

Living the Marian consecration through Lenten prayer, fasting, and charity



Archbishop Salvatore J. Cordileone blesses the Fatima statue during the consecration rite in the cathedral during the Oct. 7, 2017 rosary rally and consecration of the Archdiocese of San Francisco to the Immaculate Heart of Mary. (Photo by Debra Greenblat/Catholic San Francisco)

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Archbishop Salvatore J. Cordileone

For many of us, the consecration of our archdiocese to the Immaculate Heart of Mary last year on Oct. 7 – the feast of the Most Holy Rosary – was a highlight in the life of our local church. Our leadership in the archdiocese has been emphasizing that, if the consecration is not to remain anything more than a happy memory, we have to live it in practical ways in our daily lives, personally appropriating the message of Fatima. That is why we continue to urge our people to pray the Rosary daily, to observe some form of bodily fasting, and to spend

time in adoration before the Blessed Sacrament. The message of Fatima is consistent with what our Blessed Mother consistently asks of us in all of her apparitions: prayer and penance, in order to turn our hearts more perfectly toward her Son.

Prayer and fasting, along with works of charity, in order to turn us more wholeheartedly toward our Lord is also the point of the season of Lent, which is why we make these practices the focus of our spiritual lives every year during this holy season. But as we know from the messages of our Lady, the teachings of the saints, and, above all, from our Lord himself, this holy triad of the spiritual life is not unique to Lent, as if it can be ignored the rest of the year. Not that these practices are to be observed in exactly the same way all through the year except, perhaps, for works of charity. Certainly we should never stop praying, but our prayer life, if it is to be in sync with the liturgical life of the church, will take on a different flavor depending upon the particular liturgical season or holy day that is being observed (e.g., the Scripture passages or the mysteries of the rosary upon which we meditate). And while acts of penance are not appropriate during certain liturgical seasons and holy days, it is nonetheless a fundamental Christian practice that has application all throughout the year, especially on Fridays.

I would invite our good Catholic people, then, to see the season of Lent as a teaching tool of the Church that instructs us on how we can live virtuous Christian lives all throughout the year. We redouble our efforts during Lent, in a very focused way, in order to develop our spiritual stamina for living our faith well throughout the year. I therefore invite everyone to incorporate at least one form of each of these three holy practices that they are not already doing into their observance of Lent: some additional form of prayer (e.g., daily Mass or the Stations of the Cross), some form of fasting (e.g., skipping meals or abstaining from some favorite form of food or drink, or fasting in other ways such as a media fast), and some additional cause for almsgiving or work of charity (Operation Rice Bowl is especially appropriate).

The season of Lent is a great gift to us from the church. Let us persevere in observing it seriously, so that we might experience more profoundly the joy of Christ's Resurrection that we celebrate at Easter. That gift is, indeed, the culmination of our entire Christian life.