



VERMILION CATHOLIC
a legacy of Mount Carmel

VC Families,

Feb 22, 2026

Now that Lent is in full swing, I'd like to offer this one additional encouragement to make the most of this sacred season. A good Lent involves prayer, reflection, service, and giving to the poor. Please incorporate all of those things.

For this letter, however, I want to focus on the aspect of fasting which is so central to Lent. Every year, the Gospel for the 1st Sunday of Lent depicts Jesus in the desert battling Satan. This sets the tone for the special Lenten goal of deliberately pulling back from some of the things that make it harder to hear God and harder to recognize the ways we're being led astray.

We live in a time of unprecedented consumption, abundance, and distraction. We, more than any generation of Christians ever, have more obstacles to hearing God's voice because it's just too easy to stay busy, stay full, and stay away from the hard truths of life. Fasting is the remedy. We intentionally cut back noise, let ourselves feel discomfort, and sacrifice worldly priorities so that we can be more aware of the heavenly priorities.

You know what's coming. I'm talking about screens and phones again. If trends continue, people who are 18 years old today will spend **19 years on their phone** by the time they turn 80. That is a *lot* of time. Not all of it is wasted or bad, but so much of that is time that ought to be spent on loved ones, on faith, and on shaping the world around us to be more interesting and valuable than pixels.

But, it's really hard to live as an adult in this world without a smartphone [how many of you are reading this on one? ;-)]. So **the radical no-phone solution isn't viable for most of us**. What's needed is control. But our brains simply aren't built to regulate the amount of incentive these devices offer. **We're not built to 24/7 resist distraction**. What we need are hard boundaries: times and places in our lives where it is **impossible to access certain distractions**.

So, for Lent, my challenge to you is to create hard boundaries around your phone. If physical barriers like lockboxes or leaving it at work won't work for you, here are **programs that make regulating your phone actually possible**:

SHIFT is the best option: It will turn any iPhone or Android smartphone into a dumbphone in certain times and places. There are layers of control, some of which *cannot be worked around*. You can make it so at a certain time at night or even when you walk through your front door, your phone shifts and you can make it so there's no workaround in your weak moments. (If



VERMILION CATHOLIC
a legacy of Mount Carmel

you really need it and cannot afford it after the free trial I will personally pay for one month of it for you, just let me know - consider it one way I'm trying to give alms this Lent)

[LockMeOut is a good option for Android](#) if you set it up right and give the override password to someone else who won't just give it back to you. (This is what I've used for years, but SHIFT is better and I'll probably switch if and when LockMeOut lets me down again)

[Dumb Phone for iPhone](#) is decent at making the phone generally less addictive. I don't have iPhone, but friends report it actually cut their scrolling time. It's the weakest option of the three, but better than nothing.

I'm sure there are other methods, but this is a good place to start. It's not surprising that we all use our phones too much, but it also isn't inevitable. Let's create space to see and hear more clearly so we can set about building better selves and a better world.

In Christ,

Father Alexander M. Albert,
Pastor, Vermilion Catholic, a legacy of Mount Carmel
St. Mary Magdalen Catholic Church

P.S. Keep your eye on this soon-to-be-released [FREE "adult-material" blocker](#) (here's [stuff to use](#) in the meantime).

- If you want to hear from the guy who created SHIFT and ESC, watch this 5 minute video: youtube.com/watch?v=G0XuQj_P_4Q (it's part of a longer video that's also worth watching, which you can find in the description)