

SPRINGTIME

A Prayer Guide

for the Season of Lent
in a Time of Pandemic

2021

What is Lent?

The word “Lent” is a shortened form of the Old English word *Lencten*, meaning “the Spring”. Lent is one of the most significant seasons of the Liturgical Year. It originated from the period of preparation embarked upon by those preparing for the new life of baptism at Easter. Eventually, it became a time for the whole Christian community to seriously review and renew their lives in advance of the annual celebration of the death and resurrection of Jesus at Easter. Consisting of forty days (Sundays excluded), the season of Lent is modelled on the forty days spent by Jesus fasting in the desert prior to beginning his public ministry. (Mt. 4)

“Dear brothers and sisters, every moment of our lives is a time for believing, hoping and loving. The call to experience Lent as a journey of conversion, prayer and sharing of our goods, helps us – as communities and as individuals – to revive the faith that comes from the living Christ, the hope inspired by the breath of the Holy Spirit and the love flowing from the merciful heart of the Father”. (*Pope Francis, Message for Lent, 2021*)

Fasting, Prayer and Giving to the Poor

Traditionally, fasting, praying and giving to the poor are considered as important tools to help us on our Lenten Pilgrimage of renewal. Fasting is the reduction of one’s intake of food or the giving up of something we would normally do. It reminds us that at times we must sacrifice ourselves in order to put God and others first in life. Linked to fasting is the idea of abstinence, which is the abstaining from meat. In Ireland, Ash Wednesday and Good Friday are traditionally days of fast and abstinence. Nowadays, some people take on things for Lent. They spend more time in prayer, more time caring for others or giving to the poor. Prayer deepens our relationship with God while giving to the poor reminds us that to love and care for others, especially those most in need, is a central part of being a Christian.

Lenten Traditions

Over time, different traditions have developed as a means of making the most of the Lenten season. The Fridays of Lent are seen as special days for additional fasting and acts of penance. Prayer practices such as praying the Stations of the Cross, making a Holy Hour or joining a prayer or Bible study group are also important traditions. In Ireland, the Trócaire Lenten Box has become a means of giving to those less well off. What Lenten traditions will you take on this year?

Finding New Ways of Praying at Home

The restrictions in place because of Covid-19 mean that as a Christian Community we cannot gather for our usual religious services. This situation challenges us to find new ways of reflecting on our faith and praying in our homes as the “Domestic Church”. It is hoped that this guide will assist you in doing just that. When we gather again in Church, let us not forget to enrich our spiritual lives by continuing to pray at home.

Sacred Space

Catholicism has a long tradition of using images and symbols to help us to pray. One way of doing this is to set up a prayer space in a prominent place in your home. There, each day, you can place different symbols or things of meaning to you and your family. You might start by placing in the prayer space a Bible, which contains God’s Word.

For Younger Family Members

At various points throughout this guide there are places for the younger members of a household to get involved. Art materials – paper, pens, and paints would be helpful at these times. So too would a guiding hand from an adult.

Broadcast Masses



While nothing can substitute for gathering in person, we are blessed to live in an age where the celebration of the Eucharist can be broadcast on radio or television or by means of the internet. This guide is also designed to help deepen your participation in those broadcasts and to assist you in getting the most out of them spiritually.

Call to Action

The followers of Jesus are called to be a people of action. During each of our days of prayer there will be a call to action. To do something different or significant that puts the message of that particular day into practice.

Safety

This guide is designed for use by a single household. All health and safety advice should be adhered to. When using candles, please do so safely.

Ash Wednesday

17th February 2021

LENT



We begin the sacred season of Lent by celebrating Ash Wednesday. Traditionally, the ashes we use are made by burning the palm that was blessed on Palm Sunday the previous year. They remind us of the frailty of our human condition and the call of Jesus to turn away from sin and to be faithful to the Gospel. Ash Wednesday is one of the few days of fast and abstinence in the Church year.

A Prayer Ritual at Home

At a suitable time on Ash Wednesday, pause either alone or with your household for this time of prayer. Put the blessed ashes from your local Church in a bowl and mix them with some water (Holy Water, if available). Place them in your sacred space. Have nearby a small bowl of soapy water and a cloth. Light a candle to symbolise that God is present.

As we begin ...

In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. **Amen**

Let us pray (pause)

Loving Father, we turn to you as we begin this sacred season. Send your Holy Spirit upon us to help us make the most of this opportunity to renew our lives. Help us to choose wisely what we will give up or what we will take on. Give us the strength to persevere in our Lenten practices so that, come

forty days, we may be renewed in our relationship with you and with each other. We make this our prayer through Christ Our Lord. **Amen**

Let us listen to God's Word ... Matthew 6:1-6, 16-18

Jesus said to his disciples ... But when you give alms, your left hand must not know what your right is doing; your almsgiving must be in secret, and your Father who sees all that is done in secret will reward you. [...] But when you pray, go to your private room and, when you have shut the door, pray to your Father who is in that secret place, and your Father who sees all that is done in secret will reward you. [...] But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, so that no one will know you are fasting except your Father who sees all that is done in secret; and your Father who sees all that is done in secret will reward you.

Let us reflect ...

From Ash Wednesday until Easter we are invited to participate actively in the Lenten journey. It provides us with an opportunity to take stock of our lives and our behaviour. It is a time to stop and think! In some sports there is an official 'time out' when a team manager calls a halt to play in order to have a word with the team and correct their mistakes. It gives the team an opportunity to regroup. Lent is like that for us. Do not let it go by without making use of the opportunity it provides. So take 'time out' and use the season of Lent to evaluate your life, especially your spiritual life.

Take a look at your prayer, your relationships, and your behaviour. Look at how you care for the needs of others. Contributing to *Trócaire* gives us a means to provide for our brothers and sisters who are in need throughout the world. Our almsgiving to *Trócaire* is a real act of love and care for those less well off than we are. It might also be worth having a look at how well you respect the gift of life God has given you and the gift of the world in which you live. Care for Creation is very important. Having taken a good look at your life you might be surprised at how well you are doing, and you might see areas where you could be better. The season of Lent invites us to a change of heart. To help us achieve this, we are encouraged to use the traditional Lenten practices of prayer, fasting, and almsgiving. (*Monsignor Cathal Geraghty*)

Pause for a few moments of silent reflection

Children's Activity

Write or draw a picture of what you are going to “give up” or “take on” to become a better person during Lent. What about some pocket money for the Trócaire Box each week? Get the children and all in the family to sing that joyful hymn of resurrection: the Alleluia! and then to say farewell to it – for it is not to be heard again until it is sung to welcome the Gospel of Jesus’ Resurrection at the Easter Vigil.

Ritual Action

Over the bowl of ashes, pray:

O God, you ask us to turn back to you with all our hearts. We ask you now to hear our prayer as we begin this season of Lent. Pour out your blessing upon us as we use this symbol of blessed ashes, so that, out of our smallness and sinfulness, we may come to be what you have called us to be; that we may live faithfully, the vocation of our Baptism and come to celebrate with joy the Easter mystery. **Amen**

Members of the household put ashes on one another, in turn, saying:

Turn away from sin and be faithful to the Gospel

The small bowl of soapy water and the cloth should be used to wash and dry one’s thumb afterwards. The left over ashes and the soapy water should be disposed of reverently in soil.

If you do not have access to ashes – use the prayer and instead of using ashes simply make the sign of the cross on each other’s forehead saying:

Turn away from sin and be faithful to the Gospel

Intercessions

We take a moment to bring before God our needs and the needs of the world this day.

We pray for the wisdom to discern those areas in our lives that stand in need of renewal. (pause)

Lord, in your mercy. Hear our prayer.

We pray that we may choose well what we will give up and what we will take on this Lent so that we will enjoy genuine personal and spiritual renewal. (pause)

Lord, in your mercy. Hear our prayer.

May we celebrate Easter 2021 with a greater love for God and for each other, especially those who are less well off than ourselves. (pause)

Lord, in your mercy. Hear our prayer.

Add your own intercessions here. (pause)

Lord, in your mercy. Hear our prayer.

Our Father ...

Prayer (pause)

Father, may today be the beginning of a new “me” and a new “us”. Be with us as we begin our Lenten pilgrimage of spiritual and personal renewal. Strengthen us for the journey and walk with us on the way. Through Christ Our Lord. **Amen**

Blessing

The Lord bless us and keep us; The Lord make his face shine upon us and be gracious to us; The Lord turn his face toward us and give us his peace both now and forever. **Amen**

In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. **Amen**

Call to Action

Write down what I will “give up” or “take on” this Lent and why I am doing it? Set up a Trócaire Lenten Box in your home and read about their Lenten Appeal for South Sudan www.trocaire.org

Why not introduce a simple prayer before meals for Lent? What about a short morning and night prayer? For helpful daily prayer resources visit www.pray-as-you-go.org



Online Celebration of the Mass



Before the broadcast begins:

- Gather with other members of your household, if you can.
- Light a candle in your prayer space. Add some blessed ashes if available.

During the broadcast look out for the following:

- The priest will wear **purple vestments** as a symbol of penance.
- For the Season of Lent the **Gloria** and **Alleluia** are omitted.
- During the Mass, the priest will bless the ashes saying “Lord, bless the sinner who asks for your forgiveness and bless all those who receive these ashes. May they keep this Lenten season in preparation for the Joy of Easter”.
- The **First Reading** from the prophet Joel is calling the people of Judah back to God with repentance in their hearts. He is calling us back as well. He is a God of tenderness and compassion who takes pity on his people. The **Psalms** is a call for mercy in response to our repentance, a prayer for the blotting out of our offences and restoring us to joy in the Lord. In the **Gospel**, Jesus warns his followers not to do things for appearance sake, but to be authentic in their actions. Prayer, fasting and almsgiving are things we should do without seeking notice. Our motives are important. Our actions should never be self-serving.
- The Eucharist will be celebrated as normal. At communion time make an Act of **Spiritual Communion**. Invite Jesus into your heart. Take some time to speak with him about your life – especially the areas that need attention – need renewal. Ask him to help you decide what might be the best thing to “take on” or “give up” to help you in that task this Lent.

Take away ...

How might I engage in fasting, praying and giving to the poor this Lent?



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