

So it's Lent. . . time to slow down, quiet down and empty out. Now before you think I am still stuck in Advent—just hear me out—because during Lent we are called to put forth renewed efforts in the three disciplines of **prayer, fasting and almsgiving**.

As Saint Benedict reminds us in his rule for monks, these are things we should always be doing as Christians but take on in earnest during the next 40 days.

In **prayer**, we certainly have to quiet ourselves to have good conversations with God—in which we both speak and listen.

In **fasting**, we empty ourselves of some desires—be that food, perhaps television, or gossip, making room in our hearts and lives to be filled with the values of the kingdom of God.

And when we renew our efforts in **almsgiving** – for most of us that means first slowing down enough just to see those who we would normally rush right by – in order to notice that they do have needs and that we can respond to them in some way.

Prayer, fasting and almsgiving are the disciplines we take on with renewed efforts during this season of Lent – not necessarily because we want to – but because we have to in order to better become those people God is calling us to be: people who aren't afraid to slow down, quiet down and empty out – to be conformed more and more into the image of Jesus Christ.