



SUNDAY

by Sunday

Lent calls us to renew our commitment to all love can do to bind and heal the human community and further the thriving for which every person longs. Lent is a time to take stock and review our course in life. As conscious beings and baptized Christians, we partner with God in continuing creation and transforming our world and ourselves in Christ.

As Christians we follow a leader who gave his life in apparent failure. But like a grain of wheat that falls into the earth, dies, and yields a hundredfold, Jesus rises to new life and hundreds of millions become his body through the centuries. Easter celebrates the power of God's love to give life. The greening Earth and Easter feast challenge us to live our faith in this power we share—to love and give life.

LENT

Time to Grow

“As a Christian, I do not believe in death without resurrection. If they kill me, I will rise again in the Salvadoran people.”

—Archbishop Romero
† March 23, 1980

Take Heart Anew This Lent



Pray

Rejoice and never cease praying; offer constant thanks.

Thessalonians 5:16-18

In personal prayer we open ourselves to God's inbreaking. By participating in parish liturgies during Lent, we invite the prayer of the Church and our parish community to sustain our own lives. Lent is also the time to pray more often as a family.

Create a prayer space that reminds your family to pray together—a prayer corner, the kitchen table, or refrigerator door. Display a cross, poster, or the cover of this issue. Invite family members at a meal or before bed to thank God for a good thing that has happened and ask God for help with a worry. Use the prayers below, which take their themes from the Lenten Sunday gospels.

Practice silence—no radio in the car, no TV noise at home. Listen to what is going on around you and within you. Let silence speak. Claim five minutes, a half hour, a day to be alone and restore yourself to new possibilities. Be slow to judge and quick to care.

Meditate. Be comfortable. Keep your feet on the floor, arms and hands relaxed. Close your eyes or focus them on a cross or lighted candle. Breathe slowly and deeply in and out. Many people like to repeat a simple phrase from scripture or a simple prayer over and over; for example, the beginning of Psalm 8, "How excellent your name, O God, over all the earth." Repeat part of the phrase as you breathe in, part as you breathe out. Invite the words to become part of you. Or, breathe in, saying, "Spirit of God, I live in you;" breathe out, saying, "Spirit of love, send me."

Make a Lenten retreat and pray the daily prayer at goodgroundpress.com.

Read the 16 chapters of Mark's gospel during the 40 days of Lent.

Journal. Purchase a book with all blank pages or make one with a page for each day of Lent. Journal in your book at a specific time each day. Write, draw, or copy something you want to remember. Fill your pages during the days of Lent. Help children make their own books, or make a family book.

Take a walk with family or friends. Visit a garden, a conservatory, a nature center, or a labyrinth. Pay attention to Earth coming to life—the grass, the flowers, the birds, the lengthening days. Talk about all your discoveries and in a beautiful spot offer thanks together for all you see.

Seek reconciliation with an alienated friend or family member or someone you don't like. Imagine love surrounding this person like sunlight. Ask God to help you forgive what you have not forgiven or to see a comfortable way to connect.

PRAYER MANTRAS

1ST WEEK OF LENT



Spirit of God, help me find a solitude to rest my heart with you. Surprise me.

2ND WEEK OF LENT

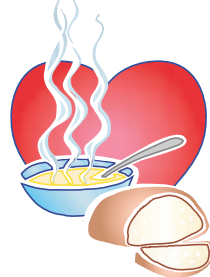


Loving God, if you are for us who can be against us? Sustain us. Transform us.

3RD WEEK OF LENT



Ever-creating God, you open the future. Free us to love.



Fast

This is the fast I seek: release the captive; free the yoked; feed the hungry; shelter

the oppressed and homeless; clothe the naked. Isaiah 58.6-7

Fasting from too much food, drink, television, or numbing electronic games quickens and enlivens us. It forces us to abandon wasteful habits and to do without, so that we have more to share. Fasting helps us rid ourselves of self-preoccupation, of all that diminishes our presence to others. It fosters solidarity with the millions of our planet who go without sufficient food.

Fast between meals.

Restrict nibbling. This is a common and worthy way to fast. Feeling hunger can help us remember to help hungry people and identify our hungers for more than food.

Eat with family. Make family meals a priority this Lent. When we eat together, more

than food passes between us. We share meat and meaning, difficulties and delights. We create bonds and strengthen relationships. Fast from eating on the run. Commit as a family to eating together at least twice a week during Lent.

Give up grudges, imagined enemies, old hurts, overwork, sarcasm, self-pity, and self-righteousness. Let go within yourself of a longstanding hurt. Pursue happiness. Embrace new relationships and new dimensions to long-lasting friendships. Attend to others' needs, welcome their insights and share your own. Talk more, or talk less.

Fast from TV. Television absorbs almost 40% of the average American's free time. Take some of that time back and use it to play games with your family, visit across the back fence with a neighbor, or go to a meeting where your voice needs to be heard on behalf of children, poor families, or those without homes.

Lent is a time to FAST and FEAST.

FAST from judging others.

FEAST on the Christ within them.

FAST from emphasis on differences.

FEAST on the unity of all life.

FAST from apparent darkness.

FEAST on the reality of light.

FAST from thoughts of illness.

FEAST on the healing power of God.

FAST from words that pollute.

FEAST on phrases that purify.

FAST from discontent.

FEAST on gratitude.

FAST from anger.

FEAST on patience.

FAST from pessimism.

FEAST on optimism.

FAST from worry.

FEAST on divine order.

FAST from lethargy.

FEAST on enthusiasm.

Margaret Murray, CSJ



4TH WEEK OF LENT

Holy One, we bask in your love like sunlight. Restore us to gratitude.

5TH WEEK OF LENT

Gardener God, yours is the light and life of the cosmos. Cultivate justice in our actions.

PALM/PASSION SUNDAY

Let our attitude be Christ's. May our love give life.





Give Alms

Pure religion in the eyes of God our Father is this: coming to the aid of orphans and widows and the poor when they need it. James 1.27

Almsgiving challenges us to give of our treasure, time, talents, and energy. Almsgiving is a work of justice, not an option for the Christian.

Alms Box Make an alms box at home. Decorate it with symbols expressing the value and joy of sharing. Collect money saved from skipping desserts, from meatless meals, from drinking fewer sodas. Plan to place your alms in your parish's Holy Thursday collection.

Write letters. Notice advertising that exploits poor people. Write to the company expressing your awareness and disapproval.

Check out Catholicrelief.org to broaden your Lenten focus beyond our borders. Contribute to Operation Rice Bowl.

Reach out and make life more welcoming for others. Visit a shut-in or prisoner. Take food to a local foodshelf. Volunteer to serve in a soup kitchen. Who in the parish, neighborhood, or family would welcome a ride to the store, a friendly visit, a call, or an invitation to share a meal?

Simplify your life. Do I have more clothes than I need? What items in my home can I do without and give to others? How can I concretely share with people in need?

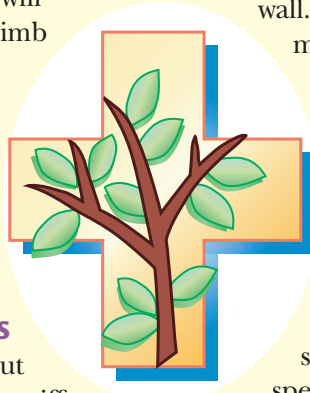
Pray for those who suffer. Spend the richness of your compassion on them. Remember AIDS orphans and old people, Iraqi and Afghani families who have lost parents and children and the families of American soldiers who have lost parents, the working poor who are desperate at the end of the month. Pray: *Holy Spirit, you who live in the family of the Trinity, help me recognize I have family all over the earth.*

Season of the Cross

The cross expresses the mystery of Jesus' death out of love for us and the failure of people like us, including his disciples, to recognize who he was. The cross is a place of defeat and despair, yet a place of triumph, a tree of shame and a tree of life. Make the cross a Lenten symbol in your home to express your openness to conversion and rebirth.

Living Cross

Erect a cross of twigs or branches in a pot of soil. Take a cutting from an ivy or other climbing vine and root it in the pot. As the plant grows, it will encircle and climb the cross—a living example of Jesus as the source of life and of the cross as the tree of life.



Loving Cross

Make a cross out of cardboard or stiff construction paper. Divide the cross into six sections—for the five weeks of Lent and Holy Week. Decide on a sign of love to perform each week; for example, refusing to complain, giving up gossip, helping a sibling. Color in the section each week after performing the action. By the conclusion of Lent, you will have

created a colorful mosaic of love, the perfect sign of Easter joy.

Hands-On Cross

Make a large cross of paper and fasten it to a wall. Have each member of the household trace his or her hand on construction paper, cut out the tracing, and write on it something special he or she will do during Lent. These can change weekly or stay the same. Place the hands on the cross as a reminder. Attach paper flowers to the cross on Holy Saturday to express the blossoming of these actions into something beautiful like the cross of Christ at the first Easter.

LENTEN RETREAT ONLINE

Go to our website goodgroundpress.com to make an online retreat during Lent. Link the website to your parish website and all parishioners will have access to this retreat. There is one for adults and one for teens.