

40 WAYS TO WIN LENT BY JOHN WHITE

This is not a list of things to give up. That list is here.

This is a list of things to do during Lent.

Maybe you can pick a few and commit to them.

And if you lose steam, don't get discouraged – ever! Come back to the list any time and start over, because that's what it's all about.

(Spoiler alert: doing these things will make you a happier person)

1. Be cheerful.

It's seriously important. Smile for goodness sake.

2. Make a morning offering.

Pre-emptive sacrifice. Not bad.

3. Read the Gospels.

Really try to do this one. During Holy Week, read the accounts of Christ's passion.

4. Examine your conscience.

Try it every night. Where did I improve? Where didn't I?

5. Read the Catechism of the Catholic Church.

Doesn't have to be cover to cover – just pick a spot and jump around if you want.

Learning your Faith will renew it, guaranteed.

6. Daily Mass.

Try going every day, or at least once or twice on weekdays. Or just try getting there on time. Or just re-focus. Attend each Mass like its your first Mass, your last Mass, your only Mass.

7. Say the Rosary.

It is a weapon. Wield it.

8. Mortification.

Okay fine, this is giving things up. But turn it into a positive action: do penance.

9. Compliment someone who annoys you, and mean it.

You might be surprised at the joy this will give you.

10. Spend time in prayer of thanksgiving after Mass.

You aren't in that much of a hurry.

11. Make a silent retreat.

Take your soul on a much needed vacation.

12. Go through your closet.

Give to the poor the things you don't wear. Or even better, something you do wear.

13. Pray 10 minutes each day.

Set a time and stick to it. Prayer is hard for you? Join the club. Difficult prayer is still prayer.

14. Accept small hardships.

Not grudgingly. Joyfully.

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15. Make an Act of Contrition.

Don't just save it for Confession. Do it every day.

16. Go to Confession.

Often. There is no joy like the joy you experience walking out of the confessional.

17. Work better.

With more order and more intensity. Put a holy card or a small crucifix in your desk drawer as a reminder to dedicate your work to God and to offer it up for a good intention.

18. Give to the poor.

Give McDonalds gift cards to the homeless. No homeless people around? Find them.

19. Meditate on a crucifix.

Behold the Man.

20. Pray for Pope Francis.

And for the Synod on the Family. And for the United States of America.

21. Spend some time around incense.

I'm not kidding. It will concentrate your attention on God.

22. Visit the sick and elderly.

Your parish has a list of shut-ins. Call the parish office and they will arrange for you to visit a home-bound senior.

23. Pray the Stations of the Cross.

Classic devotion for Fridays in Lent.

24. Forgive someone who has hurt you.

Don't hesitate. This is spiritual gold.

25. Read Death on a Friday Afternoon, by Richard John Neuhaus.

A great book on the seven last words of Christ from the Cross. Short, insightful, easy to read meditations.

26. Befriend your guardian angel.

He or she is in it with you all the way to the end. Be on intimate terms.

27. Pray Psalm 51.

"Fill me with joy and gladness...Hide thy face from my sins, and blot out my iniquities."

28. Exercise.

Walk, run, whatever. It's really good for your spiritual health.

29. Listen to Fr. Robert Barron's Tre Ore meditation on the seven last words of Christ.

Absolutely powerful. A great CD for the car.

30. Get out of bed.

The first time, every time.

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31. Read a novel about conversion, like *Late Have I Loved Thee*, by Ethel Mannin.

It happens to be a favorite of Pope Francis.

32. Pray to St. Joseph.

For your family and for the Church. And if you're a husband and father, for being a better one.

33. Be the servant in your house.

Cheerfully, without seeking recognition.

34. Read Pope Francis in his own words.

Unfiltered. Do you want to know what he actually says? His daily homilies are on the Vatican website.

35. Fast.

It's not just another devotion for certain people. It's an essential practice of Christian life.

36. Eucharistic adoration.

Look at Christ while he looks at you.

37. Pray to Saint John Paul the Great.

For anything.

38. Pray to the Holy Spirit.

For everything. For a good Lent.

39. Make a list.

Write down your Lenten resolutions and put it where you will see it each day, like on the mirror. Be specific. What time are you praying tomorrow?

40. Persevere!

It's not about enthusiasm – that can fade. It's about starting over again and again, with joy.

So there. And sorry for being preachy. Between you and me, I mostly wrote this list for myself because I'm terrible at Lent and I don't do any of these things enough. Or ever.

Have a holy Lent and try to laugh a lot.