

**40 Mortifications for 21st-Century Christians**  
(Examples for Seeking Holiness) Sermon for the First Sunday of Lent  
Star of the Sea Parish, Fr. Javier Olivera Ravasi, SE

On the First Sunday of Lent, the Church presents to us the temptations of Our Lord in the desert; and she presents them so that we may also keep in mind that during Lent we too must withdraw in order to achieve our conversion and detach ourselves from the three enemies of the human race: the DEVIL, the WORLD, and the FLESH<sup>1</sup>.

But what does each of these enemies mean?

The DEVIL is that fallen angel, rebelled against God and punished with eternal separation from Him, who out of envy tempted and caused our first Parents to fall, and who, though conquered by Jesus Christ, still has permission to tempt even the Lord's disciples.

The WORLD is that ARTIFICIAL MIRAGE, that ATMOSPHERE OF A FALSE SCALE OF VALUES.

Finally, the FLESH is our own human nature fallen after original sin, when mankind lost not only divine sonship and the preternatural gifts, but even mastery over his own nature, being inclined to evil by what Catholic theology calls CONCUPISCENCE, which not even Baptism eradicates.

From this arises the necessity, for the Christian, of MORTIFICATION, for we do not have total dominion over our passions. Therefore, like a rider who must tame his horse, we must mortify our passions, conquer ourselves; hence Christ says (Matthew 11:12) that "the kingdom of heaven suffers violence," that is, it belongs to those who seek it with determination, conquering themselves.

And we must mortify ourselves, that is, do penance according to our state of life, as all the saints throughout history have done, seeking to eliminate the dominant defects that surround us, the bad inclinations, that stone in the shoe that each one of us carries, in order to achieve what Christ tells us in the Gospel (Matthew 5:48): "be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect."

He did not say, "be good," but "be perfect."

Therefore, since we do not wish to be too lengthy, we will enumerate here a series of examples to help us work on our spiritual life, taking some mortifications that each one may choose according to what is fitting.

**Mortifying our curiosity**

1. Repress curious, useless, or imprudent glances. Do not look at shop windows or kiosks unless you truly need to buy something specific.

2. Do not read crime reports, scandals, or the private lives of others turned into merchandise to feed the gluttony of curiosity.

**Mortifying our memory**

3. Do not dwell voluntarily on the evil done to us, nor on the good we have done.

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<sup>1</sup> We have summarized, with our own introduction, the text by Fr. Néstor Sato entitled "Mortifications for 21st-Century Christians (Suggestions)".

### **Mortifying our body**

4. Accept and assume the bodily defects that God has willed for us, whether from birth or the result of illness or accidents. Likewise, the limitations of fragile health.

5. Outside the hours of rest already established, never lie down unless feeling ill or exhausted from special effort.

6. In winter, do not keep your hands in your pockets and, unless sick, do not wear gloves.

7. Bear patiently and without comment the rigor of the seasons; do not say, “How cold it is!” or “How hot it is!” Everyone already knows!

8. Do not take a vehicle when, without excessive effort or useless waste of time, you can go on foot.

### **Mortification of the senses**

9. In summer, drink beverages at room temperature; do not cross the street seeking or avoiding the sun or the shade.

10. Do not use colognes or perfumes beyond what is necessary for hygiene.

11. Do not eat sweets or do not drink alcohol.

12. Of foods we greatly enjoy, serve ourselves little and do not take a second portion. Do the opposite when they are not to our liking.

13. Eat without choosing whatever is placed before you; never complain about the food, its quality, its quantity, or its preparation.

### **Mortification in the use of time**

14. Make “scrupulous” use of your time without wasting it.

15. Flee from TIME THIEVES — idle chatter, radio, newspapers, social media.

16. Respect the time of others, striving to suffice for yourself whenever possible.

### **Mortification of the tongue**

17. Mortify your tongue: idle or hurtful words.

18. Remain habitually silent, in a penitential silence, excusing yourself from speaking unless it is to respond, making a purifying and reparative silence.

19. When there is a need to speak, do not do so immediately, but only after repressing that first impulse that pushes us to express ourselves.

### **Mortification of our impatience**

20. When something irritates us, force ourselves not to dwell on it; cast the thought from our spirit, “change the channel,” and think of something else.

21. Never confide a sorrow or difficulty while still agitated by passion. Wait until the soul has calmed.

### **The struggle against our natural selfishness: charity**

22. Mortify the inclination to think ill of others and interpret them favorably whenever possible.

23. Let every word that reaches our ears against our neighbor die within us, be buried and rot in our breast.

24. Never complain voluntarily, murmuring against those creatures God uses to afflict and test us.

25. Smile... always smile, even if inwardly crucified, offering others the permanent alms of a kind and serene countenance.

26. In gatherings, spend some time with the most unpleasant persons.

27. Leave the best place to others, and in team tasks, take for yourself the most unpleasant part.

### **Mortifying greed**

28. Get rid of some things to which we are too attached.

29. Be generous in helping our neighbor.

### **Mortifying our self-love**

30. Never try to find out what is thought or said about us, or whether we are appreciated or not.

31. Refrain from refuting others' opinions unless they concern important truths and harm souls.

32. Do not give your opinion unless asked. Once given, do not insist on it unless it concerns something of real weight and consequence.

33. In conversation, do not interrupt others and wait until they have fully expressed their thought before speaking.

34. Never speak, without real necessity, of our knowledge. When it is unavoidable, speak with modesty of what we know.

35. Say nothing about yourself, neither good nor bad, except when necessary.

36. Cut off all thoughts and reflections of self-love: do not chew over resentments, plot revenges, even imaginary ones, or sustain interior arguments.

37. In indifferent or minor matters, so long as there is no sin involved, instead of obstinately disputing, yield graciously to others and sacrifice our will to theirs.

38. Married persons, from time to time, dress or arrange themselves according to the spouse's taste, even if it contradicts their own.

39. Judge everything with indulgence and be ingenious in seeing the good side in every person and thing.

40. Do not respond with sharp retorts or ironies.

Here, then, is a series of examples that may be followed during this Lent in order to leave behind the "old man," of whom Saint Paul speaks, and become the "new man," that is, to become other Christs on earth — which is, in the end, what it means to be nothing more and nothing less than "Christians."

Let us ask for that grace through the Mother of the Lord, who said at the wedding feast of Cana: "Do whatever He tells you" (John 2:5).

Fr. Javier Olivera Ravasi, SE

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