

From the Chaplaincy



LENTEN VALUABLES

By Fr. Francis Ongkingco

“Father?” Sam excitedly entered my room and laid some pieces of crumpled paper on the table.

“Yes, Sam? Anything I can help you with?”

She gently pressed her palms over the crumpled pieces, but they rebelliously resisted by re-crumpling themselves altogether again. When she was finally satisfied with messily spreading them out on the table, she said, “These are my previous *Lenten offerings* which I never managed to do! Could you suggest something I could offer for this year?”

As she spoke, my eyes got entangled with the mess of *offerings* that seemed like floating grey clouds. I was trying to imagine what animal or object would appear with their random *crumpled-ness*.

“Father!!!?” Sam brought me back from the Dumbo and Simba figures I was just imagining together.

“Oh, I’m sorry, didn’t mean to get distracted, Sam,” I scratched my head. “First, let’s see what we could recycle from your list!”

I took one of the *offerings* and read: “This one says, *no sweets.*”

Another said, “*No video games.*”

“*No soda drinks...*”

Sam was getting impatient for some response, and even before I could give her a satisfactory answer she said, “I can’t understand why I keep breaking them!”

Her words struck me and I wondered, isn’t this precisely why we break them, because we have poorly associated Lent to a crumpled list of dos or don’ts?

Thus, a spiritual author laments:

“When we think of Lent only in these black-and-white terms and make it about the external things we do or don’t do, then it becomes a few weeks of hurrying up and getting to Easter so we can get back all that stuff we gave up and take a rest from all that extra holy stuff we tried to cram in and celebrate Easter, with marshmallow chicks and fine chocolates. Instead (Lent) ought to take you on a journey of sorts that brings you closer to Jesus. (Lent, Katie P. McGrady)”

There must be more to Lent than just our list of offerings. Perhaps, if we apply the common meaning of the word, that is, to lend or entrust

something to someone, we can draw something useful. Usually, what we are *lent* is something gratuitous, valuable and related to someone who trusts or loves us. Thus, we could consider how the *Season of Lent* is a time when God lends us the following valuable things:

- Grace
- Time
- Talent
- Family and friends

These come to us *only once in our life*. After we die, we have no other chance to indulge, bear and share our fruits through them!

Instead of a Lenten List, perhaps, it would be more interesting to sift these ‘Lenten Valuables’ and plan how they could be enriched by the three principal *acts of Lent*: prayer, fasting and almsgiving.

THE THREE PILLARS

 <p>PRAYER IT HELPS US TO BE CLOSE TO CHRIST AND IN CONSTANT DIALOGUE WITH HIM, JOINING HIM IN HIS SACRIFICE ON THE CROSS.</p>	 <p>FASTING PURIFYING OURSELVES FROM SOMETHING THAT IS KEEPING US FROM DEVOTING OUR HEARTS TO THE LORD. <small>(DOESN'T NEED TO BE FROM FOOD!)</small></p>	 <p>CHARITY GIVING WHAT WE HAVE HELPS US TO UNDERSTAND CHRIST'S GENEROSITY IN THE CROSS.</p>
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There must be more to Lent than just our list of offerings...the Season of Lent is a time when God lends us the following valuable things:

**Grace
Time
Talent
Family & friends**

We could, for example, in prayer consider how we maximize our time to love and serve God, to thank Him for His abundant graces manifested in the gift of life, our talents and family/friends, and how we could capitalize more on the Sacraments.

We fast not only by curtailing our material engagements, but also when the very Lenten gifts are rendered to serve our neighbors. For example, the time spent on video games or social media could be offered by one's initiative to take on extra chores or hidden acts of joyful service.



We offer almsgiving by offering prayers and sacrifices for those who have fallen away from the faith, doing penance for their sins and for their conversion. These daily alms may not be visible, but before God, they weigh much more than the extra coins we could offer elsewhere.

Let us therefore consider, how to journey towards Easter, bearing these 'lenten valuables' that convert us into priceless gifts for our Resurrected Lord.