

Season of Lent - By Fr. Arulkumar

Lent is a new beginning and this season urgently calls us to conversion. We are asked to return to God **'with all their hearts'** (Joel 2:12). We are called to grow in friendship with the Lord. Jesus is the faithful friend who never abandons us. Even when we sin, he patiently awaits our return by that patient expectation, he shows us his readiness to forgive.

Lent is a favorable season for deepening our spiritual life through the means of sanctification offered us by the Church: **fasting, prayer and alms-giving**. Why do we pray, fast, and give alms? To draw attention to our self so that others may notice and think highly of us? Or to give glory to God? True piety is something more than feeling good or looking holy. True piety is loving devotion to God. It is an attitude of awe, reverence, worship and obedience. It is a gift and working of the Holy Spirit that enables us to devote our lives to God with a holy desire to please him in all things (Isaiah 11:1-2).

The forty days of Lent is the annual retreat of the people of God in **imitation of Jesus' forty days in the wilderness**. **Forty is a significant number** in the Scriptures. **Moses** went to the **Mount Sinai** to seek the face of God for forty days in prayer and fasting. The **people of Israel** were in the **wilderness for forty years** in preparation for their entry into the **Promised Land**. **Elijah** fasted for forty days as he journeyed in the wilderness to the mountain of God. We are called to journey with the Lord.

Each year we take some resolutions for the lent. Do we remember what resolution we took last year? Are we able to follow or keep that resolution! What resolution we are going to take this year? It is easy to give up food or simple in our dress but it is difficult to change our self! **'Rend your hearts and not your garments'** (Joel 2:12).

What should we give up for Lent?

NON-VEG? CHOCOLATE? ICE CREAM? BEVERAGES?

Many of us try to be more disciplined for Lent and give up something that we really like. That's great! Fasting has always been an important tradition of Lent. This year however, let us also consider other things that we can give up.

1. Give up complaining - Focus on gratitude

Philippians 2:14-15 - Do everything without complaining or arguing, so that you may become blameless and pure...

1Thessalonians 5:18 - Give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Jesus Christ.

2. Give up bitterness - Turn to forgiveness

Ephesians 4:31 - Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice.

Ephesians 4:32 - Be kind and compassionate to one another forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.

3. Give up worry - Trust in God

Matthew 6:25 - "Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life... who by worrying can add a single hour to his life?"

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Matthew 6:33 - But seek first His Kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.

4. Give up discouragement - Be full of hope

Deuteronomy 31:8 - The Lord himself goes before you and will be with you: he will never leave you or forsake you. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged.

Isaiah 40:31 - But those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint.

5. Give up hatred - Return good for evil

1John 2:9 - Anyone who claims to be in the light but hates his brother is still in the darkness.

Luke 6:27 - "But I tell you who hear me; Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you."

6. Give up anger - Be more patient

Matthew 5:22 - But I tell you that anyone who is angry with his brother will be subject to judgment.

Proverbs 15:18 - A hot tempered man stirs up dissension, but a patient man calms a quarrel.

7. Give up gossiping - Control your tongue

Psalms 34:13 - Keep your tongue from evil and your lips from speaking lies.

Proverbs 21:23 - He who guards his mouth and his tongue keeps himself from calamity.