

HOW TO: DO LENT FOR REAL

WELCOME TO LENT, the period of about six weeks when Christians take extra time to grow in holiness. You might call it “special training” for the Christian mission!

The U.S. Catholic bishops tell us Lent is a time when “all the baptized are called to renew their baptismal commitment. . . . We recall those waters in which we were baptized into Christ’s death, died to sin and evil, and began new life in Christ” (uscbb.org, “Lent”). The traditional practices of Lent, drawn from Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount, are **almsgiving** (Matthew 6:2–4), **prayer** (Matthew 6:5–15), and **fasting** (Matthew 6:16–18).

Here are some ideas for how to do those three things this Lent. Your parents can find more details in “Fasting, Giving, Praying: 21+ Ideas for What Kids & Teens Can Do for Lent” at pbgrace.com. **M:C**

GIVING

“Almsgiving” is just a fancy name for giving to those in need. We practice giving during Lent not only to help others, but to better imitate Christ, who gave his life for us on the cross so that we might have life. Here are some ideas:

- Practice “letting go” by sharing your stuff with your sibs.
- Do a random act of kindness every day; get lots of ideas online.
- Give the gift of yourself by putting down phones and other media when someone needs your attention.
- Do a simple one-day fundraiser for a special cause. Look for ideas in this journal.
- Participate in the Catholic Relief Services “rice bowl” program to aid the needy.

PRAYER

Prayer is the “conversation” in our relationship with God—it powers the spiritual life! When we pray, we are better able to let God help us carry out our Christian mission.

- Get to know Jesus by reading an entire Gospel, a little each day.
- Get a Catholic prayer app on your phone and use it three times a day.
- Wear a necklace, bracelet, t-shirt, or scapular to remind you of God’s presence.
- Carry a rosary with you and say it throughout the day, as you have time.
- Go to confession every week.
- Go to daily Mass.
- Memorize a cool new prayer.

FASTING

Fasting is the practice of giving up some material good (like food) for a spiritual good. Fasting helps us make room for God in our lives; it also strengthens our will, prepares us for mission, and puts us in touch with the suffering of Christ and others.

- Give up sweets, video games, junk food, social media, and other “extras.”
- Get quiet: Spend fifteen minutes or more every day in silence, or give up listening to the radio.
- Make your room a desert: Strip it down to the bare essentials for Lent.
- Be one with the poor: Sleep on the floor, drink only water, walk to school, or give up buying extras.
- Give up your place in line, in the car, etc.
- Give up your hair or make-up.

YOUR PLAN FOR LENT

TAKE A MOMENT

to think about what special giving, praying, and fasting practices you would like to do this Lent. Write down your commitments here, and check in on them in your daily Mission Report.

People younger than age 18 are not required to fast from food on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday, as most adults are asked to do. However, teens age 14 and older are required to abstain from eating meat on Ash Wednesday and the Fridays of Lent.

Even if you're not required to fast from food, it is traditional for everyone—including kids—to choose something else to fast from throughout Lent. Sundays are not counted as part of the traditional “forty days” of Lent, so many people take a break from their fast on Sundays and major feast days (e.g., the Solemnity of the Annunciation, March 25). **M:C**

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PRAYING

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