

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.

Fifth Sunday of Lent

21st March 2021



With the Fifth Sunday of Lent, we near the end of our Lenten Pilgrimage and begin to focus on the celebration of Holy Week. This is a Sunday to take stock of how we have progressed over the weeks with the task of personal and spiritual renewal. It is also a time to begin to think about how we will grasp the opportunity that this year's Holy Week brings to further that process by walking with Jesus through his passion, death and resurrection. The Scriptures today portray Jesus on the cusp of the most challenging but also the greatest moment of his life of love. They challenge us to ask ourselves what will be my legacy in life?

A Prayer Ritual at Home

Open a Bible in your prayer space and light a candle to symbolise that God is present. Place the Trócaire Lenten Box nearby. Take a pen and paper and write down what you think is your purpose in life – what might God be calling you to. Place this in an envelope.

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, as we journey with Jesus towards the culmination of his earthly existence, help us to realise that we also have some definite purpose in life. Send your Holy Spirit upon us. Help us to discern your will for us and to guide us along your ways. Let not our faults and sins hold us back from answering our calling. Continue to walk with us on these last steps of our Lenten pilgrimage of renewal. We ask this through Christ, our Lord. **Amen**

Let us listen to God's Word ...

John 12:20-30

Now my soul is troubled. What shall I say: Father, save me from this hour? But it is for this very reason that I have come to this hour. Father, glorify your name! A voice came from heaven, "I have glorified it, and I will again glorify it". The crowd standing by, who heard this, said it was a clap of thunder; others said, "It was an angel speaking to him". Jesus answered, "It was not for my sake that this voice came, but for yours". "Now sentence is being passed on this world; now the prince of this world is to be driven out. And when I am lifted up from the earth, I shall draw all people to myself". By these words he indicated the kind of death he would die.

Let us reflect ...

This final Sunday of Lent invites us to lift up our eyes to where our strength and our purpose comes from. Our Lenten journey has had us living and praying daily in the spirit of today's Responsorial Psalm (Psalm 50). The attitude of Jesus in the Gospel focuses our attention on one particular line of the psalm – "Give me again the joy of your help". Some foreigners come seeking Jesus; people from outside of the Jewish nation and it seems to trigger quite a reaction in Jesus. It is as though the bell for the final lap has sounded and the race, or better, his journey to the fulfilment of the Father's will has suddenly intensified. Jesus seems to be filled with joy that his hour has come, accompanied by a certain dread, even suggesting that flight has crossed his mind. He seems jubilant as he seizes his purpose and prays aloud 'Father, glorify your name!' and the Father affirms him. Many of us may be struggling for a sense of purpose at present. Let us pray for each other, that as people of faith we grow into our purpose in life now and seek to glorify the Father in what little and great ways we can, filled with the joy of God's help.

(Ms Colette Furlong)

Pause for a few moments of silent reflection

Children's Activity

Draw pictures of what you want to be when you grow up and write a prayer asking Jesus to help you on your journey of life.

Ritual Action

Place the envelope with the writings about what you feel called to be in life in the sacred space. Make sure to dispose of these confidentially afterwards. Pause for a moment of reflection. Then pray:

God has created me to do Him some definite service. He has committed some work to me which He has not committed to another. I have my mission. I may never know it in this life, but I shall be told it in the next. I am a link in a chain, a bond of connection between persons. He has not created me for naught. I shall do good; I shall do His work. I shall be an angel of peace, a preacher of truth in my own place, while not intending it if I do but keep His commandments. Therefore, I will trust Him, whatever I am, I can never be thrown away. If I am in sickness, my sickness may serve Him, in perplexity, my perplexity may serve Him. If I am in sorrow, my sorrow may serve Him. He does nothing in vain. He knows what He is about. He may take away my friends. He may throw me among strangers. He may make me feel desolate, make my spirits sink, hide my future from me. Still, He knows what He is about. Amen *(Saint John Henry Newman)*

Intercessions

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

We pray for people of every race and nation – that guided by the light of their conscience they may search and find their God-given purpose in life. (pause)

Lord, in your mercy. Hear our prayer.

We pray that we may simply love and care for others more. (pause)

Lord, in your mercy. Hear our prayer.

We pray that we may share what we have with those who have less than us. (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, be with us as we come towards the end of our Lenten pilgrimage of spiritual and personal renewal. Strengthen us for the journey of Holy Week that lies ahead. May your transforming grace and our own humble Lenten penances increase our love for you and for each other so that we may celebrate with great joy the resurrection of your Son this Eastertide. 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

Take some time to think about your calling or purpose in life. Begin to plan how you are going to spend and make the most at a spiritual level of Holy Week 2021.



Online Celebration of the Eucharist



Before the broadcast begins:

- Gather with other members of your household, if you can.
- Light a candle in your prayer space. Write down and seal in an envelope what you think is your purpose in life and add it to the sacred space.

During the broadcast look out for the following:

- The priest will wear **purple vestments** today as a symbol that we are still on our penitential journey.
- For the Season of Lent, the **Gloria** and **Alleluia** are omitted.
- Today's readings shed light on the human experience of coming to certainty about God's purpose for us, and the struggle to embrace it as Jesus does in today's Gospel. The **First Reading** speaks of a new Covenant or agreement between God and the people of Israel – one that will be written in their hearts. The **Psalms** pleads with God: "A pure heart create for me." The **Second Reading** reminds us of the personal cost to Jesus that we might enjoy such a close relationship with God. In the **Gospel**, the tension in Jerusalem rises. Jesus begins to sense that his end is near and soon he will have fulfilled his mission, his purpose in life which is to definitively bring about that new Covenant between God and all humanity.
- The Eucharist will be celebrated as normal. At communion time, make an Act of **Spiritual Communion**. Invite Jesus to visit your heart, take some time to truly welcome his presence. Speak to him about what you see as your purpose in life. Ask him what does he see as your purpose in life?

Take away ...

During the week, ask yourself – "What is my purpose in life?" Plan how you will make the most at a spiritual level of Holy Week 2021.



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