



CATHOLIC FAMILY
GUIDE
FOR
A HOLY LENT &
EASTER SEASON

THE SPECIAL SEASON OF LENT

Lent (the word "Lent" comes from the Old English "lencten," meaning "springtime") lasts from Ash Wednesday to the Vespers of Holy Saturday -- forty days + six Sundays which don't count as "Lent" liturgically. The Latin name for Lent, Quadragesima, means forty and refers to the forty days Christ spent in the desert which is the origin of the Season. The last two weeks of Lent are known as "Passiontide," made up of Passion Week and Holy Week. The last three days of Holy Week -- Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, and Holy Saturday -- are known as the "Sacred Triduum."

The focus of this Season is the Cross and penance, penance, penance as we imitate Christ's forty days of fasting, like Moses and Elias before Him, and await the triumph of Easter. We fast (see below), abstain, mortify the flesh, give alms, and think more of charitable works. Awakening each morning with the thought, "How might I make amends for my sins? How can I serve God in a reparative way? How can I serve others today?" is the attitude to have.

We meditate on "The Four Last Things": Death, Judgment, Heaven, and Hell, and we also practice mortifications by "giving up something" that would be a sacrifice to do without. The sacrifice could be anything from desserts to television or your favorite hobby, and it can entail, too, taking on something unpleasant that we'd normally avoid, for example, going out of one's way to do another's chores, performing "random acts of kindness," etc. A practice that might help some, especially small children, to think sacrificially is to make use of "Sacrifice Beads" in the same way that St. Thérèse of Lisieux did as a child.

Because of the focus on penance and reparation, it is traditional to make sure we go to Confession at least once during this Season to fulfill the precept of the Church that we go to Confession at least once a year, and receive the Eucharist at least once a year during Eastertide. A beautiful old custom associated with Lenten Confession is to, before going to see the priest, bow before each member of your household and to any you've sinned against, and say, "In the Name of Christ, forgive me if I've offended you." One responds with "God will forgive you." Done with an extensive examination of conscience and a sincere heart, this practice can be quite healing (also note that confessing sins to a priest is a Sacrament which remits mortal and venial sins; confessing sins to those you've offended is a sacramental which, like all sacramentals one piously takes advantage of, remits venial sins. Both are quite good for the soul!)

In addition to mortification and charity, seeing and living Lent as a forty day spiritual retreat is a good thing to do. Spiritual reading should be engaged in over and above the usual amount one should do daily.

GUIDELINES ON FASTING & ABSTINENCE FROM MEAT ON FRIDAYS IN LENT

Ash Wednesday and Good Friday are obligatory days of fasting and abstinence for Catholics. In addition, Fridays during Lent are obligatory days of abstinence.

Fasting: For members of the Roman Catholic Church, the norms on fasting are obligatory from age 18 until age 59. When fasting, a person is permitted to eat one full meal, as well as two smaller meals that together are not equal to a full meal.

Abstinence: The law of abstinence requires a Catholic 14 years of age until death to abstain from eating meat on Fridays in honor of the Passion of Jesus on Good Friday. Meat is considered to be the flesh and organs of mammals and fowl. Salt and freshwater species of fish, amphibians, reptiles and shellfish are permitted, as are animal-derived products such as gelatin, butter, cheese and eggs, which do not have any meat taste.

If possible, the fast on Good Friday is continued until the Easter Vigil (on Holy Saturday night) as the "paschal fast" to honor the suffering and death of the Lord Jesus, and to prepare ourselves to share more fully and to celebrate more readily his Resurrection.

Please note that fasting guidelines do not apply if one has a medical necessity.



LENT IS COMING



LENT IS THE SEASON of prayer and penance set apart by the Church to prepare us for the solemn feast of Easter. To make this preparation bear fruit, She has us traverse the way of Our Lord, that is, by fasting and doing penance in the desert for forty days (cf. Matt 4:1-11, Luke 4:1-13). Lent is a time to learn to love our souls more than our bodies. Thus, every Christian should make a special effort to practice mortification and strive for holiness during these forty days. These can be fittingly accomplished through voluntary amendment of life, acts of penance, and works of charity.

Do not let this time to Grow in Holiness Pass You By!!

*Consider the following categories on what we should
do for Lent this year.*



1. VOLUNTARY AMENDMENT OF LIFE: Give up those things that need to go sooner or later, namely bad habits. Our goal here is to learn to love our souls more than our bodies... to break a bad habit forever and Lent is a good time to do it. Examples: Gossiping, surfing the web without real need, watching T.V., overeating, eating between meals, eating and drinking junk foods (e.g., soda), bad drinking habits, complaining, saying vulgar words, not getting up on time, using a snooze alarm, wasting time playing video games, going to movies, listening to base music, useless chattering on facebook, blogs, and the like, etc.

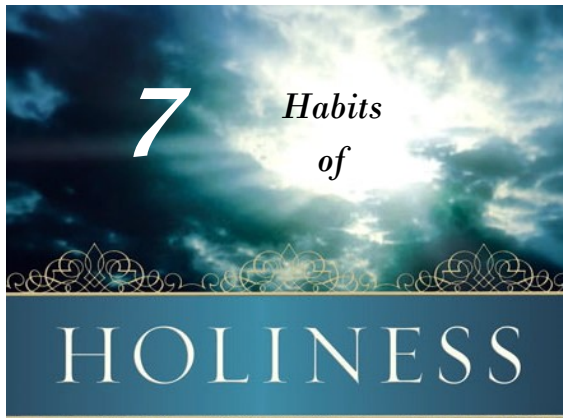
In this category I am going to give up _____

2. ACTS OF PENANCE: Perform some kind of penance. Our goal here is to train ourselves to say "no" in little things so that we can say "NO" to big temptations later. We can resume doing the things given up here once Lent is over. Examples: Avoid eating or drinking something that we enjoy, such as desserts. Give up eating out, taking completely warm showers, drinking alcoholic beverages, etc...

In this category I am going to give up _____

3. WORKS OF CHARITY: Perform some good and holy action(s). Our goal here is to strengthen our relationship with Christ and His Church. Ideally, what we start here would continue in some way even after Lent is over. Love God more than yourself! Examples: Pray the Rosary everyday, attend daily Mass as much as possible, read the Sacred Scriptures _____ minutes a day, spend _____ additional time everyday with my family, read a life of a saint or saints, increase spiritual reading in place of electronic media, make a daily visit to the Most Blessed Sacrament or shrine of Our Lady.

In this category I am going to _____



1. Say the Morning Offering first thing after you get up, dedicate the day to the glory of God.
2. Fifteen minutes of quiet prayer, preferably before the Blessed Sacrament, but this can be done at home or outside. Join Mary (Lk 10:38) and just sit at the feet of Jesus and *listen*.
3. Fifteen minutes of spiritual reading. This could be a systematic reading of the New Testament or the lives of the Saints.
4. Attend Holy Mass and receive Holy Communion in the state of grace. (Of course, this presumes a frequent trip to the confessional.)
5. Pray the *Angelus* at 12 Noon or the *Regina Coeli* during the Easter Season.
6. Pray the Rosary “sitting at the school of Mary and contemplating her Son.”
7. Make a brief examination of conscience each night before going to bed. Review the day...make an act of gratitude for the good done and act of contrition for the areas in which you failed.

CONFESSION

Going to Confession is always a way to increase in holiness and grace. Consult the bulletin & website for expanded confession times during Lent. An Examination of Conscience is provided to help you prepare for your confession.

Just as an animal becomes a stronger beast of burden and more beautiful to behold the more often and better it is fed, so too confession - the more often it is used and the more carefully it is made as to both lesser and greater sins - conveys the soul increasingly forward and is so pleasing to God that it leads the soul to God's very heart.

--Revelations of St. Bridget

Confession heals, confession justifies, confession grants pardon of sin, all hope consists in confession; in confession there is a chance for mercy.

--St. Isidore of Seville



GOOD FRIDAY PRAYERS

Prayer of the Seven Last Words

O divine Jesus, incarnate Son of god, for our salvation you consented to be born in a stable, to spend you whole life amid poverty, trials, and misery, and to die surrounded by sufferings on the Cross.

At the hour of my death, please tell your Father, Father, forgive them.

Tell your Mother, Behold your child. Tell my soul, This day you shall be with me in paradise.

My God, my God, do not forsake me in that hour.

I thirst, yes, my soul thirsts for you who are the fountain of living waters.

My life passes away like a shadow; in a short while everything will be accomplished.

Therefore, my adored Savior, from this moment and for all eternity, into your hands I commend my spirit.

Lord Jesus, receive my soul.

Prayer of Love to the Crucified Soul

O Jesus, it is not the heavenly reward you have promised which impels me to love you; neither is it the threat of hell that keep me from offending you.

It is you, O Lord, it is the sight of you affixed to the Cross and suffering insults; it is the sight of your broken body, as well as your pains and your death. There is nothing you can give me to make me love you.

For even if there were no heaven and no hell I would still love you as I do.

Amen .

The Divine Mercy Novena Begins Good Friday.



LITANY OF OUR LADY OF SEVEN SORROWS

V. Lord, have mercy on us.

R. Christ, have mercy on us.

V. Lord, have mercy on us. Christ, hear us.

R. Christ, graciously hear us.

God, the Father of heaven, have mercy on us.

God the Son, Redeemer of the world, have mercy on us.

God the Holy Spirit, have mercy on us.

Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us.

Holy Virgin of virgins, pray for us.

Mother of the Crucified, [etc.]

Sorrowful Mother

Mournful Mother

Sighing Mother

Afflicted Mother

Forsaken Mother

Desolate Mother

Mother most sad

Mother set around with anguish

Mother overwhelmed by grief

Mother transfixed by a sword

Mother crucified in thy heart

Mother bereaved of thy Son

Sighing Dove

Mother of Dolors

Fount of tears

Sea of bitterness

Field of tribulation

Mass of suffering

Mirror of patience

Rock of constancy

Remedy in perplexity

Joy of the afflicted

Ark of the desolate

Refuge of the abandoned

Shield of the oppressed

Conqueror of the incredulous

Solace of the wretched

Medicine of the sick

Help of the faint

Strength of the weak



Protectress of those who fight
Haven of the shipwrecked
Calmer of tempests
Companion of the sorrowful
Retreat of those who groan
Terror of the treacherous
Standard-bearer of the Martyrs
Treasure of the Faithful
Light of Confessors
Pearl of Virgins
Comfort of Widows
Joy of all Saints
Queen of thy Servants
Holy Mary, who alone art unexampled
V. Pray for us, most Sorrowful Virgin,
R. That we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ.

Let us pray.

O God, in whose Passion, according to the prophecy of Simeon, a sword of grief pierced through the most sweet soul of Thy glorious Blessed Virgin Mother Mary: grant that we, who celebrate the memory of her Seven Sorrows, may obtain the happy effect of Thy Passion, Who lives and reigns world without end. Amen.

THE SEVEN SORROWS OF OUR LADY

1. The Prophecy of Simeon
2. The Flight into Egypt
3. The Loss of Jesus in the Temple
4. Mary meets Jesus Carrying the Cross
5. The Crucifixion
6. Mary Receives the Dead Body of Her Son
7. The Burial of Her Son and Closing of the Tomb.

EASTERTIDE



Easter, which begins this Season, is the greatest Feast of the year for Christ is risen! The alleluia, which was omitted from the Mass since Septuagesima, returned at Vespers on Holy Saturday, and is now heard after every Introit, Antiphon verse, and Response. The Vidi Aquam replaces the Aspèrges, and the Regina Coeli replaces the Angelus. The Paschal candle remains lit in the Sanctuary until Ascension Thursday, and like the Christ Candle during the Twelve Days of Christmas, we have a Paschal Candle in our homes, too, until the Ascension (see the page on Easter Sunday for more on the Paschal Candle).

...and the Lenten fast is over!

During this Season, we are obliged to receive the Eucharist to fulfill the Church precept that we receive the Eucharist at least once a year. During Lent, most of us have already fulfilled the precept to go to Confession at least once a year, but if we haven't, we can do that now.

During the Octave of Easter, we greet each other (and even answer our telephones) with the triumphant "Christus resurrexit!" (Christ is risen!) to which comes the response "Et apparuit Simoni, alleluia" (and appeared unto Simon, alleluia!). This joyous greeting totally crystallizes the mood of this season. This triumphant attitude is also shown by the replacing of the Angelus with the Regina Coeli throughout Paschaltide.

EASTER WEEK TABLE BLESSING

The following prayer is used on Easter Sunday and through the Easter Octave.

Prayer:

BEFORE THE MEAL

Leader: This is the day the Lord has made. Let us rejoice and be glad, let us praise the Lord for his goodness. For behold, Jesus died and now lives for evermore. Alleluia!

ALL: He has gone before us. Yet he is with us for all time. Alleluia!

Leader: Lord, on this most holy day let your blessing rest upon us and upon our table. Strengthen us in this time together. We ask this in Jesus' name.

ALL: Amen.

AFTER THE MEAL

Leader: Blest are you, Lord our God, who gathers us together in Jesus' name. We thank you for sharing your life with us, both in this meal and in all the ways you sustain us, through Christ, our Risen Lord.

ALL: Amen.

SAINT GREGORY EASTER PRAYER

It is only right, with all the powers of our heart and mind, to praise You Father and Your Only-Begotten Son, Our Lord Jesus Christ.

Dear Father, by Your wondrous condescension of Loving-Kindness toward us, Your servants, You gave up Your Son.

Dear Jesus You paid the debt of Adam for us to the Eternal Father by Your Blood poured forth in Loving-Kindness.

You cleared away the darkness of sin by Your magnificent and radiant Resurrection.

You broke the bonds of death and rose from the grave as a Conqueror.

You reconciled Heaven and earth. Our life had no hope of Eternal Happiness before You redeemed us.

Your Resurrection has washed away our sins, restored our innocence and brought us joy.

How inestimable is the tenderness of Your Love!

We pray You, Lord, to preserve Your servants in the peaceful enjoyment of this Easter happiness.

We ask this through Jesus Christ Our Lord, Who lives and reigns with God The Father, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, forever and ever.

Amen .

The Prayer of St. Ephrem

{Making a prostration}

O LORD, Master of my life, grant that I may not be infected with the spirit of slothfulness and inquisitiveness, with the spirit of ambition and vain talking.

{Making a prostration}

Grant instead to me, your servant, the spirit of purity and of humility, the spirit of patience and neighborly love.

{Making a third prostration}

O Lord and King, grant me the grace of being aware of my sins and of not thinking evil of those of my brethren.

For you are blessed, now and ever, and forever.

Amen.

Lord Jesus Christ, King of Kings, You have power over life and death. You know what is secret and hidden, and neither our thoughts nor our feelings are concealed from You.

Cure me of duplicity; I have done evil before You.

Now my life declines from day to day and my sins increase.

O Lord, God of souls and bodies, You know the extreme frailty of my soul and my flesh.

Grant me strength in my weakness, O Lord, and sustain me in my misery. Give me a grateful soul that I may never cease to recall Your benefits, O Lord most bountiful.

Be not mindful of my many sins, but forgive me all my misdeeds.

O Lord, disdain not my prayer - the prayer of a wretched sinner; sustain me with Your grace until the end, that it may protect me as in the past.

It is Your grace which has taught me wisdom; blessed are they who follow her ways, for they shall receive the crown of glory.

In spite of my unworthiness, I praise You and I glorify You,

O Lord, for Your mercy to me is without limit.

You have been my help and my protection. May the name of Your majesty be praised forever.

To you, our God, be glory.

Amen.