

# 20 Out-of-the-Box Things to Do for Lent 2026

BY COLIN MACIVER

Are you tired of giving up chocolate for Lent? Then here are some other creative ideas on what you can do for Lent 2026.

To be clear, this is not a list of things to do instead of fasting and sacrificing during Lent. I'm always on guard for talk that sounds like, "I'm not doing a regular Lent, I'm doing a cool Lent." Fasting and sacrifice are essential practices modeled and endorsed by Christ himself and are among the main actions that the Church calls us to during the Lenten season. (No pain, no gain. No cross, no crown.)

That being said, prayer and almsgiving—the source and fruit of sacrifice and fasting—are also essential to Lenten observance. Self-giving love must flow from and into the Trinity, which is the source and destiny of all love.

Prayer is first. In our prayer we are driven by the Spirit into the desert with Christ (Matthew 4:1) and in our prayer we are nourished by every word that comes from the mouth of God (Matthew 4:4). Almsgiving, the other main action of Lenten observance, means offering or giving with love. When we pray and fast we grow in real liberty and can more effectively love as God loves.

So far, so good, right? The question though, is how? If we just vaguely resolve to pray and give more, we are likely to slip into inertia. At the end of Lent we will probably shrug our shoulders, eat a Peep, and hope to do better next year.

Last year I offered a list of hopefully helpful, albeit oddly specific and unusual, Lenten sacrifices. (It might be worth taking a look at that list this year as well.) This year, let's look at practices in the categories of prayer and almsgiving that can also make this Lent one for the history books. I'll offer twenty ideas for incorporating both prayer and almsgiving into your Lenten plan. Of course, this list won't be exhaustive and the hope is that the ideas given will spark many more among readers. (If you have them, please share in the comments.) Many of the ideas below came from or were inspired by teens, colleagues, family, and friends. I hope these can help you as you pray about your own personalized Lenten prescription.

## **1. Daily Mass... with a Twist**

Whether you are already a daily Mass goer or not, resolve to go during Lent. To add an element of specific intercession and self-gift, pick someone in your life to offer your Mass up for each time you go. Afterwards send them a simple, but personalized note or text letting them know about it.

## **2. Pray Like a Monk**

Pray the Liturgy of the Hours, which is the official prayer of the Church and is actually not just for monks and nuns at all. Perhaps you can start with either morning, evening, or night prayer.

Maybe you want to go big and dive into all three. Don't have a breviary? No problem. There's an app for that.

### **3. Pray It Forward**

Pray the Rosary every day (or on specific set days) for the intentions of someone in your life and give the person you prayed for the Rosary that you used. Invite them to do the same.

### **4. Get on Your Knees**

If you don't already, consider praying by your bedside on your knees before you go to bed and when you wake up. St. John Paul II reported that it was very impactful to observe that his father carried out this practice.

### **5. A Chaplet a Day**

Incorporate the chaplet of Divine Mercy into your daily prayer. The chaplet is a powerful prayer that can take place in the span of ten minutes or so on a commute, during a lunch break, or whenever the opportunity arises. (You could also offer chaplets for specific people and give them the beads as in number three).

### **6. Staycation Pilgrimage**

Maybe you can't get to the Holy Land or to a major shrine during Lent, but consider taking a trip to your diocesan cathedral, or setting aside a day to visit a series of churches, chapels, and holy places in your community.

## **7. Do Your Own Stations of the Cross**

Take the season of Lent to compose your own personal meditations on each of the Stations of the Cross. You could write them from the perspectives of those who were with Christ during his passion, from Christ's perspective, as a prayer from you to the suffering Christ. There are lots of ways to do this. Once you've written them, pray with them often.

## **8. Desert Journal**

Keep a Lenten journal to catalogue your journey with Christ into the desert.

## **9. Secret Intercessor**

Pick one person for whom you feel called to offer prayer and sacrifice during the Lenten season. Take note of prayers and sacrifices offered and send them a card on Holy Saturday letting them know that you have offered your Lenten observance as an act of love with Christ for them.

## **10. Tithe Time**

We are all busy and time is at a premium. What about making a specific weekly service commitment for the season of Lent. It could be in your parish, at a nursing home, or a local outreach. Make the commitment specific and, if possible, actually sign up so you will be accountable.

## **11. Good Samaritan Bags**

Get twenty to thirty reusable bags and pack them with healthy snacks, toiletries, socks, and other helpful items. Keep them in your car and make it a goal to hand them out to people in your community who could use them.

## **12. Saturday Service Road Trip**

Plan a day of service with your family and/or friends that might even involve a bit of travel. Where? Consider contacting a religious order who has an apostolate that could use volunteers. Get up early, get some coffee, pray a Rosary on the way, roll up your sleeves and get involved.

## **13. Rice Bowl Done Right**

CRS Operation Rice Bowl is fairly ubiquitous and is the real deal in terms of effective well run charities. Do Rice Bowl well and with a spirit of real almsgiving. Maybe you don't keep so much cash around anymore, but you can give digitally on their site as well. Consider checking out their resources and make Lent a season of real substantial giving that can make a difference to our brothers and sisters in need.

## **14. Secret Santa (but Lent)**

St. Nicholas wasn't only generous during Advent and Christmas. From what we know of him, it would seem that he had a year round penchant for identifying the concrete needs of specific people and responded with magnanimity. Take the season of Lent to save up and shower someone in your community with great and

anonymous gifts. Thanks to the miracle of online shopping and delivery, they need never know it was you. This is a chance to be a stealthy superhero of generosity known only to your heavenly Father.

## **15. Stay Awake and Keep Watch**

Want to get hardcore about your Holy Hour? Consider signing up for a slot at midnight or beyond at your local Adoration chapel for a night a week during Lent, if you haven't already.

## **16. Lenten Baby Shower**

Collect diapers, wipes, bottles, baby clothes and other items that you would buy for a standard baby shower. During Holy Week, bring it all over to a local crisis pregnancy center.

## ***17. Lectio Divina***

A simple way to read the Bible daily and purposefully during Lent.

- 1.) Pick a short passage to read
- 2.) Meditate on it
- 3.) Pray about it
- 4.) Listen to what God speaks to your heart
- 5.) Enact God's Word in your life.

## **18. I Was in Prison...**

Ministry to those in prison is directly prescribed by Christ. Find a way to get involved. It might begin with a call to your parish and might lead to having a pen pal, prayer partner, or even to taking some time for actual visits to a local prison.

## **19. Take a Hike**

Jesus' time in the desert was a journey of silence and solitude. Take a day by yourself to pray in the wilderness. Depending on where you live this might entail more of a beach or a forest than a desert, but the point is to spend time alone with God in silence. Turn your phone off, put it on silent, or even leave it behind.

## **20. Make a List**

Every Sunday pray about three concrete and actionable things that you are called to do during the upcoming week of Lent. Write them down and accomplish them throughout the week. Take time the following Sunday to reflect and choose things to do during the following week. Then repeat the process each week during Lent.