

**National Catholic
Partnership on Disability**
Alianza Nacional Católica
sobre la Discapacidad

Adapted Faith Formation Activities for February

Ash Wednesday and Preparation for Lent

Council on Developmental and Intellectual Disabilities

Family Faith Formation



“The witness of Christian life given by parents in the family comes to children with tenderness and parental respect. Children thus perceive and joyously live the closeness of God and of Jesus made manifest by their parents in such a way that the first Christian experience frequently leaves decisive traces which last throughout life.”

–General Directory for Catechesis #226



Four Keys for Practicing Faith

- **Caring Conversations**
- **Family Devotions and Prayer**
- **Family Rituals and Traditions**
- **Family Service**

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Caring Conversations

Prayer, Fasting, and Almsgiving

Ash Wednesday is the first Wednesday in Lent; it occurs about 40 days before Easter (the six Sundays are not included). In preparation for Ash Wednesday, parishes take the left over blessed palms from Palm Sunday the year before and burn them. They save the ashes and use them during the Ash Wednesday Mass. When we attend Mass, we are called forward to receive our ashes. We are told, “Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return.” The ashes are placed on our forehead in the shape of a cross to show we are asking forgiveness. It is a reminder that we are going to die to this life and we should live life in preparation for our eternal life in heaven.

Fr. Larry Rice writes in the Fact of Faith article, “Why Ashes?” (<https://catholiccurrent.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/TWIM-5-14-Fact-of-Faith.pdf>), that Lent is a season of penitential renewal through prayer, fasting, and almsgiving. Perhaps your family will take time this year to talk about what you can do individually or as a family in the areas of prayer, fasting, and almsgiving. After your conversation, ask each person to complete the “My Lenten Promise” card below. Family members can support loved ones who need assistance completing the card by writing down their promise or offering suggestions of what they may choose to do during Lent. Completed cards may be placed in your home’s prayer space or displayed in an area for all to see and remember the promises made.



My Lenten Promise

This Lent, I will



...in order to help me grow closer to God.



Family Devotions and Prayer

Pointers for Prayer

Ash Wednesday is when we begin the season of Lent and prepare for Easter. God wants us to return to him in a special way –

Rend your hearts, not your garments,
and return to the Lord, your God,
For his is gracious and merciful,
slow to anger, abounding in steadfast love,
and relenting in punishment.

Joel 2:13

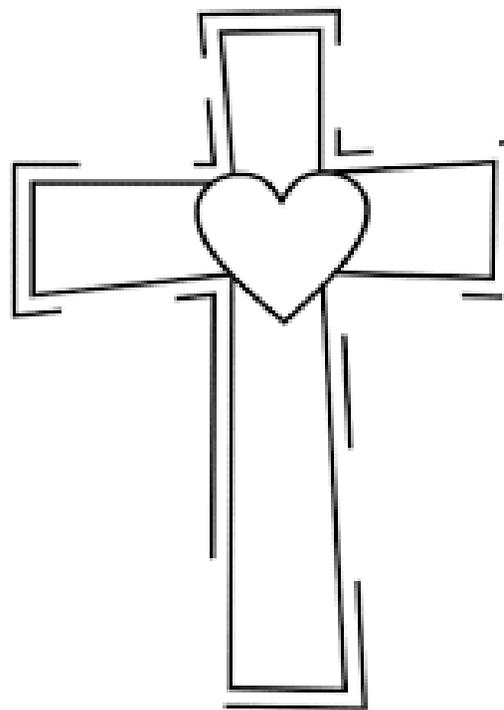


Along with almsgiving and fasting, prayer is one of the three pillars of Lent. For many families, finding time to pray may sometimes seem like an almost impossible task. In the article, “10 Pointers for Prayer” (<https://catholiccurrent.org/twim-0619/10-pointers-for-prayer/>), suggestions are given to help you find time for prayer. These pointers include:

1. Pray as you can, not as you can't. (Be realistic about what is possible.)
2. Take ten - or twenty. (Pray for shorter amounts of time.)
3. Pray as a family. (Build upon rituals such as grace before meals or bedtime prayer.)
4. Decorate your domestic church. (Create an atmosphere for prayer in your home.)
5. Short prayers count, too. (Turn your heart and mind to God if only for a few seconds.)
6. Find God at work. (Offer the day to God as you take care of a loved one.)
7. Jump start your prayer life. (Scripture or an inspirational book can help focus your prayer.)
8. Ask your Mother for help. (The Blessed Virgin understands our needs & offers comfort.)
9. Read a good story. (Read about a saint whose virtue you want to emulate.)
10. Walk with a spiritual friend. (Become “prayer buddies” with a family member.)



Consider beginning your Lenten prayer journey with point #4 - decorate your domestic church. In common areas or in their bedrooms, family members may choose to display a crucifix, the Bible, or other holy objects. To help you get started, a loved one may choose to decorate one of the following pictures. Keep in mind point #6 - find God at work. As you help your loved one decorate their room, offer this time in prayer as you “rend your heart . . . and return to the Lord”.





Family Rituals and Traditions

Lenten Recipes

Many families have rituals and traditions that involve food. The special birthday cake, anniversary dinner, and First Eucharist celebration are just a few occasions throughout our lives that involve food. During the season of Lent, many of us fast on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday, there are meatless Fridays, and personal offerings of limiting certain foods. Bishop Ricken writes in the Living the Faith article, “Journey to the Foot of the Cross” (<https://catholiccurrent.org/living-the-faith/10-things-to-remember-during-lent/>), that fasting is actually a form of penance which helps us turn away from sin and toward Christ.

During this Lenten season, keep in mind that fasting not only involves food but it can also involve other areas of our lives. As a family, reflect on time spent playing video games, watching television, viewing social media posts, etc. Family members may choose to “fast” from some of these activities so that more time is available to be with loved ones. Perhaps the saved/fasted time can be spent together creating meatless recipes such as - bean and cheese enchiladas, shrimp pasta, broccoli cheese soup, sugar cookies shaped like the cross, or other family favorites.



While making the recipe, family members may discuss why abstaining from meat is important or what they “fasted” from to create the time to spend together. Your family may decide to create your own Lenten recipe book and attach the following card to the recipes. Even if the recipe doesn’t come out as expected, you will have spent quality time with loved ones.



Lenten Recipe Card



LENT

Date Recipe was made: _____

Who helped: _____

How did it turn out: _____

Family Service

Almsgiving

In the article, “Almsgiving: Love in a Troubled World” (<https://catholiccurrent.org/living-the-faith/almsgiving-love-in-a-troubled-world/>), the author notes that we are called to walk with “Two Feet of Love in Action” - working to meet immediate needs through charitable works and to work for long-term change through social justice.

Lent is a time to choose something special we can do that will help us focus more clearly on Jesus and on doing his will. Before Lent begins, perhaps your family can think of ways you can help others in need. Consider starting the discussion by reading Isaiah 58:6-11



Is this not, rather, the fast that I choose:
releasing those bound unjustly,
untying the thongs of the yoke;
Setting free the oppressed,
breaking off every yoke?

Is it not sharing your bread with the
hungry, bringing the afflicted and the
homeless into your house;
Clothing the naked when you see them,
and not turning your back on your own
flesh?

Then your light shall break forth like the
dawn, and your wound shall quickly be
healed;
Your vindication shall go before you,
and the glory of the LORD shall be your
rear guard.

Then you shall call, and the LORD will
answer, you shall cry for help, and he will
say: "Here I am!"
If you remove the yoke from among you,
the accusing finger, and malicious speech;

If you lavish your food on the hungry
and satisfy the afflicted;
Then your light shall rise in the darkness,
and your gloom shall become like
midday;

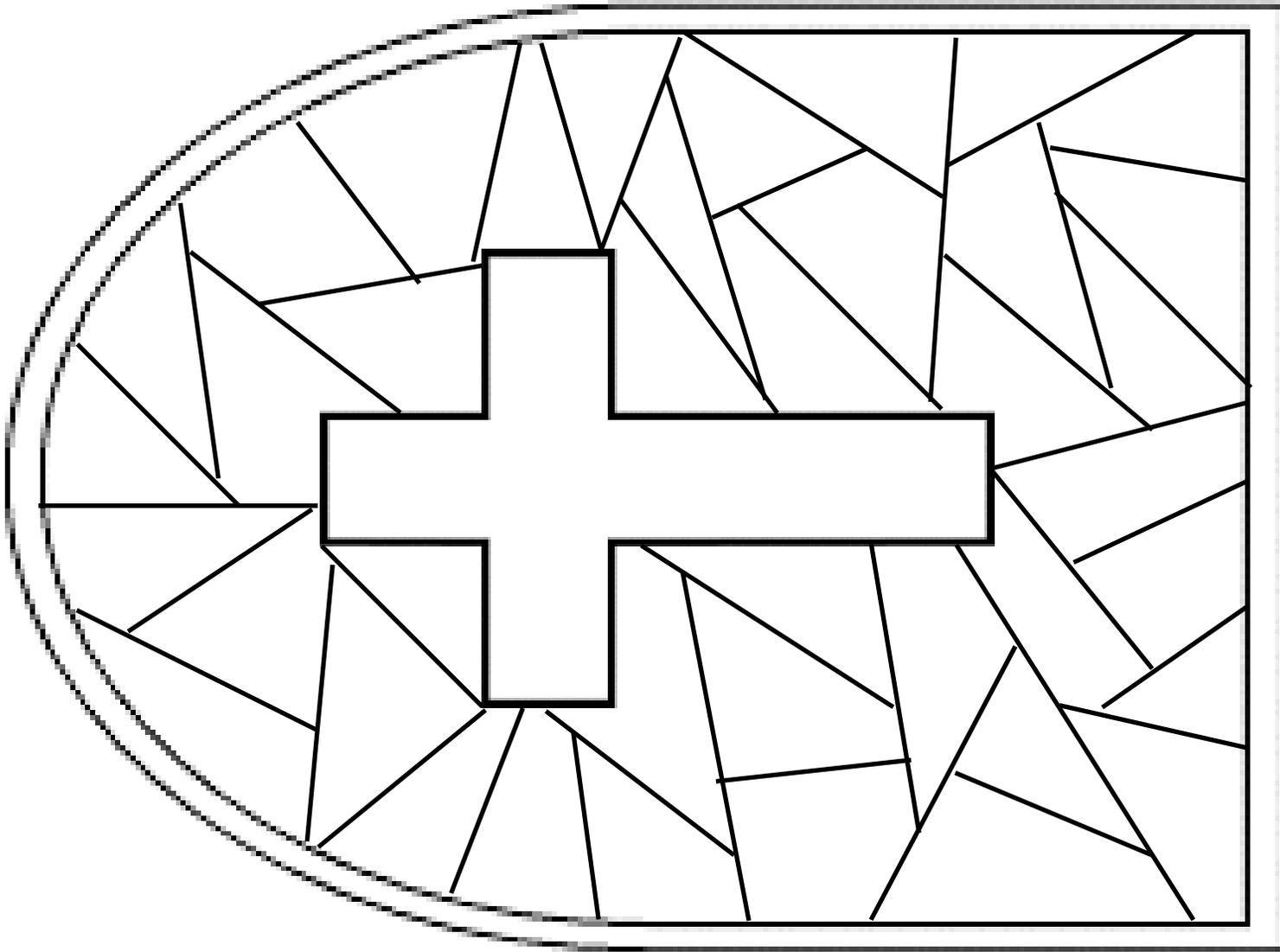
Then the LORD will guide you always
and satisfy your thirst in parched places,
will give strength to your bones
And you shall be like a watered garden,
like a flowing spring whose waters never
fail.





Throughout the 40 days of Lent, family members can conduct a daily check-in to see how they have demonstrated “love in action” for those in need. After the check-in, select a loved one to color a section on the following stained glass picture. The forty pieces of glass represent the forty days of Lent and act as a visual reminder of your family’s almsgiving.





Ash Wednesday and Preparation for Lent - Free Resources

The following free resources can be found at the USCCB's Catholic Current ministry site (<https://catholiccurrent.org/resources-for-lent/>):

- Lenten Calendar
- Numerous Articles and Prayers
- "Facts of Faith" and "Living the Faith" topics

Sadlier offers the following free resources in both English and Spanish (<https://www.sadlier.com/religion/blog/bid/79007/resources-for-lent/>):

- Lenten Practices Reflection Cards
- Lenten Preparation Checklist for Families
- Activities for Children



Ash Wednesday and Preparation for Lent - Free Resources, continued

The Loyola Press site (<https://www.loyolapress.com/catholic-resources/liturgical-year/lent/ash-wednesday/>) has the following free resources:

- Marked with Salvation (English and Spanish) - a three minute retreat
- Living Lent Daily
- Activities for Children
- Perspectives on Lent

Ave Maria Press (<https://www.avemariapress.com/40daysofsoup>) has free Lenten recipes:

- 40 Days of Soup - Daily Lenten Recipes and Reflections

A variety of free Spanish resources are available at Familia Catolica (<http://familiacatolica-org.blogspot.com/2012/02/especial-de-cuaresma-ideas-para.html>).



Tips for Ash Wednesday

A Social Story

Ash Wednesday is a very special day for many Catholics. However, it can be a tough day for individuals with sensory challenges, memory loss, and difficulties with change. To help a family member possibly have a less stressful day, consider the following suggestions before going to church.

Describe to your loved one what he/she might experience during the Ash Wednesday service:

- The priest or a minister will dip their thumb in a small bowl of ashes and make the sign of the cross on parishioners' foreheads.
- Explain how the ashes feel on your forehead.
- Have a plan in case your loved one chooses to wipe off his/her ashes.
- Will incense be used? If yes, plan for different smells and smokiness inside the church.

Explain that the Ash Wednesday service will not be the same as a typical Sunday Mass:

- There will most likely be different people, songs, and prayers.
- Someone may be sitting in your usual spot or different people may be sitting nearby.





Contact your parish to find out information about the Ash Wednesday service(s) being offered:

- Is there a time of day that is better for your family member?
- Is one service typically not as crowded as another service?
- When you know more details, you'll be better able to prepare your loved one.

You may also want to review the following social story with your family member. After reading the story, have your loved one decorate the story. Bring it with you to church as a reminder of some of the events that will happen during the Ash Wednesday service.



We go to Church.



Ashes are put onto our forehead.



We say a prayer to God.



We think about how we can be a better person during Lent.

USCCB Scripture Resources

Daily Readings:

[English](#)

[Daily Readings Audio](#)

[Video Reflection](#)

Click on the links above to reflect on Scripture by reading, listening or viewing the reading.



National Catholic Partnership on Disability

Council on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities

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For more information, please visit: [The National Catholic Partnership on Disability](#)
[NCPD Council on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities](#)

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