

Suggestions for Lenten mortifications

Lent is not about undergoing some suffering just to punish ourselves, even in union with Christ's suffering on the Cross. Lenten mortification must have a much higher purpose, that being our personal conversion into a life of sanctity. Thus, these Lenten sacrifices must be engaged in not with a downtrodden spirit, or with many complaints over what you're suffering. In fact, if you do that, you will get little if any Grace from your mortifications. No, these mortifications must be undertaken with a willing, happy spirit, with an open heart that looks forward in hope to the great work of conversion the Graces earned during Lent will make in our souls. This is our yearly opportunity to practice some serious sanctity, maybe even heroic sanctity! Here are some ideas for now (and remember, it is highly advisable to start on many of your mortifications before Lent even formally starts, so you don't get caught "cold"):

- Avoid foods you really like. Take more of foods you don't like, and less of ones you do
- Season your foods in ways you really don't like. If you like salt, have it bland. If you hate salt, salt it up.
- Avoid meat at one meal a day. Men, have a salad at one meal (or not, if you love salad).
- Give up flesh meat entirely for Lent. The devout Orthodox still give up not only ALL meat, including fish, but also ALL animal products, including butter, eggs, cheese, etc. Only do so if you are physically able.
- Even more hardcore, go with the traditional Lenten fast – on all days save Sunday and Feast days, only eat one full meal with two small snacks. You could add abstinence to this, as well, skipping meat except at the main meal
- Take your shower hotter or colder than you like
- If you drive a lot, practice patience by staying in the slow lane and keeping a good distance between you and the car in front of you. Don't speed. Every time you have to slow down, remember that you are growing in patience.
- For that matter, practice patience by getting in the long line at the store/supermarket. Let people get in front of you
- Abstain from all TV during Lent
- Abstain from radio. Instead of listening to the radio while driving, pray.
- Abstain from the internet (I get the blogger's exception on this one-heh)
- If you have some favorite hobbies or activities, consider giving one or more of them up for the duration of Lent
- Don't go out to eat during Lent. Donate the money saved to local pro-life efforts
- Along with avoiding favorite foods, don't eat dessert for the duration of Lent. Or avoid all snacks. Only eat fruit, instead of sweets. No processed sugar (can you tell I need to lose weight?).
- Practice willful spiritual poverty. Deny yourself things. No impulse buying. Only purchase what is truly necessary. Again, donate the money saved (almsgiving is another necessary Lenten practice).
- If you find your job a chore, consider working more. If you love work, try to spend more time away from work (within reason, of course). Do more chores around the house.
- Do what your spouse/kids/friends/siblings want, instead of having things your way. Within prudence.
- If you have any strong/bad habits, strive to eliminate them entirely or reduce them to a point of true moderation. This could apply to coffee, nicotine, alcohol (if you love your evening wine, skip it), all kinds of things.