

INTRODUCTION

This little booklet was written long before Lent, so I don't know what the world will look like when you read it. Normally that would be fine, but the times we're living in have some big question marks. By the time you read this, will your kids be in school or back to distance learning? Will hospitals be overloaded with new variants of COVID-19? What hurricanes, wildfires, and strange weather will have impacted our world? And, importantly to a lot of us, who will have won the Super Bowl? No matter what happens in the world around us, we need Lent. We always will. It's a time that can help us deepen our trust in God, who walks us through all the question marks in our lives. A time to discover new paths that will help us grow in love for God and for others. I invite you to take this booklet along for the ride. There's a reflection to help you take another look at each day's Mass readings, a short prayer for your family, and an easy activity to try together. May it all help you follow the path Jesus lays out ahead of you over these next 40 or so days—wherever that takes you.



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Rewards Programmed

*“Amen,
I say to you,
they have
received
their
reward.”*

MATTHEW 6:5

Imagine making your kids thank you for everything. Every goodnight kiss, pediatrician appointment, and tiny sacrifice you ever made. Of course, you don't do any of this for the rewards, but because you love your kids. What about our Christian practices? Do we ever expect praise, approval, or thanks when we help someone? Do we expect Father to run things our way just because we add to the collection basket every Sunday? Jesus seems to imply that seeking certain rewards can cause us to miss something greater. I wonder what that might be! This Lent, let's approach prayer, almsgiving, and sacrifice more like the way we raise our kids—simply for love. Let's see what happens!

Family Prayer

*Have one person read the prayer aloud; the rest of the family can respond after each line: **Hello, Jesus!***

Dear Jesus, today we say hello to a holy time with you.
For a while, we'll say goodbye to some things we like.
Be with us during Lent. Show us how to use this time to
deepen our love for you and for others. Amen.

Family Activity » Let gratitude guide your family's Lent. Before making your plans for prayers, fasting, and giving alms, spend some time together talking about what everyone is grateful for.

March 3 | Thursday after Ash Wednesday

Saint Katharine Drexel

DEUTERONOMY 30:15-20 • LUKE 9:22-25

Take It Together

“If anyone wishes to come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.”

LUKE 9:23

Some days, your cross is heavier than others. Maybe today is one of those days. What do you need to say to Jesus about it? Or maybe you're OK today. In that case, what might Jesus be saying to you? Maybe he asks you to be a Simon of Cyrene. Remember, Simon was a parent too. Maybe he had other things to do on the day Jesus bore his cross through Jerusalem's streets. But God placed Simon in that crowd that day for a reason. If you bear a heavy cross right now, ask God to help you recognize the Simon in your life today. If you are Simon, ask God to show you who needs your help. Jesus, so full of mercy, will guide you.

Family Prayer

*All respond after each line: **We all share the cross.***

Lord Jesus, show us who needs our help today.

Give us your strength to help wherever we are needed. Amen.

Family Activity » Plan to pray the Stations of the Cross at home. There are hundreds of ways to do this, so find what works for your family. You can find free coloring pages online. To add music, I recommend openyourhymnal.com. (Scroll through the site to find the Stations series.)



Fasting Company

*You fast only
to quarrel
and fight...*

ISAIAH 58:4

It's almost eerie the way Isaiah describes my fasting. It's like he's right next to me in the car as I fume about being cut off or reading the snarky text I dashed off earlier. I'm tempted to think the solution to my crabbiness when I'm fasting or sacrificing something for Lent is to make it more reasonable. Maybe I'll give up *certain* kinds of junk food, or *just one* Netflix show. But Isaiah's got news for me and anyone who thinks we know best. God has a better idea. Sharing bread with the hungry—is someone I know starved for attention? Releasing those bound unjustly—are my expectations for anyone too high? Setting free the oppressed—who have I cut off with my lack of forgiveness? Let's ask God to help us all here.

Family Prayer

PARENT: We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you.

ALL: ***Because, by your holy Cross, you have redeemed the world.***

Family Activity » Once you've found a Stations of the Cross that works for your family, have your kids help set it up around your home (or outside if the weather is nice). Walk from station to station together, reflecting and talking about what is happening to Jesus at each stop. Use the prayer above. Try making this a Lenten Friday tradition.

Essential Screening

“Those who are healthy do not need a physician, but the sick do. I have not come to call the righteous to repentance but sinners.”

LUKE 5:31-32

On the face of it, this seems a little divisive. What about all those righteous people? Are they left out in the cold? Then we remember that we are all sinners, every single one of us. Lent is like our annual spiritual health screening—that lasts for 40 days. We know it’s good for us, but we put it off like mammograms and dental checkups. Don’t wait. Make an appointment with God. Really. Set aside the time. Ask God to show you where you have fallen short with him and others, especially your family. You may discover you need to do this every day, or at least once a week. We can all find something to work on here.

Family Prayer

*All respond after each line: **Heal us, Lord.***

Jesus, we pray for all who are sick, especially _____.
Heal them, and all of us, in body, mind, and soul. Amen.

Family Activity » Write (or have your kids write or draw) the names of people you know who are sick. Make it a daily habit to pray for them. Brainstorm ways your family might offer practical help, such as making greeting cards or a meal for them.



Here Today, Here Tomorrow

*Filled with
the holy
Spirit, Jesus
returned
from the
Jordan and
was led by
the Spirit
into the
desert...*

LUKE 4:1

I don't know about you, but I've always pictured Jesus' temptation in the desert as a scene with Jesus and the devil. But all this time I've been leaving someone out.

Read the Gospel quote again and see for yourself. Jesus isn't alone. He is led by the Spirit and filled *with* the Holy Spirit! Luke reminds us that we are never alone in the face of temptation or struggle.

The Holy Spirit might lead us places, but the Spirit never leaves us to take things on alone. How can you be more aware of the Spirit's presence every day? Give yourself time to think about this today.



Family Prayer

*All respond after each line: **Spirit, lead us.***

Holy Spirit, help us be open to your presence every day.
Help us remember to look to you for strength
to get past temptations.

Give us your strength to be joyful followers of Christ. Amen.

Family Activity » Talk together about how your Lenten practices of prayer, fasting, and almsgiving are going so far. If someone has already had trouble, talk about ways to move forward. How might you help each other? What can give you strength?

March 7 | Monday of the First Week

Saints Perpetua and Felicity

LEVITICUS 19:1-2, 11-18 • MATTHEW 25:31-46

Thoughts for Food

“For I was hungry and you gave me food...”

MATTHEW
25:35

I’m hungry. And there are lots of people who have given me the food I’m about to eat for dinner. There’s the dairy farmer and his wife who are about to lose their business who provided that glass of cold milk. The pregnant farmworker who nearly passed out in extreme heat as she harvested these delicious green beans. And the supermarket checker who can’t afford child care for her son, but who smiled when I asked for a separate bag for the chicken thighs I bought. All of these good people have given me food today—despite their struggles. How about you? Who has made a sacrifice for the food you’re giving your family today? This isn’t about feeling guilty, but about being aware of Jesus’ presence in each person. Does Jesus have enough food, water, health care, clothing, safety, housing, education, and justice today? How can we help?

Family Prayer

*All respond after each line: **Bless us, Lord.***

Jesus, bless the food we are about to eat.

Remind us of the work others do to bring us our food.

Help us see you in the faces of all who are struggling today.

Bless them, Lord. Amen.

Family Activity » Replace a half hour of TV with time spent together learning about the hungry at a website like crs.org or feedingamerica.org.

Something New

“This is how you are to pray: Our Father in heaven...”

MATTHEW 6:9

I like to imagine the disciples’ faces whenever Jesus taught them something new. Jesus continually rocks their world, even when he teaches them how to pray. These guys weren’t kids—surely they already knew how to pray. But here they are, as open and eager as puppies. You’ve been praying your whole life. Could Jesus have something new in mind for you? Try this. Put yourself in your child’s place. Reread this Gospel passage from the point of view of your child. This might take some time to get used to. Keep trying. What word or phrase stands out to you? Recalling that the Holy Spirit is with your family, what do these words say about how your family might pray during Lent?

Family Prayer

*All respond after each line: **Show us how to pray, Lord.***

Jesus, show us how you want us to pray today.

Take us out of our routines, so that we might hear your message for us. Amen.

Family Activity » Change up a family prayer practice today.

Try a different meal blessing and add a new one, like blessing the family car or the entrance to your home. Or make up hand motions for saying the Our Father together. Begin like this: Our Father (*raise your arms*) who art in heaven (*point to heaven*)...