

# The Season of Lent

*A 40-Day Journey to Easter*

Parent Handout for Sacramental Preparation

**The Big Question:** *How do we prepare our hearts for the joy of Easter?*

40 days of preparation → Three pillars: Prayer, Fasting, Almsgiving → Journey through Holy Week → Resurrection joy

## What is Lent?

Lent is the 40-day season of preparation before Easter, recalling Jesus' 40 days in the desert:

- **Begins:** Ash Wednesday (ashes remind us of our mortality and need for God)
- **Ends:** Holy Thursday evening (beginning the Sacred Triduum)
- **Color:** Violet/purple — signifying penance and preparation
- **No Alleluia:** We 'bury' this word of joy until Easter morning

## The Three Pillars of Lent

Jesus teaches these in Matthew 6:1-18:

PRAYER	FASTING	ALMSGIVING
<i>Turning to God</i> Daily prayer time Stations of the Cross Scripture reading Family Rosary	<i>Self-Denial</i> No meat on Fridays Give up sweets/screens Simplify meals Fast from complaints	<i>Turning to Neighbor</i> Rice Bowl donations Give away toys Serve at food bank Visit the lonely

## Holy Week: The Heart of Lent

<b>Palm Sunday</b>	Jesus enters Jerusalem; we wave palms and hear the Passion
<b>Holy Thursday</b>	Last Supper; Jesus gives us the Eucharist and washes feet
<b>Good Friday</b>	Jesus dies on the Cross; we venerate the Cross in silence
<b>Holy Saturday</b>	Waiting in silence; Easter Vigil at night
<b>Easter Sunday</b>	<b>HE IS RISEN! Our 40-day journey finds its joyful fulfillment</b>

## Family Lenten Practices

### Traditions to Start:

- Create a family Lenten plan together
- Use a sacrifice calendar or jar
- Pray Stations of the Cross on Fridays
- 'Bury' the Alleluia until Easter

### Meatless Friday Ideas:

- Friday fish fry as family tradition
- Simple soup and bread meals
- Let children help cook special meals
- Frame it as special, not punishment

## Questions for Reflection

1. What does your family need to 'turn away from' this Lent? What do you need to 'turn toward'?
2. How can you make the three pillars (prayer, fasting, almsgiving) concrete for your children?
3. What one Holy Week service will you attend as a family this year?

## Connection to the Sacraments

- **Reconciliation:** Lent is the traditional season for confession. Many children make their First Confession during Lent.
- **Eucharist:** Our fasting deepens our hunger for the Bread of Life. First Communion often happens at Easter.
- **Baptism:** At Easter Vigil, we renew our baptismal promises — Lent prepares us for this renewal.

## Key References

- CCC 538-540, 1434-1439, 1168-1171
  - Matthew 6:1-18 (Prayer, Fasting, Almsgiving)
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*"The seasons of Lent and Easter are a time for spiritual renewal as we prepare to celebrate the Paschal Mystery."  
— General Norms for the Liturgical Year*