

Young Apprentices

A RESOURCE FOR THE OCIA

LENT RESOURCE: INTRODUCTION

Celebrating Lent with My Family by Rita Burns Senseman

Purple Is for Lent, Too!

The color purple has returned! We saw purple during the season of Advent. Now, we see purple return in the season of Lent. Lent is the Church's liturgical season of preparation for Easter. It has two themes: penance and Baptism.

First, let's look at the penitential nature of Lent. Then, we'll look at the baptismal side of Lent.



Lent and Repentance

One of the focuses, or themes, of Lent is repentance. Lent has a penitential tone. The idea is that during the liturgical season of Lent, we do penance in order to prepare ourselves for the celebration of Christ's Death and Resurrection at Easter.

Repentance means to show sorrow for what we have done. Doing penance is one way of repenting, one way of showing God and others that we want to change our ways; we want to change our hearts. By the power of the Holy Spirit, we can do so!

So, the first thing to think about and pray about is this:

What in my heart needs to change in order for me to be closer to Jesus?

We have the whole season of Lent to think about this question and to practice repentance. The Scripture readings, the prayers, and the liturgies of Lent help us to repent and to turn toward Jesus.

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Prayer



Fasting



Almsgiving

The Church gives us three ways to turn our hearts toward God during Lent: prayer, fasting, and almsgiving (doing Works of Mercy). Here are some suggestions for doing each one with your family.

Prayer By spending time in prayer during Lent, we are spending time with God. When we spend time with people, we naturally get to know them better and we grow closer to them. Spending time with God helps us to grow closer to God. Here are suggestions for spending time in prayer this Lent.

- Participate in the Lenten liturgies. There are penitential rituals called scrutinies that help the elect prepare for Baptism. These rituals also help the baptized reflect upon sin and pray for God's help.
- Place a purple prayer cloth on your kitchen table. Add a bowl of sand or another appropriate symbol to remind your family that you are in the desert of the Lenten season.
- If your parish participates in the CRS (Catholic Relief Services) Rice Bowl project, you may want to add the Rice Bowl to your Lenten table. CRS Rice Bowl is a faith-in-action program for Lent. Follow the daily prayers on the Rice Bowl calendar. See crsricebowl.org for more information.
- Participate in the Stations of the Cross on the Fridays of Lent. Invite your sponsors or other friends to join you for this popular Catholic devotion.
- Attend a penitential service. Your parish or a nearby parish will likely host one during Lent. This is an opportunity for the baptized to celebrate the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation. For the unbaptized, a penitential service helps to foster a spirit of penance and to focus on the need for God's loving mercy.
- Pray every day, even if some days it's the ten-second Jesus Prayer: *Jesus, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner*. Better yet, use a Lenten daily prayer and reflection (if your parish does not provide one, ask your catechist for suggestions) and pray this together at mealtime or before you go to bed.
- Read one or more of the readings of the day with your daily prayer. The Scripture readings that the Church assigns to every day of the year can be found at uscbb.org/bible/readings. Many Lenten prayer booklets also refer to the readings of the day. Or, another option is to pray with one of the upcoming Sunday Scripture readings at dinnertime during the week.
- Pray the Sorrowful Mysteries of the Rosary. Download your favorite Rosary app to your smartphone or again go to uscbb.org for directions on how to pray the Rosary.

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Fasting To fast means to do without, to give something up, or to make a sacrifice for the sake of another. We make sacrifices during Lent as a way of connecting with the sacrifice that Jesus made for us. Our sacrifices also help others, for when we sacrifice we give of ourselves to others. Here are suggestions for ways to fast during this Lenten season.

- Give up your favorite food or drink. Keep track of the money you save and put it in your Rice Bowl or donate it to your local food pantry. Consider giving up frozen yogurt and ice cream; your favorite coffee drink or soft drink; pizza; snack foods; chocolate; and all sweets. You may want to have a family discussion and decide what fasting the family will do. For example, the entire family could give up fast food or desserts during Lent.
- Fast from junk food and other foods and drinks that are not good for you. Focus on taking care of your body. After all, it is the temple of the Holy Spirit!
- Fast from social media for a portion of the day, or give it up all together. Use the time you normally spend on social media for prayer or spiritual reading. Or, use the time to talk face to face with family members and friends.
- Fast from television, Netflix, other streaming services, and whatever keeps you connected to your computer, smartphone, or the TV instead of connected to God. Instead of watching television after dinner, do the dishes or help your parents in another way.
- Abstain from your favorite activity or hobby. Perhaps you spend too much time playing video games, shopping online, or working out at the fitness center. Spend some of that time reflecting upon the Lenten Scriptures instead.

Almsgiving The third Lenten discipline is almsgiving, which means that we do good works for others. By doing good for others, we are following Jesus' example. Here are some suggestions for ways your family can do Works of Mercy, or almsgiving, during this season of Lent.

- Leave a note on your teacher's desk thanking her or him, and offer to help do a classroom chore.
- Make Easter baskets or Easter cards that can be delivered during the Easter season to one or more of your parish's homebound parishioners. Or, call the local assisted-living center and ask whether you can take Easter baskets there. Stay and visit with the residents. Or, make Easter baskets for the local youth center or soup kitchen. You can enlist the help of your OCIA group if you want to make this a group project.
- Do a load of laundry or clean the bathroom without being asked.
- Clean out your closets and donate the clothing you are not wearing or do not need to your local clothes closet.
- Make dinner one night so your parents can relax for the evening.
- Ask your local food pantry or soup kitchen whether you can volunteer for an evening or a day. Offer to bring fresh produce or make fresh baked goods, if that is allowed.
- Start a conversation with someone at school who seems to be lonely or to have few friends.
- Offer to do some spring yard cleanup for an elderly neighbor. Or, offer to take part in the spring yard cleanup at church.
- Have a family discussion about the Works of Mercy and make a Lenten plan to do a Work of Mercy. In past weeks you have chosen Corporal Works of Mercy. Perhaps you want to consider working on Spiritual Works of Mercy this Lent. Review the Works of Mercy chart on the following page.

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HOLY WEEK RESOURCE: WEDNESDAY

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WORKS OF MERCY

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Spiritual Works of Mercy	Corporal Works of Mercy
Warn sinners.	Feed the hungry.
Teach the ignorant.	Give drink to the thirsty.
Give advice to those who are confused.	Clothe the naked.
Comfort those who suffer.	Visit those in prison.
Be patient with others.	Shelter the homeless.
Forgive injuries.	Visit the sick.
Pray for the living and the dead.	Bury the dead.

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Lent and Baptism

The baptismal theme of Lent is for those preparing for Baptism (the catechumens and the elect) and for those who are already baptized. Lent is the last six weeks of preparation for the celebration of the Sacraments of Initiation for those who are preparing to celebrate Baptism at the Easter Vigil. At the same time, Lent gives the already baptized a chance to reflect upon the importance of their Baptism.

Whether preparing for the celebration of our Baptism or reflecting upon Baptism already celebrated, we are all focusing our attention on our life in Christ. In Baptism we are united with Christ. In Baptism, we enter into the Paschal Mystery. The Paschal Mystery is the suffering, life, Death, and Resurrection of Jesus Christ.

If you are preparing for Baptism, you are about to take a huge step! In Baptism you become one with Christ and the Church. You leave your

“old life” behind and you become a new creation. You become a child of God. So how can you prepare yourself for this new life? Let’s begin by thinking about how you prepare for other important events.

Think about what you do to prepare for a big celebration. Imagine you are preparing for a big birthday party. What are some of the things you would do to prepare? List them here:

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Now, think about the things you and your family need to do to prepare to receive Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist at the Easter Vigil. List them here:



Rituals of Lent

Hopefully one of the things on your list above is prayer. The Church says that one of the most important things you can do to prepare for Sacraments of Initiation is to pray. In fact, the whole Church will pray for you during the season of Lent. The Church has special ritual prayers called Scrutinies and Presentations.

The Scrutinies and Presentations are an important part of Lent. The Scrutinies are Lenten rituals in which the Church prays that those preparing for Baptism (the elect) will be healed of any hurt or weakness, and that God will strengthen all within them that is good.

In the Presentations, the elect are presented with the Creed and the Lord's Prayer. The Creed and the Lord's Prayer are two of the most ancient and most important prayers of the Church. The Church presents these prayers to the elect as a way of saying, "Take these prayers into your heart and make them your own."

The Scrutinies and Presentations also help those who are already baptized. By celebrating these rituals with the elect, those who are baptized are reminded of the meaning and importance of their own Baptism.

Through repentance, prayer, fasting, almsgiving, and the celebration of the rituals of the Lenten season, the Church helps everyone—baptized and unbaptized, young and old—change our ways, change our hearts, and grow in faith as followers of Christ.