

How To Meaningfully Observe Lent by Fr. Jerry Byrd

SIMPLE BUT NOT EASY

INTENTIONAL

ACHIEVABLE

Lent is fast-approaching! Here's how to make those Lenten penances and resolutions work for you this year!

BEGIN WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT:

When choosing your Lenten penances, first, begin with a prayer asking the Holy Spirit for inspiration and wisdom – that you may adopt the penances that will help you to draw closer to the Lord, turn away from sin, cancel bad habits and vices, and replace them with good habits and virtues. Start praying now, so you can have your plan ready to begin on Ash Wednesday. Don't wait until the last minute, or chances are good that your Lenten penances will be lacking.

Then remember the 3-step process of Simple, Intentional & Achievable

KEEP IT SIMPLE

- Choose penances that are not overly complicated. This does not mean to choose the easiest penances. You need to challenge yourself.

BE INTENTIONAL

- Know your "why" for each penance. It will not serve your growth in holiness if you choose something just because it sounds holy or hard. Will this penance help me overcome some vice? Will it help me grow in a particular virtue that I am lacking in? Am I willing to offer it up for the good of another?

MAKE IT ACHIEVABLE

- Your penance should not be impossible, nor should it become a penance for those around you. Choose penances that are going to challenge you. Penance is not supposed to be easy. It should be hard enough to make you uncomfortable, but not so hard that you fail after two days, or become agitated by it. For instance, it is probably not a good idea to take on a penance of sleeping on the floor, if you already have trouble sleeping through the night.

Remember, after you have chosen your Lenten penances, guided by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, write them down and put the reminders in a place that you will see every day. There is a special page for this at the end.

DAILY MORNING PRAYER FOR THE GRACE TO FULFILL MY LENTEN PENANCES

Heavenly Father, as I embark on this Lenten journey, I humbly ask for the grace to faithfully fulfill my chosen penances. Guide me to embrace the spirit of sacrifice, to use my disciplines as a means to draw closer to You, and to find true renewal in my heart. May my acts of penance be offered with sincerity, and may they open my heart to deeper understanding of Your love and forgiveness. Amen.

Suggested Lenten Penances

PRAYER

- o Spend the first 15 minutes of your day in prayer
- o Angelus (6 am – 12 pm – 6 pm)
- o Daily Rosary
- o Scriptural Rosary
- o Family Rosary
- o Morning Offering
- o Lectio Divina
- o Litany of Reparation
- o Litany of Humility
- o Litany of Trust
- o Litany of the Precious Blood
- o Seven Sorrows Rosary
- o Stations of the Cross
- o Divine Mercy Devotion
- o Liturgy of the Hours
- o Morning Prayer (Liturgy of the Hours)
- o Evening Prayer (Liturgy of the Hours)
- o Compline (Liturgy of the Hours)
- o Little Office of the Blessed Mother
- o Spiritual Communions throughout the day
- o Daily 30 minutes or Holy Hour before the Blessed Sacrament
- o Daily visit to the Blessed Sacrament
- o Prayer Journal
- o Prayer jar
- o Prayer before the Crucifix

SPIRITUAL READING

- o **Story of a Soul – St. Therese of Lisieux**
- o **Confessions of St. Augustine**
- o **In Sinu Jesu**
- o **Introduction to the Devout Life – St. Francis De Sales**
- o **Orthodoxy – G.K. Chesterton**
- o **The Lambs Supper – Dr. Scott Hahn**
- o **Searching for and Maintaining Peace – Fr. Jacques Phillippe**
- o **The Screwtape letters – C.S. Lewis**
- o **Jesus of Nazareth – Benedict XVI**
- o **The Imitation of Christ – Thomas a Kempis**
- o **Trustful Surrender to Divine Providence – Jean Baptiste Saint-Jure & St. Claude de la Colombiere**
- o **The 12 steps to Holiness and Salvation – St. Alphonsus Liguori**
- o **Way to Inner Peace – Archbishop Fulton Sheen**
- o **Life of Christ – Archbishop Fulton Sheen**
- o **The Spirit of the Liturgy – Joseph Ratzinger (Benedict XVI)**
- o **Treatise on True Devotion to the Blessed Virgin – St. Louis de Monfort**
- o **Transformation in Chrsit – Dietrich von Hilderbrand**
- o **The Rule of Saint Benedict**
- o **The Dialogue – St. Catherine of Sienna**
- o **True Devotion to the Holy Spirit – Archbishop Luis M. Martinez**
- o **Uniformity with God’s Will – St. Alphonsus Liguori**
- o **Spiritual Warfare and Discernment of Spirits – Dan Burke**
- o **Finding Peace in the Storm – Dan Burke**
- o **The Truth about Hell – Dan Burke and Patrick O’Hearn**

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Suggested Lenten Penances

FASTING

- o All drinks that are not water
- o Coffee
- o Soda
- o Alcohol
- o Sugary drinks
- o Energy Drinks
- o Meat
- o Desserts
- o Candy/sweets
- o Meat on Wednesday (or another day of the week along with Friday)
- o No salt on food
- o Snack food/junk food
- o Dairy
- o Fast Food
- o Fried foods
- o Processed foods
- o Television
- o Social Media
- o Video games
- o Movies
- o Streaming Services
- o Secular Music
- o Watching the News
- o Unnecessary purchases

MORTIFICATIONS

- o **Obedience to Church teachings**
- o **Obedience to parents / legitimate authority**
- o **Modest clothing**
- o **Modest make-up**
- o **No perfume or cologne**
- o **Tithe**
- o **Make a budget and stick to it**
- o **Limit the use of credit cards**
- o **No unnecessary spending**
- o **No eating between meals**
- o **Eat smaller portions at each meal**
- o **Eat healthy food**
- o **No Alcohol**
- o **No Desserts / sugary foods/junk food**
- o **Go to bed at a reasonable time**
- o **No Snooze button**
- o **Make your bed**
- o **Clean your room**
- o **Regular exercise routine**
- o **No computer/smartphone in your room**
- o **No scrolling before bed or in bed**
- o **No television**
- o **No Instagram / Facebook / Snapchat**
- o **No You Tube videos**
- o **Install pornography/adult content-blocking software on your devices**
- o **Custody of your eyes**
- o **Cold showers**
- o **Turn on cold water for the length of a Hail Mary at the end of your daily shower**
- o **Sleep without a pillow (if you do not have any trouble sleeping)**

ALMSGIVING / CARITAS

- o **Volunteer as a family in some way**
- o **Donate food to SVDP or to a food bank**
- o **Donate a toy or toys to SVDP**
- o **Donate clothing**
- o **Save up the money you would spend on junk food or expensive coffee and donate it to a Catholic Charity**
- o **Visit a local nursing home or a person who is unable to leave their home**
- o **Offer prayers for the dead each day.**
- o **Intercession Jar (Prayer Jar – write the name of a person on a small piece of paper, 1 for each day of Lent, put the papers in a jar, pull a name each day, and offer up prayers and penances that day for the person.)**
- o **Write a short letter/email/text to a person each day of lent and tell them how much they mean to you.**
- o **Pray each day for a person who has hurt you with the following special prayer and action:**

Forgiveness Jar – like the prayer jar, write the names of people that you need to forgive on small pieces of paper. Place the papers in a jar, pull a name each day, and pray this prayer often throughout the day:

In the Name of Jesus, I forgive _____ for (name how they hurt you), and I ask you Jesus to forgive them and to bless them. Amen

Your Lenten Resolution Prayer Sheet

1. Spend time praying to the Holy Spirit asking for the grace to choose the penances that you most need.
2. Choose one or two from each category – don't get carried away, and don't allow the perfect to be the enemy of the good.
3. Write down your chosen penance and your reason for doing it.
4. Pray the Daily Morning prayer for the grace to fulfill my Lenten penances.
5. Remember to do your penances with **JOY**. Ask for St. Philip Neri's intercession for the gift of Joy each day as you offer up these penances.
6. At the end of each day, spend a few minutes reflecting on your day and asking yourself the question: How did I fulfill my Lenten commitment today? If I failed, then ask God for the grace to do better tomorrow.
7. Finally, remember to be thankful for the penances. Yes, be thankful! They will serve to help you become more virtuous if they are embraced with gratitude and love!

Write Your Lenten Resolutions Here:

LENT 2025

Penance 1: _____

Reason: _____

Penance 2: _____

Reason: _____

Penance 3: _____

Reason: _____

Our family penance will be: _____

Reason:

I will go to confession at least _____ time(s) during Lent.

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