

Some Ways to Get Ready for Easter

Repenting

The Lord tells us that, once or twice a year, we are meant to examine ourselves and work on repenting from some evil in our lives. (See the back of this page for some readings.) The time leading up to Easter can be a good opportunity to do this work. There is a great resource available to help you—take a look at beginanewlife.info. This resource can also help you identify something to work on, if you're not sure where to start. Here are some suggestions of things you might repent from:

revenge lying gossiping cursing resentment arrogance contempt for others envy
controlling other people taking what isn't yours adultery ridiculing sacred things

Or maybe thinking of the positive quality that you want more of in your life and in yourself will help you identify what you want to work on changing. Here are a few suggestions:

forgiveness honesty trustworthiness patience gratefulness empathy integrity
contentment humility love of marriage confidence in the Lord

I will repent from _____

Adding a Spiritual Practice

The period leading up to Easter can also be a good time to work on adding in a spiritual practice. If you are fasting from something that takes time (*e.g.* watching TV) you can fit your new spiritual practice into that new time slot you have available. Here are a few suggestions of spiritual practices you could add:

reading a chapter of the Word every day praying attending church participating in a small group
doing your daily work with more intention meditating having family worship journaling

I will add this spiritual practice to my life: _____

Fasting

One of the most common ways to use the time leading up to Easter is to fast—to not allow yourself to have something, either for the whole period or for certain hours of each day. Here are a few suggestions of things you could consider fasting from:

alcohol caffeine TV sugar certain foods social media watching or reading the news

This is not to suggest that it is morally wrong to consume any of these things. It is an invitation to choose to intentionally deprive yourself of something to learn about your relationship with that thing or to make space for other things.

I will fast from _____



Bryn Athyn Church

A Few Readings on Repentance

From that time Jesus began to preach and to say, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." (Matthew 4:17)

Then Jesus said to them all, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let them deny themselves, and take up their cross daily, and follow Me." (Luke 9:23)

If people [who are devoted to doing good things that come from the Lord] abstain from one evil on the grounds that that evil is sinful, they abstain from all evils (provided that both their will and their intellect are engaged in the process, that is, they abstain from that evil purposely and deliberately). The effect is even greater if they intentionally abstain from more than one evil. As soon as we abstain purposely or deliberately from any sinful evil, we are held by the Lord in a resolution to abstain from the rest as well. Therefore if it happens that because we did not realize what was going on or because we were overwhelmed with physical desire, we do something evil, it is not held against us. It was not something we planned to do, and we do not support what we did.

We develop this resolve if we examine ourselves once or twice a year and recover from an evil we find in ourselves. If we never examine ourselves, we do not develop this resolve. (*Survey* 113)

Active repentance is examining yourselves, recognizing and admitting to your sins, accepting that you are at fault, confessing them before the Lord, begging for His help and power in resisting them, stopping doing them, and living a new life. All this is to be done as if you were doing it on your own. Do this once or twice a year when you are about to take Holy Communion. Afterward, when the sins for which you are at fault recur, say to yourselves, "We do not want these, because they are sins against God." This is active repentance. (*True Christianity* 567:5)

If we are leading a life of charity and faith we repent every day. We reflect on the evils in ourselves, acknowledge them, guard against them, and pray to the Lord for help. On our own we are constantly falling down, but the Lord is constantly raising us up and leading us toward goodness. This is our state if we devote our lives to doing good. If we spend our lives doing evil, then too we are constantly falling down and the Lord is constantly lifting us up, but the result is only that we are steered away from falling into those most serious evils to which we instinctively tend with all our might. (*New Jerusalem* 163)

[T]he only way to dig out the root of evil is by doing battle against it.

The more we do battle and thereby set evils to one side, the more what is good replaces them and we look what is evil in the face from the perspective of what is good and see that the evil is hellish and hideous. Since this is how we see it then, we not only abstain from it but develop an aversion to it and eventually loathe it.

When we battle against what is evil, we cannot help but fight using what seems to be our own strength, because if we are not using what seems to be our own strength, we are not doing battle.

However, we need to be quite clear about the fact that it is the Lord alone who is fighting within us against the evils, that it only seems as though we are using our own strength for the battle, and that the Lord wants it to seem like that because if it does not, no battle occurs, so there is no reformation either.

We need only resist evils in our intentions once a week or twice a month and we will notice a change. (*Life* 94-97)

[Jesus said,] "I say to you that likewise there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine just persons who need no repentance." (Luke 15:7)