is in control and worrying will not help.

God has so much in store for you. But many things may be holding you back from walking in the full destiny He has laid out for you. Lent is a time to renew yourself and start anew with God.