

What is Lent?

Welcome to Lent, the period of about six weeks when Catholics take extra time to grow in holiness. The U.S. Catholic bishops tell us Lent is a time when “all the baptized are called to renew their baptismal commitment. . . . We recall those waters in which we were baptized into Christ’s death, died to sin and evil, and began new life in Christ” (usccb.org, “Lent”). The traditional practices of Lent, drawn from Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount, are almsgiving (Matthew 6:2–4), prayer (Matthew 6:5–15), and fasting (Matthew 6:16–18).

Lent Promises

Discuss some ideas for how you can grow closer to God this Lent. (Check out the next sheet for some ideas.) Write down one thing and try to stick with it.

One way I will PRAY: _____

One way I will FAST: _____

One way I will GIVE: _____

Ideas for giving, praying, and fasting

Giving

“Almsgiving” is just a fancy name for giving to those in need. We practice giving during Lent not only to help others, but to better imitate Christ, who gave his life for us on the cross so that we might have life. Here are some ideas:

- Practice “letting go” by sharing your stuff with your siblings.
- Do a random act of kindness every day; get lots of ideas online.
- Give the gift of yourself by putting down phones and other media when someone needs your attention.
- Do a simple one-day fundraiser for a special cause.
- Participate in the Catholic Relief Services Operation Rice Bowl program to aid the needy.
- Do something every day to care for God’s creation: avoiding waste, cutting back on energy use, or helping wildlife.
- Do extra chores for your family every day.
- Spend time with someone who would like your company, like a younger sibling or a grandparent.

Fasting

Fasting is the practice of giving up some material good (like food) for a spiritual good. Fasting helps us make room for God in our lives; it also strengthens our will, prepares us for mission, and puts us in touch with the suffering of Christ and others.

- Give up sweets, video games, junk food, social media and other “extras.”
- Get quiet: Spend 15 minutes or more every day in silence, or give up listening to music
- Make your room a desert: Strip it down to the bare essentials for Lent.
- Be one with the poor: Sleep on the floor, drink only water, walk to school, or give up buying extras.
- Give up your place in line, in the car, etc.
- Give up doing your hair or makeup.
- Imitate saints who have the clothes off their backs for the poor: Put away 10% of your clothes for Lent. After, consider giving them away.
- Ask family and friends which annoying habit or vice you can give up.

Prayer

Prayer is the conversation in our relationship with God – it powers the spiritual life! When we pray, we are better able to let God help us carry out our Christian mission.

- Get to know Jesus by reading an entire Gospels, a little each day.
- Get a Catholic prayer app on your phone and use it three times a day.
- Wear a necklace, bracelet, T-shirt, or scapular to remind you of God’s presence.
- Carry a rosary with you and say it throughout the day, as you have time.
- Go to confession every week.
- Go to daily Mass.
- Memorize a new prayer.
- Start a prayer journal.
- Pray three times a day: morning, noon and night.
- Pray the Stations of the Cross.

Sharing Holy Week as a family

By Lorene Hanley Duquin

It's OK if your list includes coloring eggs, photos with the Easter Bunny, buying jelly beans and chocolates, shopping for new outfits, and preparing Easter dinner. There's nothing wrong with secular Easter activities, but it's important to remember that there is also a profound spiritual basis for the holiday celebration.

The Reason for the Season

Our remembrance of the death and resurrection of Jesus makes Holy Week the most sacred time of the year for Catholics. The week begins with Palm Sunday, which commemorates the triumphal entry of Jesus into Jerusalem. At sundown on the following Thursday, we begin the Triduum, a word that simply means "three days," which concludes at sundown on Easter Sunday.

The Triduum

Holy Thursday, which commemorates the Last Supper when Jesus gave us the gift of himself in the Eucharist, and set an example of service by washing the apostles' feet.

Good Friday, which recalls the crucifixion and death of Jesus.

Holy Saturday, a day of waiting.

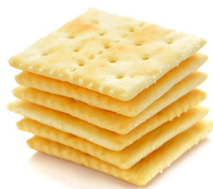
Easter, which celebrates the resurrection of Jesus, beginning at the Easter Vigil and continuing with Masses on Easter Sunday.

Make Holy Week Eggs

Fill plastic eggs with items that reinforce the events of Holy Week.



On **Palm Sunday**, children can open eggs that contain a piece of palm, a furry fabric that represents the donkey Jesus rode, and a picture of Jesus smiling.



On **Holy Thursday**, they might find a piece of towel recalling the washing of feet, a cracker symbolizing the Last Supper, and three dimes that recall the 30 pieces of silver.



On **Good Friday**, the eggs might contain a crucifix, dice to recall the casting of lots for Jesus' clothes, and a sad picture of Jesus.



On **Easter Sunday**, include a stone to recall the opening of the tomb and a picture of the risen Jesus.



Our family plan for Lent

Name

Prayer

Giving

Fasting



My plan for Lent

Name

Week #

Prayer

Giving

Fasting

Sunday

Monday

Tuesday

Wednesday

Thursday

Friday

Saturday