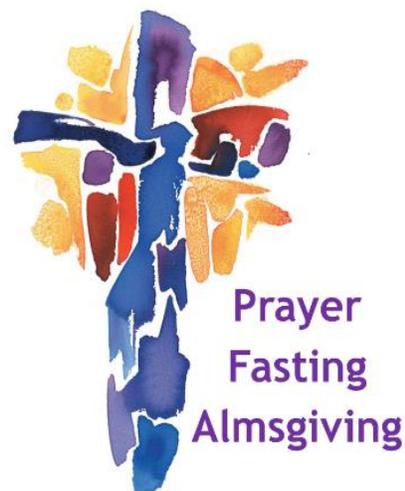


These 3 briefs are a series of commentaries relating the Lenten disciplines Prayer, Fasting and Almsgiving to *Unleash the Gospel*. From the STM Bulletin February 18 & 25, and March 4, 2018

Doing MORE this Lent with - PRAYER

The foundational conviction of *Unleash the Gospel* is that we allow the Holy Spirit to make us into a band of joyful missionary disciples. This means that everyone should, make “one’s relationship with Jesus and alignment with His will the central guiding principle of every aspect of life.”

This goal in *Unleash the Gospel* only asks us to do what we hope to do during any Lent: to pursue, with the help of the Holy Spirit, a deeper relationship with our Lord and to open our hearts more fully to the Father’s love. Lent is a season made for just this kind of on-going conversion. Archbishop Vigneron also wrote in *Unleash the Gospel* that “this missionary conversion entails a strikingly countercultural way of living **grounded in prayer, Scripture, and the sacraments...**”



As we move into Lent, let’s consider not only what we will “give up” as we prepare for Easter, but what we will take on. The secular culture may not recognize prayer because it does not recognize God. We can be more “countercultural” by praying a little more, and maybe a little differently. No matter what our prayer life is like now, let us consciously add to it, taking on even just 10 minutes or 10 minutes more a day to help us live more grounded in our relationship with Christ.

Prayer, together with Fasting and Almsgiving, is one of the three great disciplines of Lent that help us turn our hearts over to the Jesus, that is, to conversion. Try these prayerful ways of allowing Christ’s will to be “the central guiding principle of every aspect of life.”

- Keep it simple. Pick a quiet place and a regular time.
- Read the Bible 10 minutes each day. Start with the Gospels. Just read. Don’t worry. Let The Word reveal Himself to you.
- Persevere.
- Pick up a Little Black Book or other devotional to help guide your prayer time.
- Sign up for a daily email Lenten reflection, such as Bishop Barron’s at: www.lentreflections.com
- Pray the *Prayer to Unleash the Gospel*.
- Come to the Stations of the Cross and Benediction on Friday evenings at 7:00 pm, here during Lent.

Doing MORE this Lent with - FASTING

The foundational conviction of *Unleash the Gospel* is that we allow the Holy Spirit to make us a band of joyful missionary disciples. This means we all should make our “relationship with Jesus and alignment with His will the central guiding principle of every aspect of life.”

Unleash the Gospel is asking us to do what we hope to do in Lent: to pursue, with the guidance of the Spirit, a deeper relationship with our Lord, to open our hearts more fully to his love. Lent is a season made for just this kind of on-going conversion away from the ways of the world and towards God. In *Unleash the Gospel*, Archbishop Vigneron calls us to grow in appreciation of “ethical goods, aesthetic values, love, friendship [and] sacrifice...” even a self-sacrifice that can “cause the fragrance of Christ to fill the atmosphere, so that others are drawn to him.”

The spiritual discipline of fasting helps us develop a habit of sacrifice, setting aside things that can distract us from God and other people. Fasting opens up space and time and opportunity for us to love more. It moves our focus from ourselves and frees us to participate fully in Christ's Kingdom. Together with Prayer and Almsgiving, fasting helps us turn our hearts over to Jesus and attract others to him. Fasting is not just "giving up" something; it is taking up something more. Try these simple ways of allowing Christ to be "the central guiding principle of every aspect of life."

- Give up watching television during dinner time.
 - Take up conversation with your family or invite someone to dinner.
- Give up playing computer games.
 - Take up listening to sacred music.
- Give up listening to political pundits on the radio.
 - Take up listening to a Catholic station or driving in silence.
- Give up watching violent or indecent films.
 - Take up decent films (for ideas see: www.ncregister.com/blog/steven-greydanus/lent_films)
- Give up posting on Facebook.
 - Take up writing a 'snail-mail' letter each week to thank someone you've always meant to.

Doing MORE this Lent with - ALMSGIVING

Unleash the Gospel teaches that as disciples of Jesus we should express keenly attractive "joy, hospitality and generous service to the poor." *Unleash the Gospel* asks us to do more of what we aspire to do in Lent: to open our hearts more fully to Christ's love for us, as well as to express more generously our love for our neighbors.

Embracing the discipline of almsgiving helps us develop an enduring habit of Charity. Our parish has a history of generosity to charities that aid the poor. Even so, during Lent let us each prayerfully evaluate how we give. It is those who feed the hungry and clothe the naked who are blessed and invited into Christ's kingdom (Matt 25:33-40).

Also, the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* teaches that we have a duty to provide "for the material needs of the Church, each according to [our] abilities" (¶2043). This means our own parish ought to be included in our almsgiving. Some religious traditions mandate "tithing" (giving 10% of all income) for every household, even as a prerequisite to sit in a pew! The Catholic Church views such rules improper for a free will offering. Yet recent Offertory reports in our Bulletin show an opportunity for more of us to respond. Of course, numbers of weekly envelopes do not tell the whole story. Some people give monthly, or electronically, or in cash. Many give of time and talent. Still, only 20% of households typically give each week and there is a persistent deficit in budgeted receipts. For STM to become a place "of life-changing personal encounter with Jesus that permeates every aspect of parish life and that leads to a loving encounter of our neighbor," and to be a parish prepared to "equip, empower, support and send forth individuals and families in mission," all of us need to commit our prayers, time and talent, and treasure, according to our abilities. This Lent, let's prayerfully evaluate our almsgiving and our abilities and consider how we might regularly give more to our parish.

- Could we give just 10% more each week?

If we are not giving financially now, let's consider joining the ranks of those who do support all the things we love at STM.

- If just 10% more of us gave something each week, that would help eliminate the deficit.