

5 Lent fasts that benefit God's creation

What to give up for Lent is one of the hardest decisions I have to make all year (yes, I'm spoiled). One of the reasons I fret so much about it is that I wonder how meaningful or how difficult the penance would actually be. While a Lenten penance is really only required to change *your* heart, having something that can affect others or the world is a definite bonus (and often much harder).

One of my biggest concerns lately has been global warming and the state of our environment, and indeed Pope Francis thinks this is a huge issue as well. So we recycle, drive fuel-efficient cars, and try not to use so much heat or AC.

So this Lent, if you want some extreme fasting and penance with an eco-friendly bonus, check out the following five suggestions about what to give up for Lent. They may be hard, but they're to change your heart . . . and model care for God's creation for your kids!

1. Give up warm showers

There's nothing like sitting in a warm shower as the steam builds up around you and you wash all your spiritual and emotional dirt down the drain. I know I tend to lose track of time and spend about twice as much time in the shower as needed. This is a drain on water and the energy needed to warm it up, plus there are many proven [health benefits](#) to cold showers.

Also, there's no better way to jolt yourself awake in the morning. Bonus: Say a rosary or chaplet of Divine Mercy while you rinse off.

2. Give up plastic bottles and cans

Do you drink a lot of pop, carbonated water, or pretty much anything from a gas station? You probably use a lot of plastic bottles or aluminum, and while these products are mostly recyclable, they still generate waste and consume energy. Consider the benefits of giving them up for Lent—you'd cut down on waste, drink more healthily, and thus maybe lose some weight, and you'd spend less money!

Consider getting a Soda Stream so you can still have carbonated water or pop equivalent with less cost and waste. Also consider getting milk in bags or cartons; it's slightly better for the environment. You can also just cut out carbonated drinks altogether and drink plain water from the tap or filter. Talk about penance!

3. Give up driving

Do you drive to work even though you could reasonably walk, ride a bike, or use public transportation? It might be a huge inconvenience (and thus a great penance), but if you can give up your drive to work in favor of some other form of commuting, you will be doing your part to reduce carbon emissions. An added benefit is that if you walk or bike you would be exercising. Say a rosary or chaplet during your commute over Lent to add some prayer to your fasting!

4. Give up electricity

For a truly hard-core Lent, spend forty days in darkness.

OK, maybe not complete darkness, but how much electricity do you waste on lights you don't really need? I love every room in my house to be well lit, and I often have lights on in rooms just so they're ready for me to enter if I need to go in them.

Do you ever use lights you don't really need? Turn the lights off unless you absolutely need them for safety, and you can

have a part in saving the planet . . . and put more cash in your wallet.

5. Give up meat

There's no denying meat is the [biggest cause](#) of global warming. I personally love meat, and could never give it up permanently, but giving it up for all of Lent (not just Fridays) would be the ultimate penance for me.

According to a 2008 *Time* magazine article (linked above), reducing your meat consumption by just 20 percent has the same effect as switching from a gas-powered car to a Prius.

So, if you want to go big this Lent, cut out meat entirely and find a vegetarian to give you some scrumptious recipes. Our Irish friends can maybe make an exception for St. Patrick's Day, but our vegetarian friends will have to find some other way of fasting!

Learn more

[Fasting, Giving, Praying: 25+ Ideas for What Kids & Teens Can Do for Lent](#)