

Phase III: sanctifying the seasons

By and Based on the Books of Robert J. Cormier (www.thefaithkit.org)
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Introduction

Phase I, “What I Ask,” was a program of spiritual works planned to last a week. Phase II was planned to last a month. This little book, “Phase III: sanctifying the seasons,” is a guide to making holy the seasons of Advent, Christmas, Lent, and Easter.

As you will see, the instructions which follow include checklists for particular dates and also each day of the week for each week of the seasons of Advent and Lent. (Saturdays are “free” unless they coincide with a special date in the calendar.)

You will also see that, unlike Phases I and II which were meant to be self-contained little books, Phase III presumes access to the internet for certain, somewhat lengthy materials available free at www.thefaithkit.org.

Please understand that it is NOT the presumption of this program that it should take the place of any spiritual practices or rules you might have picked up from Phases I and II.

Advent

Your General Checklist for Advent

Before the first Sunday of Advent, set up an Advent wreath and, with the first Sunday of Advent, start lighting it at least during your supper. Think about the fact that faith is like light—it is the truth that lets us see differently and live a better life. []

On or about December 6, Saint Nicholas Day, make a list of the gifts with which you will show God’s love to the people you also love. Remember that it is not necessary to spend money to give a great gift. []

On or about December 8, put up your Christmas tree and see it as a vote of confidence that the life, not only in nature, but also in you, i.e., the joy of your youth, will be more than back the moment you come downstairs on the morning of heaven. []

Send greetings to those who might be slipping out of your life. []

On December 13, the feast of Saint Lucy, pay attention to the earliest sunset of the year. If possible, share with others a big breakfast []

Set up your Christmas scene as a reminder that Jesus was born poor. []

On December 24 or 25, come to church! []

Your Daily Checklist for Advent

Sunday of the first week: Come to church. []

Monday of the first week: Use the long night. Sit in silence for 15 minutes. Consider re-reading one of the tools you have already received through The Explorer Program. []

Tuesday of the first week: Pray “A New Way to Say the Rosary” available from The Faith Kit at www.thefaithkit.org. []

Wednesday of the first week: Meditate on The Joyful Mysteries available from the Mini-Books menu at www.thefaithkit.org/panorama. []

Thursday of the first week: Say The Prayer of John the Baptist (below). []

Friday of the first week: Say The Jesus Prayer (below). []

Sunday of the second week: Come to church. []

Monday of the second week: Use the long night. Sit in silence for 15 minutes. Consider re-reading one of the tools you have already received through The Explorer Program. []

Tuesday of the second week: Pray “A New Way to Say the Rosary.”.[]

Wednesday of the second week: Meditate on The Joyful Mysteries. []

Thursday of the second week: Say The Prayer of John the Baptist (below). []

Friday of the second week: Say The Jesus Prayer (below). []

Sunday of the third week: Come to church. []

Monday of the third week: Use the long night. Sit in silence for 15 minutes. Consider re-reading one of the tools you have already received through The Explorer Program. []

Tuesday of the third week: Pray “A New Way to Say the Rosary.” []

Wednesday of the third week: Meditate on The Joyful Mysteries. []

Thursday of the third week: Say The Prayer of John the Baptist (below). []

Friday of the third week: Say The Jesus Prayer (below). []

Sunday of the fourth week: Come to church. []

Monday of the fourth week (if applicable): Use the long night. Sit in silence for 15 minutes. Consider re-reading one of the tools you have already received through The Explorer Program. []

Tuesday of the fourth week (if applicable): Pray “A New Way to Say the Rosary.” []

Wednesday of the fourth week (if applicable): Meditate on The Joyful Mysteries. []

Thursday of the fourth week (if applicable): Say The Prayer of John the Baptist (below). []

Friday of the fourth week (if applicable): Say The Jesus Prayer (below). []

Celebrating Christmas

Keep your New Years clean. []

On January 1, congratulate a mother on this, Mother’s Day in the universal Church. []

Make a trip, if possible. Get a check if you at least think about doing so. []

After Epiphany: Meditate on The Luminous Mysteries downloadable from the Mini-Books menu at www.thefaithkit.org/panorama. []

Lent

Your General Checklist for Lent

On March 19, the feast of Saint Joseph, congratulate a father on this, Father’s Day in the universal Church. []

On March 25, the feast of the Annunciation (which is really the feast of Jesus’ conception), cut open a seed and notice that we do not find a little plant. Try to understand that we can’t know why things are in there until they grow. Try to understand that, in like manner, we can’t know the why of things in our own lives until we die and are transformed. []

Before Ash Wednesday, decide on your personal plan for Lent and tell someone. []

Eat a lot on Mardi Gras. []

Your Daily Checklist for Lent

Ash Wednesday: Try to get ashes on Wednesday. Give yourself a check if, at least, you keep the rules of fast and abstinence. []

The Thursday after Ash Wednesday: Make “An Act of Contrition” (below). []

The Friday after Ash Wednesday: keep the rules of abstinence and make a Stations of the Cross. Use one of the three downloadable from the Mini-Books menu at www.thefaithkit.org/panorama. []

Sunday of the first week: Come to church. []

Monday of the first week and throughout the week: Look into yourself for “idols”—anything of the world, no matter how noble it may seem, that is supremely important, even more than life with God. Identify these idols, declare to God that they are nothing you just have to have, and begin to act accordingly. []

Tuesday of the first week: Make “A Basic Doctrinal Examination of Conscience” (below). []

Wednesday of the first week: Meditate on The Sorrowful Mysteries downloadable from the Mini-Books menu at www.thefaithkit.org/panorama. []

Thursday of the first week: Make “An Act of Contrition” (below). []

Friday of the first week: keep the rules of abstinence and make a Stations of the Cross. []

Sunday of the second week: Come to church. []

Monday of the second week and throughout the week: Seek to give up “physical distractions”—the misuse of food, drink, electronics, sex, activity, or even just movement in order not to be with yourself and face what you’re feeling. Begin to ask yourself, “is this trip really necessary?” Am I really hungry? Does the occasion really call for this drink? Is this really a favorite program?... []

Tuesday of the second week: Make “A Basic Doctrinal Examination of Conscience” (below). []

Wednesday of the second week: meditate on The Sorrowful Mysteries. []

Thursday of the second week: Make “An Act of Contrition” (below). []

Friday of the second week: keep the rules of abstinence and make a Stations of the Cross. []

Sunday of the third week: Come to church. []

Monday of the third week and throughout the week: Give up “other people.” Accept or even look for opportunities to be alone. Stay home. Stay off the phone (and turn off the cell phone). []

Tuesday of the third week: Make “A Basic Doctrinal Examination of Conscience” (below). []

Wednesday of the third week: meditate on The Sorrowful Mysteries. []

Thursday of the third week: Make “An Act of Contrition” (below). []

Friday of the third week: keep the rules of abstinence and make a Stations of the Cross. []

Sunday of the fourth week: Come to church. []

Monday of the fourth week and throughout the week: Give up “appearances.” Resist worrying about your looks, or who is looking, or how

you look if you make a mistake, or are otherwise humbled, or you need do or say something that might cause someone to judge you. []

Tuesday of the fourth week: Make “A Basic Doctrinal Examination of Conscience” (below). []

Wednesday of the fourth week: meditate on The Sorrowful Mysteries. []

Thursday of the fourth week: Make “An Act of Contrition” (below). []

Friday of the fourth week: keep the rules of abstinence and make a Stations of the Cross. []

Sunday of the fifth week: Come to church. []

Monday of the fifth week and throughout the week: Give up “control.” Give up whatever tricks or intimidation you might be using to control someone. Lighten up on your passion to protect someone. In situations where it is true, accept that you have done *enough*. []

Tuesday of the fifth week: Make “A Basic Doctrinal Examination of Conscience” (below). []

Wednesday of the fifth week: meditate on The Sorrowful Mysteries. []

Thursday of the fifth week: Make “An Act of Contrition” (below). []

Friday of the fifth week: keep the rules of abstinence and make a Stations of the Cross. []

Palm Sunday: Come to church and get your palm. []

Holy Monday: Make a plan for what you will do with the rest of Holy Week. []

Holy Tuesday: Consider whether you might need to make a confession. []

Spy Wednesday: Examine your conscience to see whether, perhaps, you have betrayed someone. []

Holy Thursday: Try to come to the service and give yourself a check if, at least, you do something that amounts to washing someone's feet. []

Good Friday: Try to come to the service and give yourself a check if, at least, you keep the rules of fast and abstinence. []

Holy Saturday or Easter: Come to church. []

Some Thoughts on How to Celebrate Easter

The season of Easter goes on for fifty days. It is the longest of the liturgical seasons. And the hardest to celebrate well.

Advent is short, and there are many things to do. Christmas is even shorter, and it is filled with feasts and traditions from start to finish. There are things to do for Lent even before it starts; and the season ends with Holy Week when there is something special every day. What, however, do we do with Easter? Here are five suggestions:

Eat cake. Or otherwise enjoy the things you might have sacrificed for Lent.

After all, part of the reason to give things up is to renew our appreciation for them and let this contribute to the joy of Easter. We can enjoy things with an especially clear conscience if we succeeded with our sacrifices and showed ourselves that the things we enjoy do not control us.

Feel free to do nothing.

Take time off. Get some rest. (Even the mothers of young children can go to one less meeting.) In any case, feel as un-obligated as you can manage morally. This perhaps is the best way to celebrate the meaning of Easter—the victory is won.

Enjoy the Spring.

See every new flower as a reminder of the transformation that awaits us. Be outside. Enjoy the lengthening light of day.

Participate in the return of life.

Perhaps it involves sports. Perhaps it involves the arts, or cooking or traveling, or something else entirely. In any case, do whatever it is you do to feel more alive.

Pay renewed attention to people.

Lent is not especially a time to pay attention to special people. Instead we are urged to look at what might be our spiritual needs and make a serious plan for Lent. Then we are urged to examine our conscience with someone else posing the questions. Then we are urged to walk with Jesus on the way of his cross. Lent is not a time for dinner parties or going out to dinner. Easter is. It is also a time for romance.

Consider mediating on The Glorious Mysteries downloadable from the “Mini-Books” menu at www.thefaithkit.org/panorama.

From this same menu you can also download the fourth in this series, “Minor (but great) Goals.”

Do visit Panorama, listen to the audio tour, and consider e-mailing the author for suggestions for further spiritual reading.

The Prayer of John the Baptist

Please God, conform my mind to Yours more and more each day. Let me not be desperate for what I want from MY plan, but peacefully open to whatever comes to me from Yours.

Please God, conform my heart to Yours more and more each day. Let me not judge everything self-centeredly as all of us are apt to do, but rather let me see things as they really are, and to look at others as You do.

Please God, more and more each day, teach me not to imagine heaven as everyone looking at the glory of me, but rather as it will be—everyone looking at the glory of You, and from this sight, to gain the life, that all of us will share.

The Jesus Prayer

Dear Jesus,

We thank you because you taught us that we too are children of God your Father.

We thank you for calling us to be His family, because we could not become His family any other way.

We thank you for all the truths you taught us, for letting us see them in your life and death, and for confirming them by conquering death.

But we love you because you bore every hardship we might face, all in one anonymous life,

and we adore you because you had no Jesus to inspire you, so that if we ourselves seem to be alone and can see nothing beyond our death, we know that you have been there before us, and that our faith in the Father will not be disappointed.

A Basic Doctrinal Examination of Conscience

We believe in God:

Do you believe in God? How would your life be different if you did not believe in God?

Do you pray... every day? Is your prayer always “for” something, or sometimes do you just talk to God? Do you sometimes just listen... or is prayer to you just talking?

Are you comfortable with silence?

From the second commandment: Do you try not to use God’s name “in vain,” which is what we do when we say “God” but not in prayer? Do you strive to keep the rest of your speech clean?

Are you conscious of God’s attention to you... many times on most days? Are you conscious of His love? Would you agree that God’s love is the greatest thing you have? Is this also how you feel?

We believe in heaven:

Do you believe in heaven? Do think about life with God... every day? Is heaven the main thing you hope for? Is it the main thing you live for? From the first commandment: Is any worldly thing supremely important to you?

Are you comfortable with talk about death? Are you conscious that life here is temporary?

Do you ever feel “if only”? From the tenth commandment: Are you ever envious?

Can you say you enjoy life? *Do* you say you enjoy life? Do you think often about the good things that have already come your way? Do you often say “thank you” to God for what you have?

We believe in love:

Do you believe in love? Do you love? Do you do anything for others apart from what is expected? Do you do anything for which you get no credit? Do you ever sacrifice what you really wanted to have or to do for someone else's sake?

Do you have a special love for anyone specific? Do you love these people well? Could you love them better? How?

Do you ever say "I'm sorry"?

Do you forgive... even if others were really wrong... even if others really hurt you? Is there someone who always makes you angry... just the thought of this person?

In moments of conflict, do you strive to see the situation from the other person's point of view? Does doing so ever change your point of view?

Do you accept that people do the best they can with what they are given? Do you try to see them in the light of this truth?

Do you speak often of the faults of others? Do you often downgrade the accomplishments or apparent good qualities of others? When you speak about others, is it more often to praise or to criticize?

From the fourth commandment: Do you flaunt a law or a rule you want other people to obey?

From the fifth commandment: Do you speak kindly to people? Do you strive to control your temper? Have you become dependent on anything other than food, water, air, and rest? Is a daily "buzz" or a weekly "party" an important part of your life?

From the sixth and ninth commandments: Are you doing something sexually that expresses more commitment to someone than you really have? Do you play games with other people's feelings? Is pornography a part of your life? Do you do anything to resist fantasies that have no business in your mind? Are you cultivating a friendship that you would not want your husband (or wife) to have?

From the seventh commandment: Do you feel a freedom with someone else's property that you would not want anyone to feel with yours? Are you honest with teachers, bosses, clients, and the government?

From the eighth commandment: Do you lie to get out of trouble? Do you exaggerate to get attention?

We believe in God's plan:

Do you believe in God's plan... even when something hard has happened... even when something that seems unfair has happened?

Do you believe that God's plan includes you—everything that has ever happened to you or ever will? Is there anything you haven't let go? Are you often worried? Do you often feel fear? Do you often feel pressure?

Do you love who God has made you? Can you say you are thrilled to be you?

Are you at peace with yourself... or are you often angry? Do you brood over your mistakes, your limitations, or your bad treatment by others? Are you forever comparing yourself to others? Are you comfortable around others? Are you yourself with others, or do you often feel the need to appear to be something you are not. Are you almost always concerned about how you look?

We believe that we were made to be a family:

Do you believe that we were made to be a family? In other words, do you believe that we are going to share God's life as a family where all of us are going to be richer for the holiness of each of us? Are you happy about the idea that each of us will share fully in our family's life with God?

Do you believe that we are called to be the Church? From the third commandment: Do you come to church? Are you as faithful to God as you want God to be faithful to you?

Do you serve the community in any other way? Do you do anything apart from Sunday to help your faith to grow?

Do you let it be known that your faith is important to you? Do you ever talk about your faith? Do you ever speak of your faith to people who may not share it?

An Act of Contrition

Dear God,

Please know that I am sorry for all my sins since the last time I said this prayer.

Know that I am deeply un-proud of my self-centeredness, and of the many times I was preoccupied with myself for no good reason, judged things solely with reference to me, or depreciated the success or goodness of others.

Forgive me for speaking of the faults of others in yet another failed attempt to boost or justify myself, and for judging others as You never judge me.

Forgive me for those times that I chose myself, even my convenience, over the greater good I might have done for others.

Forgive me for casually not caring about the suffering of others, not even bothering to commend them to Your care.

Forgive me for those times that I did not bother to encourage or congratulate others even though the opportunity was obvious.

Forgive me for those times that I was indifferent to others, had no time to take them seriously, or was positively cruel.

Forgive me for those times that I was rude or crude, or dirty in thought, word, or deed.

Forgive me for those times that I was dishonest, cowardly, or lazy, and those other times that I was phony.

Forgive me any time I might have misused something, or someone, in order to kill time or deaden my spirit.

And forgive me for ignoring You, even though You never ignore me, and help me to continue my struggle for holiness, to believe better in Your love, and to see myself and others as You do.

Amen.