

40 days of practice to make perfect

By the time you read this article, the faithful will have journeyed halfway through Lent. However, this message comes as a reflection to discern that we still have time to walk with Jesus and to strengthen our relationship with Christ. Lent is our time to follow Jesus.

What a perfect example Jesus is. What a perfect sacrifice he made for our sins. When Jesus was at Gethsemane (Mark 14: 32-38), he told the disciples to wait and pray. Jesus was overwhelmed with sorrow, and he turned to the Father and prayed that thy will be done. The disciples were not able to keep awake for even the short time Jesus was away, but he again instructed them to pray.

The 40 days of Lent remind me of the same time before Jesus' death that the disciples were instructed to be still, await for his return and pray so that they would not fall into the temptation of sin until his return. Just as the disciples were asked to go without sleep, we are called to fast and abstain. And just as they were instructed to pray while staying awake, we should pray during our time of sacrifice. The idea of fasting and praying reminds us that we must die to the weak temptations of the flesh (sin), but we can only do that by turning our focus away from our earthly desires and towards the Father through prayer.

During Lent, we turn our focus away from an earthly convenience or temptation and, instead, turn towards a closer walk with God through prayer. Lent teaches us that our daily focus should be on God's will and direction to lead. When I make that sacrifice (fasting or no chocolate) and call on the Holy Spirit to carry me through it, I find immediate comfort and a huge burden is lifted from my heart. I no longer have that desire to eat, and I feel the Holy Spirit carrying me through that moment of trial. I am not just delivered from my earthly concern, but I am redeemed by Christ for eternal life. In prayer I can become what God desires for me. God grants me peace and I am ever so grateful for the blessing of God's authority to remove my temptation. This is the blessing of Lent.

Our blessings and witness should be shared by as many people as possible. And so during our 40 days of Lent we give back to God a little bit of what God has given us.

Our almsgiving, prayer and fasting are essential elements for the journey. They enhance our understanding of what it means for us to be so blessed by a closer walk with God.

In addition to the above, moments of reconciliation are important. During Lent in particular, I pray that God forgives me for losing focus on God, and I ask the Holy Spirit to reorder my steps and take away this temptation. Then I take some amount of money and place it in my Lenten folder.

For me Lent is a time for us to practice how we should carry out our daily lives. It allows us to focus on turning to God when we find ourselves falling short of his will; staying in constant communication with God so that we receive as many blessings as God has prepared for us; and finally sharing our blessings, time, talents and treasures with others so that they may be blessed as well. I am not as good at this as Jesus was at Gethsemane. So I thank God for giving me 40 days to practice being perfect. And when "it is finished," I pray that I can continue almsgiving, constant prayer and fasting (avoid temptations) with the help of the Holy Spirit. Perfect practice makes perfect.

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