

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.

Solemnity of St Patrick Lá Fhéile Pádraig

17th March 2021



Today our Lenten Journey finds welcome relief as we celebrate Saint Patrick, apostle to Ireland. Born in 387 AD, tradition holds Patrick to have been from Britain. Taken prisoner at the age of sixteen by a group of Irish raiders, he was held as a farm hand before eventually escaping home. During this harsh period in his life, he turned to his Christian faith for solace. Once home, he began to feel a call to return to Ireland to share with the Irish his faith. This he did with great success. In the *Confessions* attributed to Patrick, he reflects on his life and his calling: “So I am first of all a simple country person, a refugee, and unlearned. I do not know how to provide for the future. But this I know for certain, that before I was brought low, I was like a stone lying deep in the mud. Then he who is powerful came and in his mercy pulled me out, and lifted me up and placed me on the very top of the wall. That is why I must shout aloud in return to the Lord for such great good deeds of his, here and now and forever, which the human mind cannot measure”. (*Confessions*, 12) Patrick died sometime around 461 AD.

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 ready some shamrock or a picture of shamrock.

As we begin ...

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

Let us pray (pause)

O God, who chose the Bishop Saint Patrick to preach your glory to the peoples of Ireland, grant, through his merits and intercession, that those who glory in the name of Christian may never cease to proclaim your wondrous deeds to all. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, for ever and ever. **Amen**

Let us listen to God's Word ...

Mark 16:15-20

Lastly, he showed himself to the Eleven themselves while they were at table. He reproached them for their incredulity and obstinacy, because they had refused to believe those who had seen him after he had risen. And he said to them, 'Go out to the whole world; proclaim the gospel to all creation. Whoever believes and is baptised will be saved; whoever does not believe will be condemned. These are the signs that will be associated with believers: in my name they will cast out devils; they will have the gift of tongues; they will pick up snakes in their hands and be unharmed should they drink deadly poison; they will lay their hands on the sick, who will recover'. And so the Lord Jesus, after he had spoken to them, was taken up into heaven; there at the right hand of God he took his place, while they, going out, preached everywhere, the Lord working with them and confirming the word by the signs that accompanied it.

Let us reflect ...

We celebrate today, Saint Patrick, our National Patron. Usually when this day falls during the Season of Lent, we get a short reprieve from the penitential nature of this Season. It is good for us to celebrate the person of Patrick and what he stands for. He is a man of Faith, motivated and driven by a deep sense of the Blessed Trinity - Father, Son and Holy Spirit. We look to this former slave as a man who heard and listened to the Word of God. He not only heard God's message, but he also dedicated his whole life to sharing it with others.

He brought the light of faith to these shores, from lighting the fire on Easter morning in 433 AD on the hill of Tara, to the Paschal fire and Easter Candle in every church in Ireland. During this Lenten time, we stoke the flame of faith in our own lives which may have been smouldering. As individuals, let us support one another on the journey and build up the Community of Faith. May we use this Lent to explore our relationship with God and one another. We remember too and pray for all those around the world today who have any connection with Saint Patrick and our Land. May we too listen to God as Patrick did and follow Jesus as he did. *(Father Ray Milton)*

Pause for a few moments of silent reflection

Children's Activity

Read a children's version of the story of Saint Patrick. Using card or paper, make Saint Patrick's Day badges to wear. Draw a picture of Saint Patrick. Use a thought bubble to represent what you think he would say to you today.

Ritual Action

Tradition has it that Saint Patrick used the Shamrock to teach the Irish about the mystery of the Trinity – God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Sprinkle the Shamrock with some holy water and pray:

Loving Father, we give you thanks for the gift of Patrick and for the Christian faith which he nurtured in Ireland. Bless these shamrock leaves.

May they ever remind us of the infinite mystery of God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Increase our faith.

Protect our land.

Give us the strength and the courage to work for the coming of your Kingdom here on earth as it is in heaven. **Amen**

If appropriate, pin the shamrock on your lapel. Pause for a moment of silent reflection and pray:

**I arise today through a mighty strength,
The invocation of the Holy Trinity,
Through a belief in the Threeness,
Through a confession of the Oneness of the Creator of all creation.**
(Lorica of Saint Patrick)

Intercessions

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

We pray that our faith may be strengthened and that it may bear abundant fruit in our lives. (pause)

Lord, in your mercy. Hear our prayer.

We pray for the land of Ireland. May all her people work to promote that which is good. (pause)

Lord, in your mercy. Hear our prayer.

We pray for those who like Patrick find themselves slaves to oppression of any kind, those who suffer from violence, warfare or human trafficking. We pray for the refugee and the emigrant. We remember those who are poor or suffer from pain or sickness in mind or body. (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)

Críost liom, Críost romham,
Críost i mo dhiaidh, Críost istigh ionam,
Críost fúm, Críost os mo chionn,
Críost ar mo lámh dheis, Críost ar mo lámh chlé,
Críost i mo luí dom, Críost i mo sheasamh dom,
Críost i gcroí gach duine atá ag cuimhneamh orm,
Críost i mbéal gach duine a labhraíonn liom,
Críost i ngach suíl a fhéachann orm,
Críost i ngach cluas a éisteann liom.

Christ with me, Christ before me,
Christ behind me, Christ within me,
Christ below me, Christ above me,
Christ on my right hand, Christ on my left hand,
Christ in my sleeping, Christ in my waking,
Christ in the heart of all who think of me,
Christ in the mouth of all who speak to me,
Christ in every eye that looks at me,
Christ in every ear that listens to me.

Blessing

May the road rise up to meet us. May the wind be always at our back. May the sun shine warm upon our face; the rains fall soft upon our fields and may God hold us all in the palm of his hand. **Amen**

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

Call to Action

Source a copy of the Confessions of Saint Patrick or the text of his Breastplate and become familiar with his own words. Listen to a recording of the “Deer’s Cry”. Make contact with relatives and friends outside of Ireland to wish them a blessed Saint Patrick’s Day.



Online Celebration of the Eucharist



Before the broadcast begins:

- Gather with other members of your household, if you can.
- Light a candle and place some shamrock in your prayer space.

During the broadcast look out for the following:

- The priest will wear **white or gold vestments** today, a reminder that it is a feast day – a day of celebration.
- For the Season of Lent the **Alleluia** is omitted.
- **Shamrock** may be blessed during the Mass.
- The Word of God before us today is about our Mission and Mandate. The **First Reading** reminds us that we are chosen by God to play our part in spreading his Word. **The Psalm** proclaims, “Go out to the whole world; proclaim the Good News”. The **Second Reading** from St. Paul urges us to share our faith with others, so they too can live the Christian life. In the **Gospel**, Jesus commissions and mandates us to proclaim and share the Good News. As the baptised, we have a duty and responsibility to make Jesus known.
- 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. Thank him for the gift of your Christian Faith – ask him to help you in times of doubt. Ask him to bless your family and friends – to bless Ireland and her people.

Take away ...

During the week: ask yourself what does it mean for me to be a Christian in Ireland today?



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