

LENT

FEBRUARY 17, 2010 –
MARCH 28, 2010

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LENT

Let's Start at the very . . . end?

This year, begin Lent by looking ahead and giving the gift of the Triduum to yourself and those closest to you.

Get out your household calendar and circle the dates from sunset Thursday, April 1, through Sunday, April 4, and perhaps include Monday, April 5 (because if you celebrate the Triduum well, you'll want a day of transition back to "real" time).

To the extent possible, schedule time off from your usual activities—take vacation days from work if you're able, get most chores done in advance to let you focus on these three days.

When you've finished preparing your Triduum time, spend some time and make notes before Ash Wednesday, choosing how you'll embrace prayer, fasting, and almsgiving in a personal and concrete way in your household and with your parish community.



LENT

Let's Begin!

PRAYER Make time for personal conversation with God. Commit 20 minutes: perhaps 10 in the morning and 10 before bedtime to thank God for the day and offer praise for the wonders around you. Begin or revise a prayer list naming names, identifying needs, asking for grace, wisdom, or surrender where it's most needed. Turn off electronic sound sources, and use the silence to talk and listen to God. Put a cross, picture, or prayer on your dashboard, in your pocket, or with your train ticket or bus pass to remind you to pray for a moment when an opportunity presents itself. When you're stuck at a railroad crossing, in traffic, when the bus or train is late, at the supermarket, ticket counter, or doctor's office, snatch those moments for prayer. Also look for opportunities to pray together with others from your community.

For more direction, get a copy of Brother Lawrence's *The Practice of the Presence of God*, and find out how this Carmelite brother engaged God among the kitchen utensils, and while wrestling wine barrels into his boat.

FASTING Get bold and cut out *all* snacks, not just one favorite. Use the constant confrontations with your mouth and stomach as reminders of your spiritual goals and your relationship with God. It's a vivid lesson, shining light on our habits of thoughtless consumption and the abundance we take for granted. It's also an opportunity for solidarity with hungry people in our world. Plenty of grist for our prayer lives, and even more for our lives of charity.

ALMSGIVING All of us encounter many opportunities for charity, and we can engage them as they present themselves. Maybe your parish offers a Lenten project to support: food collections, clean water projects, peace and justice programs, with the option to give time, resources, or skills, and a chance to learn about people we haven't met. Open your parish bulletin, open your mail, open your New Testament (Mt. 25:31–46). You'll find a life's worth of life-changing action right there!



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LENT

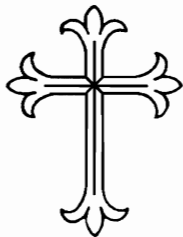
Activities for hands, head, and heart

As Catholics, we celebrate Lent in our heads and hearts, in our parish community, and in our homes. At home, there are other ways to observe this season. Here are a few possibilities:

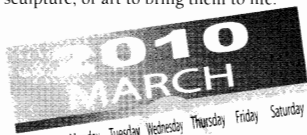


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- **Make space.** More precisely, make a space used only for prayer and reflection. The environment should be clean and sparse. Put away the décor of seasons past. Spend time cleaning and clearing the household of clutter. Spring cleaning traditions come from a practical need to refresh after a closed-in winter and a psychological need to clear our lives for new growth. Familiar chores give our minds a certain freedom to pray, plan, and ponder.
- **Connect with symbols.** These are aids to your spiritual growth. If you don't normally have a cross on your wall, put one up. Frame one from a magazine, bring out and display a book of religious art (or borrow some from the library). If you enjoy drawing or painting, make an image that will prompt you to prayer and charity.
- **Invite others.** Get the whole household together, or invite neighbors or friends from the parish to join in the process. If several people are involved, agree on a spot to use as a prayer place—a desk, tabletop, shelf, bench, windowsill, or mantel—to hold and display reminders and resources for your Lenten activities. If you live in a warm climate, this can even be done outdoors.
- **Color the season.** Use a purple or gray tablecloth, scarf, or cloth napkin as a base for your devotional area. Put out a candle to light if safety permits. Have a Bible or New Testament available for reading. If it makes sense in your situation, put your alms container in this place. Fill a small bowl or clay dish with ashes burned from old palms, or have a book of "intentions" to write down habits you are committed to leave behind. Preview the scriptures from your parish worship aid, and use tools, toys, sculpture, or art to bring them to life.



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- **Mark your progress.** As Lent progresses, add to or transform your altar to reflect the milestones of the season: Laetare Sunday (the Fourth "Joyful" Sunday of Lent, March 14 this year), memorials of St. Patrick (March 17) and St. Joseph (March 19), Annunciation (March 25), Palm Sunday (March 28). Download or play inspirational music: Gregorian chant, St. Matthew's Passion, gospel music, or instrumental selections that will help you focus.
- **Feed the spirit.** Plan simple, ecologically-minded Lenten meals with recipes from parish cookbooks, vegetarian sources, or traditional meals from your ethnic roots. Take some time on line, with the diocesan paper, parish resources, in conversation with relatives, neighbors, and friends to plan special foods for meatless Fridays. Plan a basket of Easter foods (one for your household, one for a food bank) to take for a blessing on Holy Saturday at a parish that keeps this tradition.

Lenten Blessings and Prayers

A LENTEN PRAYER FOR PRIESTS

*As the Church celebrates
the Year of the Priest
June 19, 2009 – June 19, 2010*

God of boundless mercy and grace,
during this season of Lent
we come before you with our prayer
for all who guide us
through their priesthood.

Give them a heart renewed.
May they help us to renew our lives,
faithful to our baptismal calling.

Fill them with a spirit
of reconciliation.

Through them, lead us all to be
reconciled to Christ and one another.

As we prepare to celebrate
the days of your Son's sacrifice,
his passion, death, and resurrection,
we pray *Kyrie, eleison:*

In your mercy, hear us,
Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,
now and forever. Amen.

Lenten Blessings and Prayers

LENTEN TABLE PRAYER

Mighty God, you filled creation
with all we need to live;

Bless me with a thankful heart.

Lord Jesus Christ, you ate with sinners
as a sign of the kingdom:

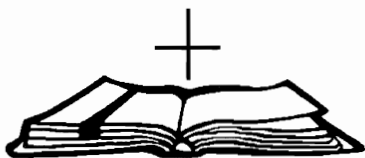
Bless me with a thankful heart.

Holy Spirit, you make Christ present
for us in his Body and Blood:

Bless me with a thankful heart.

Thank you, Father, Son, and Holy
Spirit, for the gifts of this table and
the gift of life. Bless and nourish your
Church through these Lenten days,
and bring us to the joy
of the heavenly feast.

Amen.



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