

Partners in FAITH™



Helping our children grow in their Catholic faith.

2010 Special Lent Edition



Thoughtful Moments

Why Lent?

"If we say, 'We are without sin,' we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we acknowledge our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive our sins and cleanse us from every wrongdoing" (1 John 1:8-9).

Lent is the Church's gift to us to help us overcome the tendency to sin and to be "cleansed from every wrongdoing." It's our chance to perform community penance and personal acts of self-denial.

What to do with palms?

Some families twist palms around crucifixes or sacred pictures. Or, you can offer a palm to anyone you may have offended as a gesture of reconciliation.

The Family Poor Box

To make giving to the poor a family project, decorate a shoe box, cut a hole in the top and put it where everyone can see it. Ask each person to contribute to it every week. Then put the contents in your parish poor box on Sunday.

Lay the foundation

Don't hesitate to talk to your children about topics that may seem beyond their understanding. While they may not get the Holy Trinity or the Real Presence now, more will be revealed as they grow older. Others will remain mysteries for them as they do for us.

What are your children giving up for Lent?

This month Catholic children all over the country will ask each other, "What did you give up for Lent?" Giving something up — abstaining from a favorite food or activity — is a good way to observe the season of Lent.

But when this abstinence is too hard to maintain for the whole season, children get a dim view of Lent. Here are some suggestions for helping youngsters sacrifice during Lent.

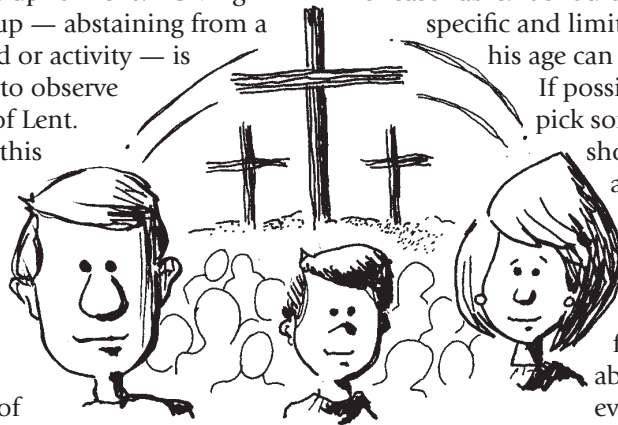
Encourage your child to give up something he really values — a favorite dessert or a cherished past-time. When he starts to miss it, tell him to think of it as giving Jesus a "thank you gift" for

his sacrifice on the cross.

Make sure what your child gives up is reasonable. It should be something specific and limited so that a child his age can see it through.

If possible, help him pick something he shouldn't have anyway. Sweets, soft drinks, or too much television make healthy choices for Lenten abstinence. He may even decide he can do without it after Lent is over.

Once you've helped him choose wisely, encourage him to give what was saved to God. For example, money not spent on sweets can go in the Rice Bowl or the Poor Box. It will send the message that there's more to Lent than just "giving something up."



Why Do Catholics Do That ?

Why do Catholics wear ashes on our foreheads on Ash Wednesday?

To ancient Jews, wearing sackcloth and sitting in ashes showed repentance and humility, and acted as a penance. Thus, the early Church adopted the practice of wearing ashes at the start of Lent to show repentance, too.

The ashes on our foreheads are

an outward sign of our desire to repair our relationship with God during Lent. As he places the ashes on our foreheads, the priest says, "Remember that you are dust and unto dust you shall return," to remind us that our time on earth will pass away but our life in Heaven lasts forever.



Help children have a fruitful Lent

Like eating green vegetables, good Lenten practices aren't always pleasant to children but they always help us to grow up healthy. Try these ideas to help children have a fruitful Lent:

Penance. Even young children understand that if we make a mess, we need to clean it up and try not to do it again. That's the basic idea behind Lenten penance. When we disobey God, we need to apologize to him, fix things if we can and try not to do it again.

Prayer. Children with good prayer habits often become adults who pray. Refresh your family prayer habits and encourage children to start and end their day in prayer. Together pick a morning and evening offering and say it together during Lent.

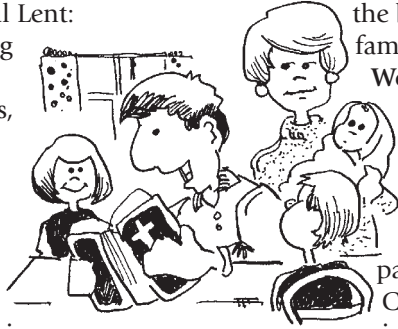
Acts of kindness. Our sins affect others, so offering kindness to others is a good way to compensate. Some good Lenten acts for children include shoveling a neighbor's walk, doing an extra chore without being asked, or showing kindness to another child at school.

Sacrificial sharing. Help children sort through their toys and put the excess into a box, even toys they like but don't play with much. Take the box to a needy family or family shelter.

Works of Mercy Mobile. The Spiritual Works of Mercy include instructing, advising, consoling, comforting, forgiving, and patiently forbearing.

Corporal works of mercy include feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, visiting the sick and imprisoned, sheltering the homeless, and burying the dead. Choose a set of Works and draw or cut out pictures to illustrate each one. Attach them to a hanger with string and hang it up to remind you to do these good works during Lent.

A Lenten Wreath. Press seven purple candles and one yellow candle into a Styrofoam ring. Decorate it with silk flowers or fresh greens. Light a candle on Ash Wednesday and the rest of the week. The second Wednesday, light two, and so on. Light the yellow candle on Easter and celebrate our new life in Jesus!



family FUN

Pretzels for Lent

Early Christians observed a strict fast during Lent, avoiding butter, cheese, eggs, meat, milk, or cream. So they created a bread shaped like a person's arms crossed in prayer (a popular prayer posture at the time) to remind them that Lent was a time of prayer and penance. Sprinkled with salt, this bread was eventually called "pretzels."



Recipe: Dissolve a package of dry yeast into 1 ½ cups of warm water. Add one teaspoon of salt, and one teaspoon of sugar. Blend in two cups of whole wheat flour and two cups of enriched flour.

Knead the dough until smooth and cut into small pieces. Roll the pieces into ropes and twist into a pretzel shape. Place on a lightly greased cookie sheet, brush with a beaten egg and sprinkle with sea salt. Bake at 425° for 12-15 minutes.

Joyful Jelly Beans

Last year, I found a way to make Lent fun. I started with jelly beans – our favorite Easter candy – and separated them by color into baggies. Then I taped a bean of each color to an index card and wrote what it represented.

Red meant sacrifice. Green was good deeds. Yellow was acts of kindness. Blue was stewardship (doing chores, turning out lights, etc.). Purple meant asking for forgiveness and pink meant offering it. White stood for God's grace which isn't earned.

Every time we performed a "jelly bean act," we put the colored bean into a jar with our name on it.

On Easter, I added white jelly beans to fill the jars to the top to show the gift of God's grace where we are lacking. On Easter, we were so proud of our full jars, nobody wanted to eat the jelly beans.

Celebrate the traditions of Lent

Mardi Gras: Translated as "Fat Tuesday," Mardi Gras is a final celebration before Lent. It began as an attempt to use up rich foods forbidden during Lent and people feasted on such items as pancakes, sausages, and sweets. Have a Mardi Gras party and pancake supper with your family the night before Ash Wednesday.

Meatless Friday: Abstaining from meat on Fridays during Lent is a sacrifice as penance for sin. It is also a sign of solidarity with the hungry all over the world. If your children are too young to abstain from meat

on Fridays (all over the age of 14 are required), suggest they abstain from something they enjoy like sweets or dessert.

Stations of the Cross: This is a way to reflect on the events of Jesus' journey to Calvary. Many churches display images before which families can pray while performing this devotion.

Confession: Jesus created the Sacrament of Reconciliation to help us remember God's unlimited mercy. Take your family to Confession so you can all know God's forgiveness and make a new start on Easter.

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