

What Are You Giving Up For Lent?

With Easter coming up, most religiously-minded people know that the world is most of the way through the 40-day period of Lent. The traditional purpose of Lent is the penitential preparation of the Catholic through a variety of measures including prayer, penance, repentance, almsgiving, and self-denial. Its purpose is deemed even greater during the "Holy Week," which marks the death and resurrection of Jesus, which recalls the events of the crucifixion of Christ on "Good Friday," which then culminates in the celebration on "Easter Sunday" of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. During Lent, many Catholics fast or give up certain types of luxury as a form of penitence. They may decide to give up a favorite food or drink (e.g. chocolate, alcohol) or activity (e.g., going to the movies, playing video games, etc.) for Lent.

While the entire Catholic system of Easter needs examination, this article will only focus on Lent and the 40-day period of self-denial. In some cases, people are abstaining from activities that have no place in the life of a Christian (i.e., alcohol), while in other instances, people are abstaining from what does not matter (i.e., chocolate). In the scriptures, Christians are called to "*walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called*" (Ephesians 4:1). This responsibility exists every day. We have to chose the narrow path, not just for 40 days, but continuously; self-denial is never partially commanded in the New Testament (Matthew 7:13-14). Furthermore, abstaining from something trivial like one type of food does not inherently make someone more righteous. Paul called these ascetic tendencies "*the commandments and doctrines of men*" which have no value in stopping the indulgences of the flesh (Colossians 2:20-23).

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