

Lent 2024: what is it about?

Our souls, like our bodies, get run down. Lent is a time for spiritual training, for raising ideals, for practising virtues in hope that they may have some permanent effect on our character. Lent is a time for doing penance for our sins. But we must be practical, not vague. It is better to choose one penance and stick to it, rather than aiming to do too much and failing in fact to do anything. If it helps, use this sheet to write down what you want to achieve, keep it nearby, and assess how things go. If you fail, don't give up, but start again. **4 things to aim for during Lent 2024...**

1. Acquiring a particular virtue is in many ways more practical than trying to root out a particular sin. Most of us have heard of the Seven Deadly Sins, but are we as familiar with the Seven Opposite Virtues, or Extremes? Below is an illustration. *Let us work to acquire the Opposite Virtues during this Season of Lent.*

<i>Deadly Sin</i>	<i>Opposite Virtue</i>	<i>Opposite Extreme</i>
Pride	Humility	Self-loathing
Greed	Generosity	Wastefulness
Lust	Chastity	Prudishness
Anger	Patience	Servility
Gluttony	Temperance	Stinginess
Jealousy	Kindness	Fainthearted
Laziness	Diligence	Workaholic

2. The practice of a particular devotion is also an important part of Lent. For instance, you might consider reading a small part of one of the Gospels each day, or saying the Rosary every other day, or even once a week; but any spiritual undertaking is a good idea, perhaps a daily Hail Mary for a particular intention, whether for yourself, or another person, or for the Pope's intentions. I can recommend the Catholic Phone App called "Universalis."

3. A particular penance is the most traditional form of Lenten observance, and is good for training the human will. If we cannot control our appetite for an extra glass of wine, or can of Coke, or a spoon of sugar in our tea, how can we hope to control a bad temper or a cruel tongue?

4. Almsgiving is also important, and it need not be financial. We may wish to set aside a small sum for a good cause, or take the trouble to do something extra for someone else, or give a bit of our time to a neighbour or a stranger, or pick up litter quietly from our street or area. We may have a Mass offered for a particular intention.

The VIRTUE that I will aim for is:

The SPIRITUAL DEVOTION that I will undertake is:

The PENANCE / SELF-DENIAL that I will do is:

I will GIVE ALMS by:

(Name)..... (Date).....