

## Liturgical Living: Living Lent as a Family

The 40 days of Lent correspond to the 40 days that Jesus spent in the wilderness to fast, pray, and endure the temptations of the devil, all in preparation for His public ministry, which would culminate in His death on the Cross.

As faithful Catholics, we are called to practice prayer, fasting, and almsgiving during Lent so that we can walk in the desert with Jesus, allowing us to experience an inner conversion and to grow in holiness.

But parents often wonder: how do we guide our children through this penitential season? Here are some ideas that cover the three pillars of prayer, fasting and almsgiving. Start by trying to adopt one new idea in each category into your domestic church this year, and building a little more into each year that follows.

### **Pillar #1: Prayer**

Make a prayer plan that works for your family and commit to the same time each day for praying together. Some ideas include:

- Read the daily Gospel
- Attend an extra Mass during the week
- Pray the rosary every night
- Attend Stations of the Cross
- Use a family Lenten devotional ([this is a great one](#) for kids)
- Learn a new prayer together (i.e., [the Angelus](#) or [Divine Mercy chaplet](#))
- Attend Eucharistic Adoration once a week
- Make a [prayer chain](#)
- Create a [prayer jar](#)

If you have older kids, they can add an extra prayerful practice into their day in addition to the family prayer. Older kids may enjoy:

- Find a chapter book to read about a Saint or by a Saint
- Listen to a spiritual podcast daily or weekly (the Hallow App has a teen Lenten journey)
- Read the Scriptures each day (perhaps a book of the Bible that they don't know well)

## **Pillar #2: Fasting**

Fasting is a spiritual discipline designed to tame the body so that we can concentrate on higher things. Saying "no" to the things we enjoy is a good exercise of self-discipline. While fasting during Lent generally takes the form of refraining from eating, it can also refer to the avoidance of other things that we enjoy, or perhaps things that take our time away from God and prayer.

Talk to your children about what you will fast from during Lent and try to help them find something age-appropriate that they can fast from. Explain to your kids that fasting from something is not a punishment, but rather a chance to sacrifice something for Jesus, who made the ultimate sacrifice for us.

For a fun twist, [print this sacrifice dice](#) and let your child roll each day to randomly chose what to sacrifice.

Encourage older kids to think about something they can use less of in their lives, such as TV time or phone use, and replace it with something that they need more of (praying, talking with others, reading, or even just silence).

## **Pillar #3: Almsgiving**

When thinking about almsgiving, we often think first of monetary giving. Since children have limited funds, this can seem like an especially hard practice for them. So, aside from monetary donations, how else can we teach about almsgiving to young children? Here are some ways:

- Make a jar full of almsgiving ideas [using this list as an example](#)
- Serve a meal at a local soup kitchen or homeless shelter
- Collect items to donate to those in need in our community
- Put a box in your kitchen and add one nonperishable item each day to deliver after Lent to a local food pantry
- Make hygiene kits for a local shelter
- Collect baby items for a local pregnancy center

Pick up our free family Lenten countdown, which is available at all parish locations, or print this free [40 Ways for 40 Days printable](#) checklist.