

Lenten Personality

Jesus told us that when we fast, we should do it modestly. Trying to impress others with your holiness is one sure way to displease your Father in heaven.

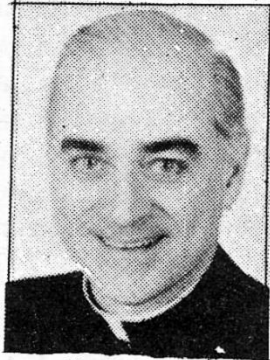
The Lord calls for real sacrifice, not histrionics. Sacrifice can take many forms. For instance, instead of giving up sweets, you can begin working on your personality. When Jesus said, "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you" (Mt. 7:2), He was offering us a formula for personal growth. The Golden Rule is the basic norm of morality of every major religion in the world. Those who practice it inevitably develop admirable traits and characteristics.

In our Christopher Leadership Course we divide the Golden Rule into separate components which we call "Personality Rules." We know for a fact that these practical rules can transform lives. They also make excellent Lenten resolutions. Here then are some ideas to make your Lent more meaningful and more spiritually fulfilling.

1. Show genuine appreciation. A grateful person takes the time and the effort to say thank you. Be attentive to the little things that are done for you, and express your thanks.

2. Point out the good in others. Give truthful praise and be specific. Affirm the good that others do, and give compliments when they are deserved.

3. Be alert to opportunities to speak a kind word, to show sympathy, or to give your neighbor a boost. And if someone maligns your neighbor, offer a defense by pointing out the good qualities in that



person.

4. Develop tolerance and courtesy. Think the best by looking for good motives behind the actions of others. Be quick to sense their needs and feelings. Be courteous and respect those feelings.

5. Practice kindness. Picture yourself in the other person's place and try to understand why they acted as they did. All behavior has a reason. If you don't understand the motives behind someone's actions, be kind anyway. Jesus said, "return good for evil." If you can't rise to heroic charity, at least be civil.

6. Ease the burdens of others. Practice the "works of mercy." Feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, clothe the naked, visit the imprisoned, shelter the homeless, visit the sick and bury the dead.

7. Act cheerful. Make light of the ordinary hardships of life. Why drag others down by constantly complaining? Be positive and look on the bright side. Learn to live your life gladly and joyfully because of the knowledge of God's love.

8. Smile to yourself more. If you do, you'll notice that any look of severity you might have developed will slowly vanish. You'll be a more attractive person, the way God intended you to be.

These are only a few ways of practicing the Golden Rule. If you decide to practice the Golden Rule more diligently, you won't have to give up anything for Lent, except perhaps the few faults and failings that make you less attractive.

[For a free copy of the Christopher News Note, Life Up Your Heart, send a stamped, self-addressed envelope to The Christophers, 12 E. 48th St., New York, N.Y. 10017.]

