

Lent: Tips to make this time unforgettable for your community

Lent is a time of prayer and penitence, of conversion. In other words, it is time for the Church to evangelize. Whether by words or by concrete works, this liturgical period is another opportunity to offer the faithful and brothers who are distant from the Church, a new encounter with Christ. But how can we make Lent a special time of conversion? Here are some practical tips on how to work evangelism during this time.

Tip 1: Reaffirming the value of Via Sacra meditation

Going through the path of Christ, from his condemnation by Pilate to Calvary: this is one of the exercises of spiritual piety that most characterizes Lent for the Christian. However, the faithful often do not understand the value of Via Sacra and they end up not participating of this moment. Therefore, it is up to the priests and pastoral leaders and movements to encourage the community to live by remembering that every baptized person must travel spiritually through the via crucis, accompanying the suffering of Christ, his surrender for our salvation, for the redemption of humanity. Pope Francis, when he was in Brazil in 2013, experienced a special moment of prayer of Via Sacra with the World Youth Day participants. On the occasion, he explained that on Christ's cross is not only the suffering of Christ, but also ours. According to the Pope, through the meditation of the Via Sacra, we remember that "Christ carries our crosses and tells us: **Courage! You are not alone to take it! I'll take it with you. I have overcome death, and I have come to give you hope, to give you life.** "

***** READ – The fundamental questions about Liturgy that you should know how to answer ***

Tip 2: Encouraging the practice of fasting

Fasting is like a remedy that helps the Christian to fight against their spiritual adversaries. It is an external mortification that aims to restore the interior. However, this is not always the understanding faithful people have about fasting. It is, therefore, necessary to give guidance on the value of this exercise during Lent and the different ways of practicing it.

Tip 3: Promoting reconciliation

One of the Christian's ways of manifesting his conversion is through the sacrament of confession – also called the sacrament of conversion and reconciliation. Through confession, the penitent delivers to Jesus the miseries he carries within himself, relying on the Divine Mercy.

It is in the forgiveness of sins that there is reconciliation with God and with the Church. As the Magisterium recommends in its commandments that the Christians should confess themselves at least for the Easter time, parishes should be willing to offer and to facilitate to the faithful the opportunity to confess during Lent.

Let us always remember that evangelization is not only in transmitting doctrine, but especially in personal encounter with Christ. When we promote favorable occasions for this meeting, the faithful spontaneously seek to live the sacraments of the Church and, in this way, evangelization happens in all its fullness.

Reading suggestions:

Catechism of the Catholic Church: 1422, 1440, 1446.

**Letters from Pope John Paul II on Lent, Access the letter here

Letters from Pope Francis on Lent, Focused reading ***