

# Personal Lent Planner

I invite you to have a plan for Lent, based on the three traditional Lenten practices: *prayer*, *fasting*, and *almsgiving* (that is, compassion-giving). Consider one practical thing you can do for each of the three practices. Keep them SMART. Write them down. Commit yourself to following your plan.

SMART refers to setting goals. A goal is said to be SMART if it is *specific*, *measurable*, *achievable*, *relevant*, and *time-bound*:

- **Specific.** Avoid the abstract (I will appreciate my neighbor, or, I will have a generous heart). Instead, make it concrete: I will write a note to a neighbor who needs a kind message, or, I will give \$100 to (name a charity).
- **Measurable:** attach numbers to what you will do: I will write 1 note on each day of Lent (46 days) to them know they're in my prayers, or, I will give \$100 to a charity every week.
- **Achievable:** avoid something you know you cannot do (writing 30 notes every day, or, giving \$1000 a week). Focus on what you can do (write 1 note a day, or give \$100 to a favorite charity).
- **Relevant:** focus on what can deepen your relationship with Jesus. Be guided by the Lenten practices of *prayer*, *fasting*, and *almsgiving*. Consider one goal for each practice.
- **Time-bound:** when do you expect to accomplish your goal and how often? For example, by Holy Thursday, each Friday, twice a week?

Again, I invite you to have a plan for Lent and to put it in writing. Use the form on the backside of this page to spell out your SMART goals for Lent. Then, put it where you can see it each day. At the end of Lent, you will find that your relationship with Jesus has deepened.

*Fr. Dave*

**Lent: Prayer Ideas.** Consider adopting the following simple practices throughout Lent:

- Follow the *prayer calendar* included with the *Catholic Relief Service Rice Bowl*.
- Consider each stop sign and traffic light to be a bead on a rosary, at which you pray a Hail Mary or Our Father. (However, remain focused on your driving.)
- Think of someone who hurt you long ago. Pray for the grace to forgive him or her. Schedule on your calendar when you will write a note to that person, simply to say he or she is in your thoughts (and prayers).
- Put a cup of water at the front door. Ask family members to sign themselves with the water as they come and go, reminding themselves that they are baptized.
- Begin your family prayer at the dinner table, asking each person to name one thing about the day they are grateful for. Then, give thanks not only for the food, but for all the causes of gratitude that were expressed.
- Keep the Sunday Psalm response in the car, and pray it at the beginning and end of each car trip that week. Or, use the *memory verse* from the Sunday bulletin.
- Write down the Sunday Psalm response. Use it in the prayer at the dinner table.
- The church will be open Wednesdays, 6-8pm. Come for quiet prayer, or, come to confession.
- Come to Friday 8:30am Mass, and stay to pray before the Blessed Sacrament (9-10am)

**Lent: Ideas for Fasting and Abstinence.** Here are a few ideas for *fasting* and *abstinence*:

- Abstain from meat on Fridays by following one of the recipes included with your *CRS Rice Bowl*.
- Once a week, fast from all foods, 1-5pm. Add the money you would have spent on food to your Rice Bowl box.
- When abstaining from meat on Fridays, think of someone who tends to bring the worst out of you. Pray for the grace to abstain from your attitude too, then ask God to guide him or her through that day's difficulties.
- Give something up for Lent, and replace it by thinking of something you are grateful for, and write it on an index card. At the end of the day, give God thanks for whatever you wrote.
- Commit to live more simply. Get rid of one item a day throughout Lent.



**Lent: Almsgiving.** The *alms* in *almsgiving* means *compassion* or *mercy*. Consider the following possibilities for *almsgiving* this Lent:

- Donate to *Catholic Near East Welfare Association*. Go to: *cnewa.org*.
- At the end of each day, add any loose change to your *Rice Bowl* box.
- Start the day by thinking of one person you will give a kind word to that day. Pray for the grace to do it, and then do it.
- Join the *Sandwich Making Ministry* on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Wednesday of the month.
- Keep in your car a stack of scrip (gift cards) for Safeway, Carl's Junior, Burger King, Starbucks, and Subway (available at the Scrip table after mass). Give a card to a homeless person when you are out shopping.
- Keep a few *Blessing Bags* (with daily essentials) in your car for the homeless.
- Call *Sacred Heart Community Services* (408-278-2160), and volunteer 4 hours with your family or friends for whatever help is needed. They're at Alma and S. 1<sup>st</sup> Streets.
- Have a neighbor who doesn't get out so easily? Stop by to say hello, and offer to make a grocery run for him or her.
- Thin your wardrobe by ¼, ⅓, or ½, and take what you remove to *Sacred Heart Community Services*, *HomeFirst*, or to our parish's own 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of the month *food and clothing drive*.

**Lent Fasting and Abstinence.** During Lent, those between the ages of 18 and 60 are obligated to observe a day of fasting on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday.

*Fasting means eating only one full meatless meal per day. Two other meatless meals, sufficient to maintain strength, may be taken, but together they should not equal a full meal. Liquids, including milk and fruit juice, may be taken between meals. If health or ability to work is affected, one is not obligated to fast. On other weekdays of Lent, eating more modest meals is also strongly recommended.*

Abstinence from meat is observed on Ash Wednesday and all Fridays of Lent. All the faithful are bound by Church law to abstain from meat on these days, beginning the day after their 14th birthday.

The above are understood as *minimum* expectations. Consider them as *first ideas*, and first ideas are intended to lead to better ideas. Thus, you might consider a full day fast, once a week.

*List below what you will do during Lent as SMART goals, commit yourself to them, and pray that the Holy Spirit will help you keep to them.*

Fasting/abstinence: I will \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Prayer: I will \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Almsgiving: I will \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_