

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.

First Sunday of Lent

21st February 2021



We come to the first Sunday of our Lenten Pilgrimage. The image of Jesus being driven by the Spirit into the wilderness or the desert takes centre stage. There we are told that Satan tempted him for forty days and forty nights. Immediately afterwards, he begins his ministry. “The time has come”, he said “and the Kingdom of God is close at hand. Repent, and believe the Good News”. (Mk 1:15)

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. Have some sand or gravel to hand.

As we begin ...

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

Let us pray (pause)

Father, our lives are often deserts – wastelands littered with bad decisions and bad actions. Help us in our struggle to live in love with you and with one another. This Sunday help us respond to the call to Repent – to turn our lives around. Help us to believe in the Gospel and to see in Christianity the good news of how to live life well. Walk with us on our Lenten pilgrimage of renewal. We ask this through Christ, our Lord. **Amen**

Let us listen to God's Word ...

Mark 1:12-15

The Spirit drove Jesus out into the wilderness, and he remained there for forty days, and was tempted by Satan. He was with the wild beasts, and the angels looked after him.

Let us reflect ...

Piri Thomas wrote a book called *Down These Mean Streets*. It describes his conversion from being a convict, a drug addict, and an attempted killer, to becoming an exemplary Christian. One night, Piri was lying on his bunk bed in prison. Suddenly it occurred to him what a mess he had made of his life. He felt an overwhelming desire to pray. But he was sharing his cell with another prisoner called 'the thin kid'. So he waited. After he thought 'the thin kid' was asleep, he climbed out of his bunk, knelt down on the cold concrete, and prayed. He said: "I told God what was in my heart... I talked to him plain... I talked to him of all my wants and lacks, of my hopes and disappointments... I felt like I could even cry..." After Piri finished his prayer, a small voice said "Amen". It was 'the thin kid'. The two young men talked for a long time. Then Piri climbed back into his bunk. "Good night, Chico," he said. "I'm thinking that God is always with us - it's just that we aren't with him".

Lent gives us an opportunity to see if we are falling behind in our spiritual growth. Take time each day for yourself. What attitudes or habits are obstacles to me living a more fulfilled and fruitful life? These are the "beasts". What resources for spiritual nurture am I neglecting? Making prayer, silent meditation, good reading and charitable acts part of my day will restore the balance. These are the "angels". 'Lord make me know your ways.' Psalm 24. (*Father John Garvey*)

Pause for a few moments of silent reflection

Children's Activity

Draw a picture of Jesus asking people to "Repent and believe in the Good News" (Mk 1:15). Use thought bubbles to explain what he meant by "Repent" and what he meant by "Good News".

Ritual Action

Place the sand/gravel in your sacred space – pause in silence to try to name the places of wilderness or desert in your own life. Pray together:

O my God, I thank you for loving me, I am sorry for all my sins; for not loving others and not loving you. Help me to live like Jesus and not to sin again. Amen

Intercessions

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

We pray for the gift of recognising and acknowledging the areas of desert or wilderness in our lives. (pause)

Lord, in your mercy. Hear our prayer.

We pray for an increase in faith. Help us to believe that God has truly reached out to us in Jesus and that he walks with us in both the good and bad times of life. (pause)

Lord, in your mercy. Hear our prayer.

We pray for our families – those who are here with us, those who cannot be with us and those who have gone home to God. (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 in these first days of 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

How can I arrange my week so that I can spend a little extra time in prayer with God?

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. Add to it some sand or gravel.

During the broadcast look out for the following:

- The priest will wear **purple vestments** as a sign of the penitential aspect of the Lenten Season.
- For the Season of Lent the **Gloria** and **Alleluia** are omitted.
- On the First Sunday of Lent, those seeking baptism this Easter take part in the **Rite of Election**.
- In the **First Reading**, after the great flood, God's covenant with Noah and with all of us is renewed and the rainbow is its sign. The **Psalm** is a prayer praising God for his covenant. In the **Second Reading**, the waters of the flood and the covenant with Noah point towards the waters of baptism and the new covenant established by the death and resurrection of Christ. In the **Gospel**, every life has a touch of the desert about it. There are oasis moments of refreshment and tranquillity. There are long tracts of inhospitable sand with threats and fears, burning heat and icy cold. Christ entered the desert of life to be with us there.
- 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 truly welcome his presence. Bring to him the areas of desert or wilderness in your life. Ask him to help you name and tame your temptations or "inner demons".

Take away ...

What does it really mean for me to "Repent" and "Believe in the Good News"?



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