

Restore the Roots

Cultivating Your Domestic Church

A Liturgical Living Initiative of St. Joseph the Workman Cathedral, La Crosse, WI

Lent



Lent is a 40-day liturgical season focused on penance and preparation for the celebration of the Paschal mysteries through fasting, prayer, and almsgiving. To indicate the need for penance, purple decorations adorn the church during Lent and Advent. Both seasons lead up to the two greatest celebrations in the Church. In Lent's case, it's Easter. During Lent, we are called to fast from meat on Fridays. We refrain from using the word *Alleluia* to enter into a more serious time. In this season, the celebratory hymns for Mass are replaced with solemn ones. The Church asks us to **fast** before we **feast** in order to make room for God - just like the hour fast from food before receiving the Eucharist. The call to fast more intentionally during Lent allows us to empty ourselves of worldly attachments through prayer and penance, so we may be filled with Christ's self-emptying love on Easter.

Lent begins with a visible, outward sign of ashes but aims toward inner conversion. These 40 days of Lent remind us of the 40 days Jesus spent in the desert after His baptism to prepare for His public ministry. Hungry and tempted, He offered the limitations of His humanity to His Father, creating space within Himself. Let us use this time to place ourselves in the desert with Jesus and sacrifice, repent, and reflect. Let us create space in our hearts to prepare a place for Christ to pour his love and mercy.

Plan, Pray, Prepare

As with any important celebration in our lives, we must prepare. Take some time to pray about what will be the most fruitful for you. It is crucial to be intentional. Lent is not just a time to say "no" to guilty pleasures; it's a time to say "yes" to the will of God and the love of Christ, just like our Blessed Mother, even if it means swords will pierce our hearts. This can include adding positive practices to your life, especially ones that help your spiritual life. The next pages are given to help guide you through your Lenten sacrifices. Try to pick one thing from each pillar of Lent. You may want to write down your resolutions and post them in a place where you'll see them everyday.

It's easy to get ambitious and come up with a many ideas and resolutions; however, this can overwhelm us and ultimately may make it a difficult practice for the entirety of Lent. More is not necessarily better. Stick to a few things and do them faithfully. This is how growth happens. On the other hand, don't choose the smallest thing that you know won't really be a sacrifice. You can only get out of Lent what you put into Lent.



The 3 pillars
of Lent are
Prayer,
Fasting and
Almsgiving.

Into the Desert

Just like the other liturgical seasons, you can decorate for Lent. Since the liturgical color for Lent is purple, add a purple table cloth or placemats to your table. Lent is also a time we remember Christ's time in the desert, so you can create your own mini-desert by placing sand or pebbles on a plate or tray as a centerpiece.

Scavenge outside for a couple of bare twigs to create a small cross. You can add other decorations that remind you of Christ's passion, like a crown of thorns made out of brambles, candles, stones, etc. Place these decorations in a prominent area in your home to remind you of your resolutions and center your family on the purpose of the season. You could even set the decorations up in a quiet corner of the house to create a prayer space.

Ash Wednesday

Ash Wednesday is not a Holy day of obligation; however, going to Mass is a great way to start your Lent. Leave your ashes on for the rest of the day and do not be ashamed of our faith.



St. Therese of Lisieux beautifully writes, “For me, prayer is a surge from my heart, it is a simple look turned toward Heaven.” Often when we think of prayer, we imagine someone sitting or kneeling in perfect stillness. This isn’t necessarily what prayer has to look like for you. Focus on how you might pray this Lent. Do you have space in your home to pray? How can you create a quiet space? What time do you typically pray? If you don’t, what time could you set aside to pray? Create an intentional plan for prayer this Lent by writing down your resolution(s). Again, it doesn’t need to be complicated or ambitious. Simply setting aside 10-15 minutes to pray a rosary everyday, reading and pondering upon a Lenten devotional, or stopping into Eucharistic Adoration once a week is great. Allow yourself room to grow in the habit, asking God for the grace and desire to pray. As Pope St. John XXIII said, “Prayer is the raising of the mind to God. We must always remember this. The actual words matter less.”

Our Lenten fasting and almsgiving are fortified when we offer them to the Lord as prayer, and our prayer life is fortified when we offer our sacrifices and alms in His name. They work together. That’s why prayer is a key pillar during Lent. Just as St. Therese says, “All my strength lies in prayer and sacrifice. They are my invincible weapons.”

Sacrament of Reconciliation

As Lent is a season of penance, there is no greater time to go to confession. The second precept of the Catholic Church states that Reconciliation “continues the work of our Baptism for conversion and forgiveness.” (CCC 1457). And when we experience God’s love and forgiveness, we’re better prepared to extend those gifts to those around us.

During Lent, there are often extra offerings of the Sacrament in your local community. Mark on your calendar the time you will go or go with someone else for accountability.

Need a confession guide?

Scan here!



Stations of the Cross

A traditional devotion for Lent is the Stations of the Cross. This practice helps us to mediate prayerfully upon Christ’s final footsteps on earth. Following Jesus as He makes His way to death is not comfortable, but challenges us to come face-to-face with Christ’s self-sacrificial love for us.

You can pray the Stations of the Cross at any time: at your parish, with a group of people, outside, or even just in your home. You can print off pictures of the stations or purchase prints online to hang around a room, and get a booklet so you can “walk” to each station as you pray.

Many parishes will pray the Stations of the Cross during Lent. Check local bulletins to see if Stations of the Cross can fit in to your schedule.



Eucharistic Adoration

Waiting for you in the monstrance is Jesus Christ. His Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity is truly present in the Blessed Sacrament. What better way to pray than in front of Christ Himself and His loving gaze. If you have never been to Adoration before, go with a friend or your family. Centering our lives around our Eucharistic Lord is an important part of our Catholic faith!

Here are some great prayers and practices to add for Lent:

The Litany of Humility
The Rosary — Sorrowful Mysteries
Four Gospel Accounts of Christ’s Passion
En ego, O bone et dulcissime Iesu
The Divine Mercy Chaplet
The Seven Last Words of Jesus
St. Faustina’s Litany of Divine Mercy
The Seven Sorrows Devotion off
Attend weekday Mass in addition to Sundays
Act of Contrition The Anima Christi
Daily Examen Psalm 22

This QR code is for an extra resource guide that contains these prayers, the indulgences attached to them, ideas for families, devotionals and more! You can also go to the Cathedral homepage and click on “Restore the Roots”.





Most know that Lent is a time to “give something up.” However, many think that we give things up for no good reason. This is not true. The Church calls us to give something up not for its own sake, but in order to empty ourselves of the world to have space to receive Christ and His outpouring of love. Specifically, the Church has provided rules and guidelines to help shape our Lenten journey towards renewal. Catholics who have celebrated their 14th birthday are to abstain from meat on Ash Wednesday, all Fridays in Lent, and Good Friday. In addition to abstaining from meat, Catholics aged 18-59, who do not have health limitations that would prevent fasting, must fast on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday. This means that only one full meal is to be eaten during the day. Two smaller meals are permitted if necessary to maintain strength according to one's needs, but snacking between meals is not permitted. We offer this fast to Christ and ask Him for purification. Along with the required fast and abstinence, we are

encouraged to make resolutions to sacrifice things in our lives during Lent. We want to focus on giving up the extraneous things in our lives that we could live without. This creates space for us to replace those bad habits with edifying practices. Don't just give up bad habits though. Look for things in your day that make life comfortable. Long showers, coffee, condiments, radio or music, etc. When we give these practices up for Lent, we allow God to be our comfort and strength and can be more attune to the quiet voice of God in the stirrings of the heart.

Challenge yourself to make this Lenten season different. Take time to pray and analyze your life. Is there a habit or practice in your life that's creating a wedge between you and the Lord? If you give that up, what could you replace it with? Focus on one habit or sin. Write down your resolution and put it in a place where you will remember it. It is important to have accountability in this as well. Faith is lived in community, especially in hard seasons and difficult practices. Work with your spouse, children, or trusted person to check in with each other throughout Lent. Pray for each other as you journey together towards Easter.

Burying the “Alleluia”

Another fast Catholics take up during Lent is refraining from saying the word *Alleluia*. *Alleluia* is a Hebrew word that means “Praise Yahweh.” It's a word of joy and celebration! When we sing it, we join the choir of angels in worship. During Lent, we are reminded of our sins and the need of repentance, so we step back from the joy of the angels until we are ready to praise the resurrected Lord at Easter. That is why we don't sing or say “*Alleluia*”.

If you have children, write out a beautiful “*Alleluia*”. On Mardi Gras bury the *Alleluia* in some sand in a box and put it on your Lent table, or hide it in your house. Then on Easter dig it up or find it and display it for the Easter season.

Here's a list of some things to consider giving up for Lent, and some possible replacements:

TV, movies - Read Catholic books or classics, then find good media to watch on Sundays

Phone scrolling, social media - Put a time limit on your phone for anything you need to do, then use the rest of that time for a hobby; maybe choose a new one to learn this Lent

Watching the news - Call family or a friend

Music - Challenge yourself with silence

Gossip, rude comments - Kind notes or spoken words every day to a different person

Sarcasm, complaining - Keep a gratitude journal or write letters of thanks each week

Eating out, take out - Learn to make your favorite meals at home and invite people over a few times during Lent for a homemade dinner

Coffee shops - Make coffee at home and, each Sunday, treat a friend by taking them out for coffee with the money you saved that week

Shopping - Commit to a “no spend” Lent (other than groceries) and donate the money you save to CRS Rice bowl, Catholic charities, or Birthright

Amazon - Resolve to shop only local for all of Lent, or try shopping only second hand stores

Alcohol and/or bars - Replace with time spent with friends and family



Giving alms is about donating your time, money, services, or resources to others. The primacy of almsgiving in Christianity is pretty clear. "Whoever cares for the poor lends to the Lord, who will pay back the sum in full" (Prov. 19:17). Almsgiving is an important way of embodying the teachings of Christ during Lent. It allows us to deny ourselves and offer our time, money, services, and resources to God as a gift to Him and others. As it's written in the New Testament, "It is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God." (Mark 10:25) You don't have to give away all your possessions, but your almsgiving should be meaningful. Take time as an individual and as a family to think about how you can give of your time, talent or treasure meaningfully this season. It really is true that when you give, especially when you volunteer, you get more in return from those you are serving than what you give to those in need. This is another important point for Lent; when we are

turning from sinful and selfish ways, giving to others can be an integral part of forming ourselves to be more like Christ.

The Works of Mercy

The Corporal and Spiritual Works of Mercy are taken from the teachings of Jesus to guide us in treating our family, friends, neighbors and complete strangers as if they were Christ Himself. Each and every person should be treated with dignity regardless of how they ended up in the hardship they find themselves in. While we often think of this in the physical needs of a person which are what the corporal works focus on, we must remember that each soul must also be attended to so that each person may have the ability to reach heaven. It is our duty to take care of the needs of our neighbor, in both body and soul. This Lent, stretch yourself to do these works for others.

Corporal Works of Mercy Spiritual Works of Mercy

Feed the hungry	Counsel the doubtful
Give drink to the thirsty	Instruct the ignorant
Shelter the homeless	Admonish the sinner
Visit the sick	Comfort the sorrowful
Visit the imprisoned	Forgive injuries
Bury the dead	Bear wrongs patiently
Clothe the naked	Pray for the living and the dead

Mercy Cross

Make the Works of Mercy a Lenten project for your family. Get flower or heart stickers and place a large paper cross on a wall with the Works of Mercy posted next to it. Any time someone does a work of mercy, they place a sticker on the cross. The goal is to cover the whole cross by Easter. For kids, get creative on how to do the works. Can they get a drink of water for a family member? Help a sibling get dressed? Bring an extra lunch to school for someone who doesn't have much food? Call a grandparent? Teach a toddler a prayer? Get an ice pack for their injured older brother? Just because they might not be able to follow exactly what the Works of Mercy might look like for an adult, doesn't mean it's not a work of mercy for them!

40 Bags in 40 days

Many people find that Lent is a great time to declutter their house. Not only because it frees us of worldly possessions but also because when we know that there are others in need, it is easier to part with items. Challenge yourself to donate one bag of items from your home each day of Lent for a total of 40 bags! If you already live simply, give one item each day instead.

Sacrifice Bean Jar

During Lent, put out a bowl of dried beans with an empty jar next to it. When kids offer up a sacrifice, they get to place a bean in the jar. On Easter morning, switch out the dried beans for jelly beans to show that Jesus has changed their sacrifices for a sweet reward! Throughout the entire Easter season, if they offer a sacrifice, they get a jelly bean!

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