

THINGS YOU SHOULDN'T DO DURING LENT.

Lent is a time of spiritual self-discovery, renewal, and an invitation to find God's will for us. Through sacrifice, prayer, and alms-giving we are looking to join Jesus in the desert – finding a purer form of ourselves. There are as many opportunities for Lenten self-improvement. As we enter the first week of Lent, however, we might want to take a look at our intentions and the desired effect on our lives. Are our objectives pure? Do we have the proper mindset to make this Lent a life-altering experience? “For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and return not thither but water the earth, making it bring forth and sprout, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall my word be that goes forth from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and prosper in the thing for which I sent it.” (Isaiah 55:10-11) In keeping with the hope of a fruitful Lent, we might consider this list of seven snares to avoid:

1 - Don't use Lent as a weight loss regimen – Abstaining from delicacies we savor can be a worthy discipline to practice. While better care of the temple which is our body is admirable, selfishly looking for a vanity-based outcome can detract (or eliminate) the purity of our sacrifice. Instead, emptying ourselves and refraining from creature comforts, should make more room for God in our lives.

2 - Don't focus solely on self – We are called to improve our relationship with God during Lent. An important aspect of the disciplines we practice, is to be closer to Him. A pertinent offshoot of applying this objective is to bring the love of Christ to others. We do this through our actions toward them. If we selfishly withdraw without giving thought to being a light to others, we diminish a positive aspect of our call to Lenten love. A virtuous alternative would be to allow true charity to bring us closer to those around us.

3 - Don't be rigid in our intentions – If we find that our spiritual needs take on a divergent direction, we shouldn't be afraid to redirect our efforts as the Holy Spirit dictates. One of the purposes of Lent is to grow in our faith life and to transform our everyday interaction with God and others. Sometimes our needs or the opportunities to serve God through others present themselves in a variety of ways. Altering course and flexibility, then, become a benefit to our Lenten growth.

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