

It's time to sit down as a family and talk about Lent. So what does that mean for your family? Here are some ideas on things you can do to make Lent more meaningful and more merciful this year.



LOOK FOR MERCY
Moments of mercy are happening all around us. Help your kids to identify one merciful act every day during Lent. It might be something that happens in your own family, in your community or in the world.



FINDING MERCY THIS LENT

By Lorene Hanley Duquin



GET RID OF GRUDGES
Teach your kids by giving them examples from your own life on how you let go of anger and resentments and forgave someone that hurt you.

GO ON A MISSION OF MERCY
Spend a day as a family helping at a local food pantry, soup kitchen or homeless shelter. Local missions always need extra volunteers, and your children will get hands-on experience in what it means to be merciful.

SEND BOOKS TO THE MISSIONS
Visit a Catholic bookstore or website and buy spiritual books for children and adults that you can send to Catholic missions in the United States and overseas.

RECEIVE GOD'S MERCY
Take the whole family to a parish penance service. We are all prone to self-centeredness. Help your children understand that admitting to selfish behaviors and asking God's forgiveness helps us to become the merciful people that God is calling us to be. Even children who are not old enough for confession can take part in the prayers of a penance service.

BECOME MORE MERCIFUL
Pope Francis hopes that during Lent we will all become more merciful in everything that we say and do. Holding a door for someone, extending a helping hand, offering a sincere complement, giving a word of encouragement, checking on elderly neighbors and making it a habit to share and to care are just a few of the small things that we can practice during Lent that will lead your family to becoming more merciful.



SELECT A PSALM
Psalms teach us about God's mercy. They are an easy addition to family prayer at dinner or bedtime, because the words of the psalms tell a story and everyone can join in the refrain. Try praying Psalm 136, which tells the story of God's goodness and includes the refrain, "For his mercy endures forever."

SHOW MERCY
We are merciful when we are kind to one another, when we forgive and when we put the needs of others before our own. Ask your children to share an example of how they were merciful to someone.



SPEND TIME IN ADORATION
Pope Francis has called for us to recognize "24 hours for the Lord" on the Friday and Saturday preceding the Fourth Week of Lent. It's a good time to teach your children about adoration of the Blessed Sacrament. Most kids have short attention spans, but a few minutes of silence in the presence of Our Lord is a good way to help them learn about spiritual benefits of quiet reflection.

VOLUNTEER AT YOUR PARISH
Find out what kind of volunteer opportunities are available in your parish religious education program. Maybe your family can do something that will help others learn about God's love and mercy.

MAKE TIME FOR MARY
Make time during Lent to pray the Rosary with your family, focusing on the Joyful Mysteries, which reflect on the early life of Mary and Jesus. For example:

- The story of the Annunciation can lead to a discussion about how each family member can discover God's will in his or her life.
- Perhaps focus on the Visitation will prompt a family plan to visit someone who is sick or homebound.
- Maybe talking about the Birth of Jesus will inspire ways your family can help single or unwed mothers.
- Perhaps reflecting on the Presentation of Jesus in the Temple will lead to a family trip to a nearby shrine.

