KISS and the 1-1-1 Plan

Here’s a helpful acronym to help you stay focused during Lent:

Keep • It • Simple • Sinner

The best Lent is one in which we enter the season wholeheartedly. The solution is to simplify our disciplines, focus our intentions and concentrate more clearly on our spiritual goals.

One sin

Most of us, if we are honest, know at least one area of sin to focus on during Lent. If you aren’t sure, or are having trouble narrowing it down, use the traditional seven deadly sins as a guide (at night). (Contrary to what one may gather from all the emphasis on seeing these days, there are six deadly sins besides lust!) In fact, some of the other deadly sins are even deadlier, especially pride, or self-love, which St. Thomas Aquinas called, “the cause of every sin.”

If you need help in identifying which sin to concentrate on this year, ask God in prayer. He will answer according to the virtues they oppose, or also be linked to capital sin which Christian experience has distinguished, following St. John Cassian and St. Gregory the Great. They are called “capital” because they engender other sins, other vices. They are pride, avarice [greed], wrath, lust, gluttony and sloth (No. 1864).

One add-in

The next step in 1-1-1 Lent is to add one thing to your routine that you haven’t been doing. Because we are all so busy, it’s a good idea to not just pick an add-in, but to schedule a regular time when you put it on your calendar so you don’t! Target ideas for add-ins are pretty much endless, but some include:

◗ Go to Mass in the middle of the week
◗ Attend the Stations of the Cross as a family
◗ Read a Gospel
◗ Volunteer at a social ministry
◗ Get up early to pray

One give up

Giving up something for Lent has been part of the Church almost since the beginning. While giving up sweets and alcohol are time-honored, consider giving up one thing that you really like or enjoy. Just make sure it is something that lets you feel the deprivation and is at least a little bit challenging. Make it difficult but doable.

◗ Fast from food, fasting and nagging, and fast from a critical tongue or a closed mind.
◗ Give up impulsive purchases.
◗ Give up an unhealthy habit, like smoking.
◗ Limit the time you watch television or surf the Web.
◗ Give up fast food and donate the money you save.

The 7 Deadly Sins

The Catechism of the Catholic Church also refers to these sins as “capital sins” and explains why they are the most dangerous. “Vices are divided into two groups: according to the virtues they oppose, or also be linked to capital sin which Christian experience has distinguished, following St. John Cassian and St. Gregory the Great. They are called “capital” because they engender other sins, other vices. They are pride, avarice, [greed], wrath, lust, gluttony and sloth.” (No. 1864).

1. PRIDE: an excessive love of self or the desire to be better or more important than others.

2. LUST: an intense desire, usually for sexual pleasure, but also for money, power or fame.

3. GLUTTONY: a voracious appetite, usually for food or drink.

4. GREED: a desire for and love of possessions.

5. SLOTH (OR Acedia): physical laziness, also disinterest with spiritual matters or neglecting spiritual growth.

6. ANGER OR WRATH: anger is a desire for revenge...

7. ENVY: sadness or desire for the possessions, happiness, wealth or abilities of another.

Lent is like a long race ‘treat’, during which we can turn back into ourselves and listen to the voice of God, in order to defeat the temptations of the Evil One. It is a period of spiritual ‘combat’ which we must experience alongside Jesus, not with pride and presumption, but with the arms of faith: prayer, listening to the word of God, and penance. In this way we will be able to celebrate Easter in truth, ready to renew the promises of our baptism.”

— Pope Benedict XVI

Fasting is not just a spiritual duty. By denying our bodies our natural hunger reminds us of the hunger of our souls for God. Our fasting for a deeper relationship with our Lord.

Almsgiving teaches us to separate ourselves from material possessions. By freely giving of our money and possessions, we learn to trust the Lord more deeply for our own daily needs.

Finally, an emphasis on prayer during Lent is a way to stir up our love and ardor by having a deeper conversation with the Almighty. Remember that the light of God’s love shines more brightly in the darkness of the recognition of our own emptiness.

Prayer

O Lord and Master of my life, keep me from the spirit of idleness and discouragement, lust of power and idle chatter. Instead, grant to me, Your servant, the spirit of watchfulness of being, humble-mindedness, patience and love.

O Lord and King, grant me the grace to be aware of my sins and not to judge my brother; for You are blessed now and ever and forever. Amen.

Almsgiving

Then let us offer the practical and efficient weapons of fasting and almsgiving as a means of combating an excessive attachment to money. Giving not only from our abundance, but sacrificing something more in order to give to the needy, fosters that self-denial which is essential to authentic Christian living. Strengthened by constant prayer, the baptized reveals the priority which they have given to God in their lives;

— Blessed Pope John Paul II

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Books


“Surrender! The Life-Changing Power of Doing God’s Will,” by Father Larry Richards (Our Sunday Visitor, $14.95).


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