



## *Reflection from Fr. Garry Richmeier*

Sometimes, life gets to be too much. There's just too much of everything it seems, and it can be overwhelming and stressful. Too many meetings, too many demands at work, too many bills to pay, too much stressful news, too many family problems, too many health issues, too much food, too many drugs, too many disagreements and arguments, too much social media, etc., etc. It's enough to drive a person nuts.

Lent is an excellent opportunity to do ourselves a favor and do something about the "too much." We began Lent by hearing how Jesus spent 40 days in the desert at the beginning of his ministry. The desert is a place that is the opposite of "too much." There he could avoid distractions and focus on what was really important. We can create our own mini desert to facilitate our own mental, physical, spiritual, emotional, and relational health if we want.

Our church traditionally recommends prayer, fasting, and alms giving (charity) as ways of simplifying and emphasizing what is important. But we can adapt and tailor those suggestions to fit our unique situations. For example, we could fast from the news sometimes, or from time on social media. We could practice contemplation or meditation as a way of finding some silence in the midst of a chaotic world. Spending time in nature also has a way of slowing us down and helping us be more calm. Just being with friends and loved ones without any specific agenda or reason can restore some of the life and energy that a busy schedule takes out of us. Exercise can not only benefit our physical health, but the natural endorphins produced can raise our mood and foster positive emotions.

It would be nice if these types of things would happen automatically or magically, but they require intention and planning. If you are like me, if I don't put something on my calendar, it usually won't get done. But any way a person can make room in their lives for some of these desert practices is good.

We can't get away from all the busyness and stress of daily life. But finding time to spend in the "desert" once in a while can help us cope and manage the inevitable chaos of modern life.

*Peace,  
Fr. Garry*