

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.

Fourth Sunday of Lent Laetare Sunday

14th March 2021



Today we celebrate the Fourth Sunday of Lent, which is also called “Laetare Sunday”. Laetare is the Latin for “to Rejoice”. “Laetare Sunday” focuses on the idea that in the midst of our Lenten Pilgrimage there is real joy and hope because Easter is just around the corner. The liturgical colour changes to rose or pink – a mixture between the purple of penance and the joy that awaits us at Easter. This anticipated joy is evident in today’s readings which focus on God’s will that we might be saved from everything that diminishes us and that we might live life as God had intended it to be lived.

A Prayer Ritual at Home

Open a Bible in your prayer space and light a candle to symbolise that God is present. Place the Trocaire Lenten Box nearby. Write a list of things that bring you joy in life and place them in a sealed 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, amid the changes and challenges of this world, you alone are unchanging and eternal. We give you thanks for the many gifts you have given us in life. Grant us a profound trust in your goodness and the true joy of knowing your presence. As Holy Week and Easter draw near, let us not weaken in our work of spiritual and personal renewal. Continue to walk with us on our Lenten pilgrimage. We ask this through Christ, our Lord. **Amen**

Let us listen to God's Word ...

John 3:14-21

And indeed, everybody who does wrong hates the light and avoids it, for fear his actions should be exposed; but the man who lives by the truth comes out into the light, so that it may be plainly seen that what he does is done in God.

Let us reflect ...

Thank God for the gift of springtime. With the harshness and darkness of winter behind us, we can begin to see the effects of spring all around. The days are getting ever longer, the buds are appearing on the trees and there are signs of growth everywhere. The farmer is preparing ground for planting as he admires the gift of new life all around him. One of the major reasons for all this growth is of course the ever-increasing light that comes with this time of year. Life needs light. Saint John uses the metaphor of light in his writings and we see that in today's Gospel. Jesus tells Nicodemus, who comes to him in the dark of night, that whoever lives the truth lives in light.

Through our Lenten observances, we try to dispel the darkness of sin from our lives, a darkness that brings coldness and decay, and we try to allow the light of Christ, the light of the Gospel of love to grow ever brighter within us. That light which grows ever stronger and brighter over the days of Lent brings life to our lives, true life and so come Easter we can rejoice in the true light and life brought by the resurrection of Jesus. (*Canon Tom Hever*)

Pause for a few moments of silent reflection

Children's Activity

Write and decorate a prayer to God thanking him for everything in life that you are grateful for.

Ritual Action

Place the envelope with the list of things that bring you joy in life into the sacred space. Pause for a few moments reflection and pray:

God of all blessings,

source of all life,

giver of all that is good.

Thank you for the marvels of the world around us.

Thank you for life and living.

Thank you for family and friends.
Thank you for food and shelter.
Thank you for kind voices and smiling faces.
Thank you for caring hearts and helping hands.
Thank you for forgiving words and new beginnings.
Thank you for Jesus and his Good News.
Thank you for my fellow Christians.
Thank you for being there when I need you.
For all this and everything else, I am eternally grateful. Amen

Intercessions

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

For all those who are searching for meaning and purpose in their lives.
May they find in Jesus the answer to their questions. (pause)

Lord, in your mercy. Hear our prayer.

Lord, increase our faith and love of you and help us, with your wisdom, to become better people. (pause)

Lord, in your mercy. Hear our prayer.

We pray for our world in this time of Pandemic; we pray for those who are sick because of Covid-19, those who have died and their families. We entrust our worries and our fears to you, “the light that darkness cannot overpower”. (pause)

Lord, in your mercy. Hear our prayer.

Lord, today on Mother’s Day, we pray for all mothers – our own mothers, mothers-to-be, those who have been motherly figures in our lives – grant them peace and joy in life. We pray for the happy repose of the souls of all mothers who have died.

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 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

Before the sun sets today – find a way of bringing some joy to someone in your life. On this Mothering Sunday, tell your mother how much she means to you. If your mother has gone to her Eternal reward, take a moment to pray for her and perhaps visit her grave, if this is possible.



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. Place in the space an envelope containing a list of things/people that bring you joy in life.

During the broadcast look out for the following:

- The priest will wear **rose colour vestments** today.
- For the Season of Lent the **Gloria** and **Alleluia** are omitted.
- In the scripture readings today, we hear of how much God loves each one of us. In the **First Reading**, we hear how God's promises are not negated because of his people's sins but rather his mercy wins out. The **Psalm** is a song of hope that the people of Israel exiled in Babylon will soon return to Jerusalem. The **Second Reading** from Paul to the Ephesians speaks of God's generous love for us shown in sending his Son, not because of anything we have done. In the **Gospel**, we read of how much God loves the world in the sending of his Son and he is the light by which we are invited to live our lives and so be saved.
- 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 and to thank him for the things that bring you joy in life.

Take away ...

During the week to come try to smile more – what about a random act of kindness for someone?



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