

“*Feeling hopeful does not mean to be optimistically naive and ignore the tragedy humanity is facing. Hope is the virtue of a heart that doesn’t lock itself into darkness, that doesn’t dwell on the past, [that] does not simply get by in the present, but is able to see a tomorrow.... And it can do so much, because a tiny flicker of light that feeds on hope is enough to shatter the shield of darkness.*”

— POPE FRANCIS, April 2017 TED Talk

## HOPE AND ALMSGIVING

“It is in giving that we receive,” according to the Prayer of Saint Francis. Almsgiving can seem the easiest of Lenten disciplines. Most of our parishes have opportunities to donate funds to missions or the poor, and these are important works of charity. Giving funds to help support others has been a part of Lent since the earliest days of Christianity and brings hope to others. However, as Saint Mother Teresa of Calcutta said, “It’s not how much we give but how much love we put into the giving” that’s important. Exercising hope means we are relying on God’s love for us, which calls us to truly love others. This might mean that we exercise our hope this Lent by giving our love in time as well as in treasure:

- Volunteer time at your parish during one of their Lenten activities, or help clean or decorate the church in preparation for Holy Week.
- Write cards to family and friends expressing ways they help you feel more hopeful and thanking them for their support.



- At Mass, introduce yourself to one new person each week of Lent and show them God’s love by sitting with them during the liturgy.
- Actively watch for someone each day who needs an extra helping hand in your family, in your neighborhood, at work, or at school.
- Keep a Lenten Hope List. Write down names of those you encounter who need an extra dose of love and support. Pray for them and check in with them during Lent to show your care.

## LENT: A SEASON OF HOPE

Lent gets its name from a word meaning “springtime,” the time of year when the hours of daylight are lengthening and the sun is bringing back its warmth and light. The Lenten season, indeed all of springtime, is a time of hope: we deepen our relationship with Christ through our Lenten disciplines and look to his crucifixion, death, and resurrection to overcome the darkness that can cause us to struggle and despair. Some days we may not feel the love of God that is always present, but we can rely on hope to move us forward in faith. Exercise hope this Lent and find renewal for the coming Easter season where we celebrate Christ’s joyful resurrection.



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# HOPE IN THE CROSS

A Lenten Experience

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“For who hopes for what one sees?  
But if we hope for what we do not see,  
we wait with endurance.” — Romans 8:24-25

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Saint Bonaventure stated, “Three things are necessary to everyone: truth that brings understanding, love of Christ which brings compassion, and endurance of hope which brings perseverance.” While Lent is traditionally the season to renew and refocus our discipleship through deeper experiences of prayer, fasting and almsgiving, it is important to remember that Christians are also called to live in hope. This Lent let us work to become more understanding, compassionate, and faithful through developing a habit of hope.

### WHAT IS HOPE?

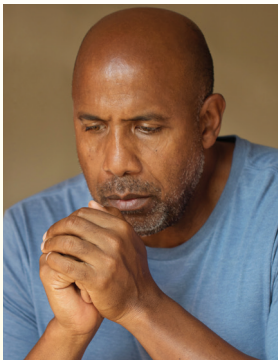
Hope is a theological virtue, a gift from God that helps us act as his children. Received at baptism, hope gives us confidence and inspiration as we look forward to heaven and salvation. Hope allows us to move forward in faith even in the most doubtful or difficult times. Hope can help us feel secure even in the midst of our own failings or the injustices we see in the world around us.



Saint Thomas Aquinas said, “Hope denotes a movement or a stretching forth of the appetite toward an arduous good.” In other words, we are reaching for the goodness of God when we exercise hope — even when it isn’t easy. Hope is also a form of trust in, and surrendering to, our loving God. We have faith in his goodness, and we trust his guidance for our lives and future. And, while hope is a gift, it is also an active choice we make to stretch toward God’s goodness. This stretching exercise can take many forms as we live the days of Lent.

### HOPE AND PRAYER

The season of Lent calls us to deepen our prayer lives. Saint Padre Pio’s famous phrase, “Pray, hope, and don’t worry,” is a reminder that prayer can give us comfort when we place our hope in God. Prayer shows our reliance on God as well as our confidence in God. Along with praying traditional Catholic prayers, it is helpful to pray with God’s word. This Lent, renew your prayer life by reflecting on these hope-filled Scripture passages:



- “We who have taken refuge might be strongly encouraged to hold fast to the hope that lies before us. This we have as an anchor of the soul, sure and firm” (Heb 6:18–19).
- “Rejoice in hope, endure in affliction, persevere in prayer” (Rom 12:12).
- “May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit” (Rom 15:13).
- “Let us hold unwaveringly to our confession that gives us hope, for he who made the promise is trustworthy” (Heb 10:23).



### PRAY THE ACT OF HOPE

Another way to deepen our faith life this Lent is to learn and recite the Act of Hope. Consider God’s mercy as you reflect on Christ’s death and resurrection and find hope in the promise of salvation:

*O my God, relying on your infinite mercy and promises, I hope to obtain pardon of my sins, the help of your grace, and life everlasting, through the merits of Jesus Christ, my Lord and Redeemer. Amen.*

### AN ANCHOR FOR THE SOUL

Did you know that the anchor represents hope? During the time of Roman persecution of Christians, it was adopted as a Christian symbol because it forms a cross. It was found in the catacombs and in homes, serving as an encouragement to Christians without drawing the attention of authorities. Since that time, the anchor cross is found in many churches and reminds us of hope and stability in Christ. As you meditate on the cross this Lent, consider the anchor cross and use it as an inspiration for hope in stormy times.



### HOPE AND FASTING

*“Fasting of the body is food for the soul.” — Saint John Chrysostom*

During Lent Catholics are called to days of fasting from food and abstinence from meat as we refocus our discipleship. The goal of fasting is to improve our relationship with Christ as we experience sacrifice in honor of his sacrifice for us. Fasting can help us feel connected with Christ and solidarity with the poor. Many Catholics also traditionally “give up” something for Lent. Here are some ideas to make your Lenten sacrifice a hope-building exercise.

- ✓ Refrain from negative or hopeless comments; try saying things only in positive ways.
- ✓ Avoid watching television or movies with negative messages or dialogue.
- ✓ Give away items that are burdening you with clutter; find new homes for them with a charity donation.
- ✓ Trade the time you usually spend on screens or sports viewing to take walks with family or friends.
- ✓ Skip buying desserts or treats and use the money you save to purchase flowers for someone who needs a day-brightener.



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