

Ten Ways We Can Fast

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1. Eat less and receive the most Holy Eucharist more.

By this practice we give more importance to our spiritual life and the salvation of our soul. Jesus said: "Do not work for food that perishes, but for food that endures for eternal life, which the Son of man will give you. For on him the Father, God, has set his seal." (Jn. 6:27—Discourse on the Bread of Life)

2. Control your tongue.

Saint James says, "We should be slow to speak and quick to listen." Read James chapter three—one of the best exhortations in the world to work on controlling our tongue!

3. Heroic Moments.

The Founder of Opus Dei has coined the phrase, "The Heroic Moment". By this Saint Jose Maria asserts that as soon as we hear the alarm-clock we should spring from bed, pray and start our day. The devil of laziness encourages us to push the Snooze-button! I do not believe the Snooze-button exists in the vocabulary and practice of the saints. What do you think?

4. Control those wandering eyes.

The eyes are the mirror to the soul. The holy King David plunged into sin and more sin leading to murder for the simple reason that he allowed his eyes to wander. His eyes wandered and gazed upon a married woman—Bathsheba. Adulterous thoughts led to physical adultery, to denial of his sin and eventually to killing an innocent man—the husband of Bathsheba (II Samuel 11-12). Let us strive to live out the Beatitude: "Blessed are the pure of heart, they will see God" (Mt. 5: 8)

5. Punctuality.

Jesus says, "He who is faithful in the small will be faithful in the larger things." (Mt. 25:23) Being punctual and on time is a sign of order, respect for others, and a means to accomplish tasks well and on time.

6. Listen to Others.

It is all too easy to interrupt others when they speak and try to impose our own ideas even before the person has finished his idea. Charity, which means, love for God and for others, teaches us to respect others and allow them to speak without interrupting and imposing our own ideas.

Listening to others is also an act of humility—putting others before ourselves! "Jesus meek and humble of heart make my heart like unto yours." (Mt. 11:28-30—Jesus describes His Heart as meek and humble...)

7. Be Thankful Rather Than Complain.

Never allow a day to pass in which you do not thank God. We should constantly be thanking God. Furthermore, we should make it a habit to frequently give thanks to others. "Give thanks to the Lord for He is good; His mercy endures forever," (Psalm 118:1).

8. Smile, even if you don't necessarily want to.

This indeed could be a great penance—to smile at somebody even when you are tired, carrying with you a headache or a cold. This is heroic virtue. A smile is something small, but it is contagious. Indeed, a sincere smile can lift those who see it from desolation to a state of consolation. One of the most evident signs of being a follower of Jesus is the smile of joy radiating from the face. "Rejoice in the Lord; I say it again: rejoice in the Lord." (Phil. 4:4)

9. Pray, even when you do not feel like it.

Many of us unfortunately base our spiritual life on mere feelings which are ephemeral, transitory, and passing like the dew that evaporates by the morning sun. Our best example is of course Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ in the Garden of Gethsemane (Lk. 22:39-46). When Jesus was experiencing a mortal agony and desolation that drew huge drops of Blood from His pores, He did not really feel like praying. Nonetheless, Jesus prayed all the more fervently.

Therefore, let us practice fasting and penance in our lives and have a set time and place to pray and to pray at times even when we do not feel like it. This is penance and true love for God! This is a sign of true maturity in the faith!

10. Encouragement.

"Barnabus" actually means "Son of encouragement" (Acts 4:36). Let us get out of our egotistic shell and focus more on God and seeing Jesus in others—in imitation of the Good Samaritan. (Lk. 10). Let us learn to be a Simon of Cyrene and help our brothers and sisters who are carrying the weight of a very heavy cross. Let us lighten it by encouraging words, motivational gestures and by a heart filled with love and compassion. Remember the Golden Rule: "Do to others what you would like them to do to you" (Mt. 7:12) In the difficult storms of the earthly battle, a word of encouragement can indeed be a powerful wind in the sails! Prayerfully read through these ten suggestions on how to fast—how to deny yourself—and choose at least one or two that you can start to practice right away. May Our Lady, Mother of Good Counsel, encourage us to deny ourselves and say "yes" to the love of God by serving our brothers and sisters with a generous heart! (Lk. 1: 38—Mary's "Yes" to God).

