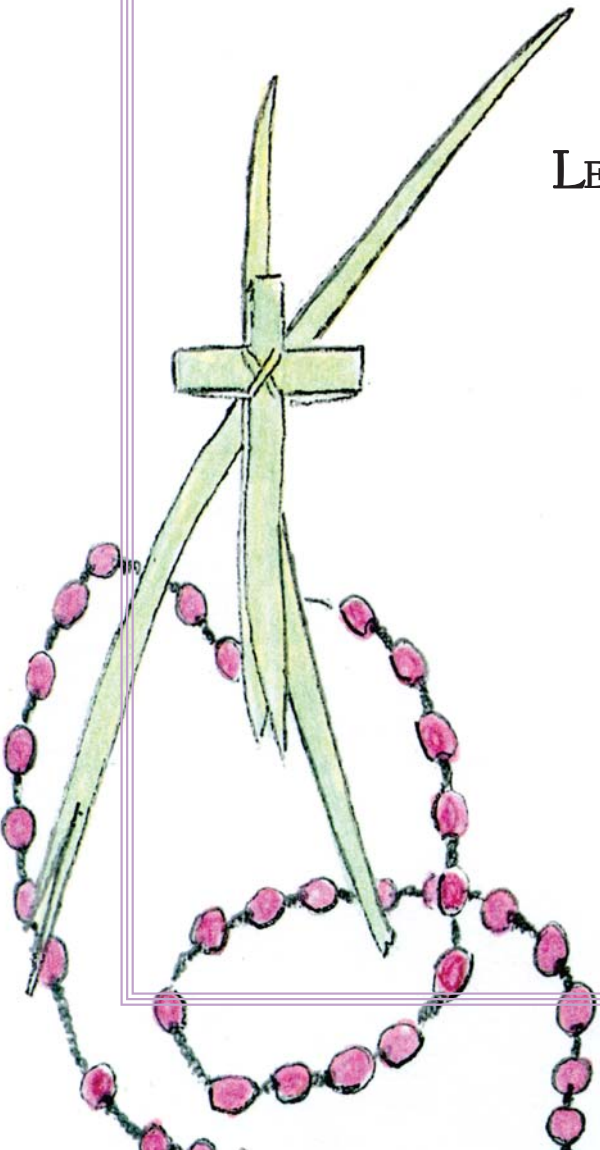


**Part
One**

**Ways Families Celebrate
Lent and Easter**

**2011 SURVEY RESULTS
LENTEN PRACTICES FOR ADULTS AND
CHILDREN, RECIPES, AND MORE**

Compiled by Catholic Heritage Curricula
www.chcweb.com



As a parent, which Lenten activity/prayer/practice is the most helpful to your own spiritual growth and renewal?

The rosary, without a doubt. Our parish also hands out Lenten prayer booklets every year. Each year they're a little different and I really enjoy reading them.

Ashley in Brockport, NY

Last year I found fasting during Lent to be good for my spiritual renewal.

Julie in Paris, KY

Doing the Stations of the Cross on a weekly basis during Lent has been such a blessing for our entire family. All of us really get to prayerfully enter into the way of the Cross.

Colleen in Parma Hts, OH

A practice that we call "turned off". Eliminate television, handheld electronics and the like. It's quite a jolt to our daily routine and immediately gets everyone's attention directed towards sacrifice, quiet and stillness.

Julie in Keymar, MD

I try to read something spiritual and actually get through the entire book during Lent, and limit my time on the computer. We also limit our TV viewing to EWTN and religious videos only during Lent. We are filling our minds with only spiritual things - a great way to cleanse our minds after football season! The peace and quiet is wonderful.

Karen in Winter Springs, FL

My most helpful practice is to put everything to prayer. Each day, sometimes each moment, presents opportunities to pray. And each prayer is different: blessings, challenges, struggles, redemption...it's all there! And for me to be mindful of Jesus' 40 days, to visualize it, keeps me on the right path.

Brenda in Whitmore Lake, MI

I make my own resolution each day, similar to what the children are doing, but at an adult level. Such as "I will be cheerful & give each child a compliment for the work they are doing."

Clarissa in Saint Cloud, MN

Praying a daily rosary.

Sherry in St. Louis, MO

I find implementing daily mass, weekly confession and daily rosary to be the most beneficial for my personal spiritual renewal.

Jillian in Silverdale, WA

Fasting is by far the biggest weapon we can wield. We notice that years when I can not fast to as great a degree b/c of pregnancy or nursing, it is very difficult to get to the same state spiritually through other sacrifices (or impossible). We remember a specific Lent when we fasted the most rigidly as being a time of immense grace and inner joy.

Janice in Canton, OH

Fasting. It creates a clarity of focus that is difficult to find any other way. It makes carrying the daily cross so much easier, and so much more enjoyable!

Samantha in Whitmore Lake, MI

Building up my daily prayer routine to include devotions that I love and know are important but that seem to fall to the wayside in the busyness of daily life. By the time Lent comes around again, it is time to recommit to my personal relationship with Our Lord. It is a time to commit, once again, to conversion. I always find reading material to aid this journey, choosing readings I am familiar with and that have assisted me in the past and also material that is a challenge for me so that this isn't just a time to rest in consolations... but to truly grow.

Melody in North Royalton, OH

The prayers of St. Bridgit are something that I have enjoyed most during Lent.

Rachel in Helotes, TX

I enjoy the fasting on Fridays. This is the first year since I have become Catholic that I am not nursing or pregnant and I am looking forward to fully participating in the fasting practice.

Brianne in La Grange, TX

Praying the Stations of the Cross and attending Lenten talks/discussions/Bible studies

Molly in Green Bay, WI

As a mother to four young children my days are filled with laughter and happiness seeing their growth within the Domestic Church. However, my fuel for motherhood is when I take time to pray. One prayer I have found helpful during Lent is the Mothers Way of the Cross. It is my go to prayer book during Lent. There are plenty of rich meditations to fuel my apostolate.

Holly in Miami, FL

I've tried several different things over the years. One that I like particularly well is the St. Louis de Montefort consecration. In other years I've read parts of St. Faustina's diary or some other life of a saint. It helps me to hear how human the saints really were.

Jen in West Fargo, ND

We do the "Jesus Tree", reading bible stories and doing coloring pages leading up to Easter. Plus, we do Holy Heroes online.

Maria in Columbus, OH

Meditating on the Passion of Our Lord and fasting. Additional spiritual reading with the family, focusing on the Passion of Jesus. Stations of the cross: We put a picture of each station at different locations throughout the house, with a lighted candle at each one, and extinguish each candle as we pass the station. We turn on minimal light, just enough to read the meditation, so that when we have finished, the house is nearly dark, representing the death of Jesus, the Light of the World.

Katie in Escondido, CA

Reading the Four Gospels (one per ten days), praying the Rosary, and finding time in the day to concentrate on Christ's suffering.

Suzanne in Jacksonville, NC

Fasting and prayer and reflection

Judith in Lexington, KY

At our church every Friday of Lent we have Stations of the Cross. This helps me to center myself around what the true meaning of Lent is. Also, I find that praying the rosary together as a family, especially the Sorrowful Mysteries brings us back to the true meaning as well.

Kerri in Boerne, TX

Lenten reading and fasting from the computer. I am unable to fast from food for health reasons, although I can and do give up sweets, but fasting from the computer except for necessary (business/school) activities brings me a great sense of peace (as much as possible in a busy household) and my spiritual reading is my solace at the end of the day, although I am usually so tired, it takes me all of Lent to finish a book :)

Karen in St. Louis, MO

I try to go on a Silent Lenten Retreat for women and have a devotional written specifically for Lent.

Mary Ann in Evansville, WI

The prodigal son parable and the temptation of Christ for forty days is what helps with my spiritual growth. It is amazing how the Spirit works within you as you begin to prepare a lesson to discuss the meaning behind Lent. I always refer back to these two scriptures.

Adela in San Antonio, TX

Definitely the works of mercy prayer papers each day. It requires me to give up my agenda for a day or step out of our comfort zone and complete the act.

Danielle in Lumberton, NJ

Do you usually “offer something up” for Lent or do you find “giving alms and doing acts of charity” is more beneficial — or both?



It depends on the year. Generally I find that doing something extra such as making the extra effort to get to an extra mass each week, or praying a daily rosary, or something along those lines is most beneficial.

Ashley in Brockport, NY

We find doing both beneficial. ‘Offering something up’ has been so great, even for little ones. They understand what sacrifice is and can understand more fully the sacrifice at Calvary. I have also found giving something away helps with making their little hearts more generous. Then adding an extra daily Mass during the week, or rosary, or doing a Holy Hour has immense blessings for the entire family.

Colleen in Parma Hts, OH

Giving alms and doing acts of charity are where we focus.

Julie in Keymar, MD

We do the traditional give up candy practice - it makes the Easter candy taste all that much better. Giving up secular TV, however, has been the most beneficial, because it allows us to focus on God more fully.

Karen in Winter Springs, FL

As a family, we offer something up, whether it’s a favorite food, or an activity that we rely on as a source of entertainment (TV!!), and we also try to offer our time to something outside our doors.

Brenda in Whitmore Lake, MI

We offer up these little sacrifices, but we usually change the menu to purposely include cheaper recipes that are not as well loved by the children, such as bean soups. I think both are important.

Clarissa in Saint Cloud, MN

Since I seem to be either pregnant or nursing during Lent the past 6 years or so, doing acts of charity and having a specific prayer intention that I pray for each day has been a better Lenten offering for me.

Sherry in St. Louis, MO

Offering something up is most helpful. I really struggle with the idea of entitlement and sacrificing an unnecessary activity and/or object helps to remind me that God will provide.

Jillian in Silverdale, WA

We try to do a little of both, but I definitely give something up each year.

Jen in West Fargo, ND

In the past few years there has been a major push by our local clergy to persuade people to “do something positive” rather than “just give something up”, and they often point out that fasting can make people “grumpy” which they use as evidence that it is a poor antiquated practice. But denying one’s self and acts of charity can not be equated. The Bible tells us that some demons can not be cast out without fasting. It does not say that you can give alms instead! Fasting is a means of purification that allows the heart to grow toward greater charity, giving wisdom, discernment, and grace to your outward acts of charity. Without that grace, your charity can be damaged and devalued. We can’t give what we don’t have, so if we want to really change the world with our charity we must enter into it in the purest state we can achieve, and confession and fasting are terribly efficacious tools for edifying ourselves so we may serve Him better and be truer representatives of Christ.

Janice in Canton, OH

Both -- we offer up, but also try hard to add in both spiritual aids to growth and works of mercy -- often as a filler for the time you DON’T waste on the things you give up!

Samantha in Whitmore Lake, MI

Lent is a time of purification and preparation. As parents we do “offer something up” to help us become virtuous. Our children are all young, but we include them by “doing acts of charity” throughout the Season and year.

Holly in Miami, FL

Both. I do think the modern tendency is to deemphasize the physical mortifications of Lent in favor of charitable works. I think this is a mistake because mortification of our bodies and charity are not mutually exclusive. If we cannot die to our pleasures and preferences, then we will not truly be fit and free to love at all times. I have stopped “giving up” one or two specific things because it seems so easy to find a way around those particular pleasures by finding more and simply give up all sweets and flavored beverages. That way, I don’t give up chocolate and then just replace it with caramel in a weak moment. Sundays are feast days and I allow myself the option of partaking in a small treat if my will is weak, but was encouraged by a confessor to offer Sundays as well if I can. Alms and acts of charity are very important as well and we seek out ways to increase this focus as a family.

Melody in North Royalton, OH

Yes, we usually give something up that we enjoy but that might not be all that healthy for us, like TV, computer or sweets.

Erika in Nashua, NH

We follow the traditional rules of fasting (one regular meal a day, two small meals with no meat, no eating between meals), and we give up sweets, except on Sunday.

Katie in Escondido, CA

We do both, always sacrifice something and always find an act of charity to participate in. This year we intend to make visits to the local convalescent home.

Suzanne in Jacksonville, NC

Both, yet doing something is an opportunity to engage all aspects of ourselves which can be so spiritually healing and fulfilling. I think it helps me feel that I am truly participating in God’s love with my whole self. On the other hand if I am offering something up, then I can also engage my whole self. Both are a wonderful privilege and honor which God lets us participate.

Judith in Lexington, KY

I like to do both. I like to give something up that will help me shed some bad habits or time wasters so I can focus more on God but I also like to give something of myself as well, whether it is daily mass or an act of charity.

Kerri in Boerne, TX

I do offer up my sweets, which really aren’t much since I don’t eat that many, so I would have to say acts of charity is harder for me. Since I am so busy at home, I try to reach out to my siblings and elderly father a little more, and I find that a sometimes very difficult but beneficial exercise.

Karen in St. Louis, MO

I usually do both, but I also keep myself open to what God would like from me at this time. Several years in a row I was very ill and that was my offering to Christ on the cross. All my plans of “doing things” was not what He was asking of me. This was a huge lesson about “doing” for Lent or Advent.

Mary Ann in Evansville, WI

Honestly, we try to incorporate prayer, fasting, and almsgiving into our Lenten journey.

Mary in Madison, SD

I think acts of charity is the most beneficial, and also sacrificing something that costs money (like a latte) and giving the money away.

Jessica in Dexter, MI

In our family it has usually been to practice both. We are in prayer and service throughout Holy Week, but it is important to remember that Lent or Holy Week is not the only time for acts of charity or to offer something up. This is stressed year-round.

Adela in San Antonio, TX

We do both, I think in giving alms there is sometimes sacrifice as well.

Danielle in Lumberton, NJ

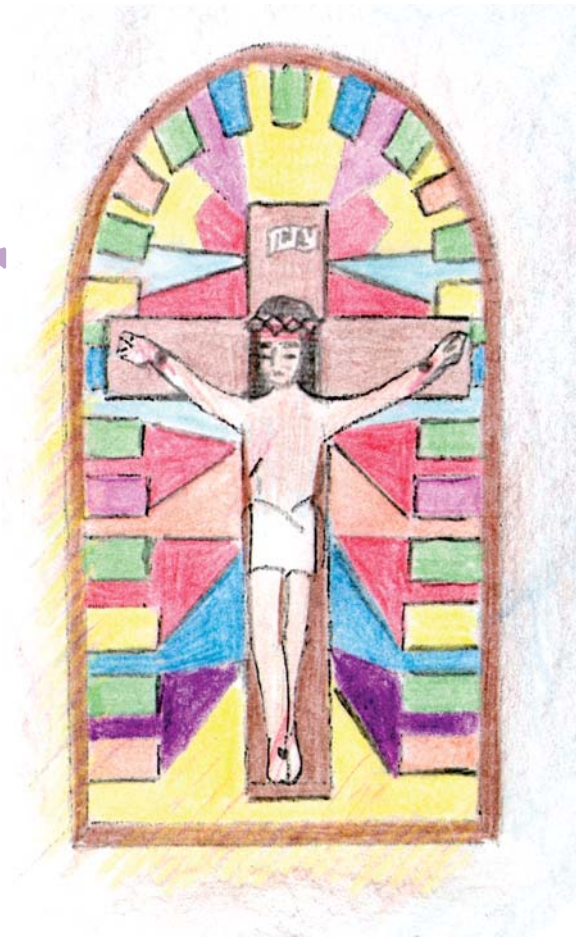
Yes, we find something to offer up. Since we have meatless Fridays throughout the year, we try to add an additional meatless day. We also remove ice cream (or favorite dessert) and replace it with fruit. We try to limit t.v. as well. These acts of restricting ourselves is especially helpful in our family for those who have difficulty with self-control.

Renee in Belleville, WI

For the past several years of being pregnant or nursing, “giving something up” was difficult, because in the past I gave up food or fasted. I have found that adding additional prayer brings the Lenten season into focus for me. This year I want to find a way to do an act of charity in my community. I want to find something that my children can also participate in with me.

Lindsey in Boerne, TX

Lenten Recipes



MEATLESS CROCKPOT LASAGNA

Super easy, super yummy, super cheap!

Ingredients: Lasagna noodles, 1 container cottage cheese, 2 cups mozzarella cheese, 1/2 c. parmesan cheese, 1 egg, 1tbsp Italian seasoning, 1 jar red sauce.

Combine cottage cheese, mozzarella cheese, parmesan, egg and seasoning in bowl. Ladle some sauce into bottom of Crockpot, top with layer of uncooked noodles, spread cheese mixture on top of noodle layer. Repeat the layering until you're all out of cheese. Set on low and cook until all cheese is melted and top of lasagna is golden brown.

Ashley in Brockport, NY

BROCCOLI CASSEROLE

4-6 c. bite-sized pieces of fresh broccoli and/or cauliflower
1/3 c. chopped onion
1-1/2 c. grated cheddar cheese
16-oz. cream-style cottage cheese
4 eggs
1 c. corn kernels and/or chopped mushrooms
1/2 tsp. salt
1/8 tsp. pepper

In a greased 2-quart casserole, stir together all ingredients, except broccoli, until well-blended. Gently fold in broccoli. Bake, uncovered, at 325 degrees F for 35 min. until lightly set. Allow to cool 10 min. before serving.

Julie in Paris, KY

We love to eat breakfast roll ups. Just scrambled eggs, fresh tomatoes, and cheddar cheese in a tortilla. Usually cut up some fresh fruit for a fruit salad.

Colleen in Parma Hts, OH

We like cream tuna on toast...I can't imagine you want the recipe! :)

Samantha in Whitmore Lake, MI

Bean and cheese enchiladas, and cream of cauliflower soup.

Rachel Daggett in Helotes, TX

Salmon broiled with coconut oil & lemon.

Maria in Cumming, GA

Black Bean Soup (any recipe, but served with cilantro, salsa, tortillas and cheese).

Jessica in Dexter, MI

My girls and I have begun the tradition of making home-made soft pretzels along with tomato soup for lunch on Fridays during Lent.

Mary in Madison, SD

CURRIED TUNA WITH APPLES

2 c. uncooked rice
2 TBS butter or margarine
1 med-large apple, peeled, cored and diced
1 small onion, peeled and chopped
1- 14.5 oz can petite diced tomatoes
1-2 TBS curry powder*
2- 6 oz. cans tuna, drained

Cook rice according to package directions. While rice is cooking, melt butter or margarine in a large skillet over low heat. Stir in apples and onions until they are soft and wilted. Add tomatoes (do not drain) and curry powder* and mix well. Stir in tuna; simmer uncovered for 5-10 minutes. Serve tuna mixture over cooked rice. Serves 4. *Curry powders can vary in intensity – add 1 TBS and taste mixture before adding more.

Karen in Winter Springs, FL

SLOW COOKER SPLIT PEA SOUP

16 oz. package dried split peas
1 cup diced fully cooked lean ham (omit during lent)
4-5 carrots
1 med. onion
2 garlic cloves, minced
1-2 sticks of celery
2 bay leaves
1/2 tsp salt
1/2 tsp pepper
5 cups boiling water (or veggie broth)
1 cup hot milk

In a slow cooker, layer the first nine ingredients in order listed (do not stir). Cover and cook on high for 4-5 hours or until vegetables are tender. Stir in milk. Discard bay leaves before serving. We serve with Brown Rice.

Clarissa in Saint Cloud, MN

COLOMBIAN BAKED POTATOES

Large baking potatoes
1 large sweet onion cut into strips
1/2 bunch of green onions sliced into one inch lengths
1 tomatoes diced large chunks
1/2 stick of butter
2 cups of shredded cheddar cheese

Place first three ingredients in a skillet and caramelize with butter. Add cheddar cheese in slowly. (May substitute Velveeta cut into cubes). Pour over prepared baked potatoes. Enjoy.

Holly in Miami, FL

We do meatless every Friday so we have a lot of recipes! A favorite is probably my baked macaroni and cheese. You layer macaroni, shredded American cheese (Land O Lakes or Kraft Deluxe), onions, salt and pepper twice in a casserole dish. Top with butter and a basic white sauce. Bake for 30 minutes at 350 degrees. It gets nice and crunchy on top and ooey-gooney cheesy-weesy inside!

Jen in West Fargo, ND

Egg and Potato Frittata: peeled, cubed potatoes and beaten eggs mixed in a shallow dish. Put in oven until eggs are cooked and serve. Super easy and your able to add many different ingredients to make it your own.

Maria in Columbus, OH

FISH TACOS

2 pounds Cod Fillet Or Favorite Fish
½ cups Sour Cream
¼ cups Favorite Salsa
Salt And Pepper, to taste
Favorite Seasonings (I Use Cajun Seasoning)
2 Tablespoons Virgin Olive Oil
2 whole Limes, Juiced
1 whole Small Red Onion, Diced
2 whole Small Tomatoes, Diced
Shredded Lettuce
Shredded Cheese
Chopped Cilantro
Corn tortillas (use 2 per taco)

Preheat oven to 300F. Stack and wrap tortillas in aluminum foil and warm in the oven while preparing the fish.

Whisk together sour cream and salsa in a small bowl; season with salt and pepper. Cover and put in the fridge. Heat grill or nonstick pan over high heat. Brush fish with oil and season with salt and pepper and your favorite seasonings (I just sprinkled it on both sides of fish).

Cook fish until golden brown on both sides, about 4 minutes per side. Remove to a plate; drizzle with the lime juice (I love tons of lime juice on these). Let rest for 5 minutes. Using a fork, flake the fish into large pieces. Set up a taco bar with all ingredients and go to town!

Karen in St. Louis, MO

BEAN AND CHEESE CHALUPAS

1 16 oz can of Bush's Brand Refried Beans (or your favorite)
2 tbsp of Chili Con Carne Seasoning or any Pinto Bean seasoning you like (I use either Gebhardt if I can find or Fiesta brands)
2 cups of shredded cheddar cheese (I grate my own but use the pre-packaged if you prefer)
2 cups of shredded iceberg lettuce
2 cups of diced tomatoes, (I like the Roma)
1 pkg baked corn tortillas disks (like Bea's or Old El Paso)

Additional toppings--avocado or guacamole, sour cream, black olives and hot sauce.

In a shallow pan on low heat, place about 1/2 a tbsp of vegetable or corn oil and swirl until heated, next drain the liquid from the can of beans and place beans in the pan. (Be careful there may be some splattering). Stir beans and heat through for about a minute. Next add your seasoning and stir. Continue heating on low heat for about another two to three minutes stirring in between.

While beans are heating through, begin assembling the tortillas on a microwave platter and warm in the microwave for about 30 seconds. (You may dispense with is step if you prefer, the tortillas are fully baked.)

Remove beans from the heat and turn off the burner.

Spread each tortilla with the bean mixture to your liking, usually one to two tbsps, then top each one with cheese, lettuce, tomato and any additional toppings you prefer. Get creative!

Serves 6-8

Adela in San Antonio, TX

STUFFED CABBAGE

2 cups cooked wild rice
1 cup diced onion
4 cloves garlic, thinly sliced
raisins
apple cider
one small head cabbage
tangy tomato sauce

In apple cider, sauté onion and garlic until onion is soft. Add rice, raisins and some more cider. Heat gently for a few minutes to let flavors meld. Take cabbage and core and plunge into hot water for a few (5?) minutes to loosen leaves. Peel off a dozen or so leaves. Put a layer of sauce in the bottom of the pan. Roll the cabbage leaves around the rice mixture by putting a tablespoon or so of the mixture in the middle of the cabbage leaf, fold up the sides and roll. Put the rolled cabbage on the sauce; layer as needed by putting sauce on top of the cabbage, adding more rolls, end with sauce. Cover and bake 30 minutes in a 350 degree oven.

Sarah in Corpus Christi, TX

One of our favorite recipes is **SWEET CORN AND CRAB SOUP**

2 Tbsp butter or margarine, 1/4 c white cornmeal, 2 celery ribs diced, 1 medium onion diced, 1 red bell pepper diced, 1 jalapeno pepper diced (optional), 3 c fresh sweet corn kernels (or frozen), 4 3/4 c vegetable broth, 2 corncobs, 1 lb fresh lump crabmeat drained and flaked, 1 c whipping cream, 1/4 cup chopped cilantro, 1/2 tsp salt, and 1/4 tsp ground white pepper.

Add butter to a Dutch oven over medium heat and melt. Whisk in cornmeal and cook, whisking constantly, 1 minute. Add celery and next 4 ingredients; sauté for 2 minutes. Add broth and corncobs. Bring to boil; reduce heat, and simmer 30 minutes. Remove and discard corncobs. Stir in crabmeat and next 4 ingredients; cook until thoroughly heated. Yield: 10 1/2 cups.

Tiffany in Disputanta, VA

EGG BURRITOS

Scramble eggs and top with salsa, olives (green or black), cheese, sour cream, rice-- whatever you like! and wrap in a soft flour tortilla. Easy and filling. Sometimes we'll sauté some onions and peppers in the grownups portion.

Renee in Belleville, WI

HUMMUS!

1 can of chickpeas
lemon juice (lots of it for us!)
1 tablespoon of tahini
1 tablespoon of olive oil

Stephanie in Broussard, LA

I have a few! Some of my meatless recipes are here:
<http://jamieskitchenblessings.blogspot.com/search/label/Meatless>

Jamie in St Cloud, MN

VODKA SAUCE FOR PASTA

½ cup Butter
1 Onion, diced
1 cup Vodka
1 (28 ounce) Can Crushed Tomatoes
1 pint Heavy Cream

Directions:

1. In a skillet over medium heat, sauté onion in butter until slightly brown and soft. Pour in vodka and let cook for 10 minutes. Mix in crushed tomatoes and cook for 30 minutes. Pour in heavy cream and cook for another 30 minutes.

This recipe is delicious and simple. I think that the name scares people off, but the alcohol should cook off. It would also be tasty with the addition of some seafood.

Lu in Spring Lake, MI

Which Lenten activity has been the most helpful in teaching your children about the Lenten Season of love and sacrifice?

Why is this activity your favorite?

We have a "Crown of Thorns" as a centerpiece for our dining room table. I made it from a grapevine wreath I purchased at the craft store. On Ash Wednesday, my children put in the "thorns" (wooden toothpicks) and set their holders (a small terra cotta flowerpot with the child's initial painted on it in purple) in the center of the wreath. I add a single purple candle (using a leftover candle from our Advent wreath).

Then during Lent, every time they make a sacrifice or do a good deed or do some sort of prayerful activity (like go to Mass), they can take out a "thorn" from Jesus' "crown" and put it into their holder. And if they do something not so nice, they may have to replace one of their "thorns" back into the "crown".

My children look forward to seeing how many "thorns" they can take out before Easter. It seems to help them visualize how their small acts of kindness, sacrifices and prayers can help relieve the suffering Jesus endured for our sinfulness. And on the few occasions that merited replacing a "thorn", the child is immediately penitent and saddened that he is adding to Jesus' suffering.

I once had a teen-aged babysitter ask about our tradition when she saw our "Crown of Thorns". She loved the idea and said wistfully, "I wish I could do that, too!"

Sherry in St. Louis, MO

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Our family is still very young, so we rely mostly on simple things such as praying the Rosary. Since our 2 and 3 year old are a little young to sit still with beads of a rosary, we have them place one block (or matchbox car) into a bucket for each Hail Mary. This is an interactive way for them to participate in the rosary that I have found very helpful. I feel that we are instilling a prayer life in our children at a very young age.

Ashley in Brockport, New York

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When our children were younger, we put a large craft foam cross on the wall, and had small square pieces of pastel-colored paper next to it. Whenever the kids made a sacrifice, they would write it up on the paper, then fold it up origami-style so that it would resemble a small flower. The flower would be stapled or taped to the cross. The goal was to fill the cross with flowers by Easter, so that it looked like a cross covered with Easter Lilies. The kids really loved participating in this and it made a beautiful Easter decoration when we were done.

Karen in Winter Springs, FL

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We have participated in the 40 Days for Life Campaign outside the local abortion clinic. I believe it helps emphasize the importance of prayer and its link with true charity.

Julie in Paris, Kentucky

We have 7 children ranging from 8 years old to 10 months. We start Lent by going to Mass on Ash Wednesday as a family. Our 5 oldest boys wear sacrifice beads and try to do little sacrifices throughout the day for Jesus all through Lent. As a family we think of a sacrifice we can do together. During past Lent's we have given up TV, have not eaten fast food all of Lent and donate that money to a prolife house for unmarried woman, and give away a bag of clothes, toys or books each day of Lent. The Stations of the Cross are a great family prayer on Friday. Sometimes we just go by the book and sometimes a few older boys will act it out for us. Also a good visual for our little ones is a big jar on the kitchen counter that we put beans in for good deeds and small sacrifices. Then, on Easter Sunday we take the beans out and fill it up with candy. I have found that collecting a bag or box of clothes each day and then at the end of the week driving to a place to donate it has shown our children that when we are blessed with things like a house, clothes, and toys we need to be grateful for what we have and we need to help others who may not have those things.

Colleen in Parma Hts, OH

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Live Stations of the Cross. It's visually stimulating for teens, particularly if they are participating in the performances. the more involved they are at that age, the more focused they are on what's happening.

Julie in Keymar, MD

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With 5 children ages 13 down to 5, we tend to keep things close to home. So, following St. Therese's practices, we have used the sacrifice beads as little reminders of how the

little ways can be a part of the greater good for God. We have also written the names of friends/family on little pieces of paper, placed them in a jar and draw the names out to have a silent prayer partner for Lent. We pray for that person, or offer up a sacrifice for them. I think this has helped our family think beyond ourselves. We're all in this together and we need each other for our salvation, too. We can all share in Jesus' Passion.

Brenda in Whitmore Lake, MI

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I have a box with several slips of paper that have little offerings or service, sacrifice, and prayer written on them. They say things like, "I will say a Hail Mary for a family in need.", "I will pick up something off the floor and put it away." "I will always say Please & Thank you." Every morning at the end of our morning devotions we choose a slip from the box. Each time during the day the offering is made the kids can add a bead to a heart shaped vase & they are always very excited to see it filled up. I love to teach my children "The Little Way" of St. Therese.

Clarissa in Saint Cloud, MN

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Operation rice bowl (alms jar). It incorporates giving up something with actual examples from different countries. It shows the kids how poverty affects real people.

Rosanne in Rolla, MO

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Not getting that special treat when we are out as well as helping to clean our toys and give to charity. Teaches sacrifice and the joy in helping those less fortunate.

Jillian in Silverdale, WA

We use a vinyl cling Lenten Storyboard to act out Bible history associated with Lent and Easter and change the artwork in the house to more graphic images of the crucifixion. These tools present a format for natural discussion and thought about how much Jesus suffered and how much pain our sins cause. That inspires pathos which helps motivate us all for sacrificial prayer.

Janice in Canton, OH

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Each year our family makes a Lenten calendar: We take a posterboard, create a calendar that encompasses all the days of Lent, and make sure we have additional empty columns on the left and top. In the empty left column we put what the kids are giving up that week as a sacrifice. Sometimes it is food, sometimes screen time or fun reading, etc. As they got older they would give up candy or something else for all of Lent and then do the additional weekly things too. They really like to draw pictures of what they are giving up!

On the top of each day we would write down something in our house that we could count: chairs, doors, windows, etc -- and they would put that many pennies in the rice bowl on the table. This is very popular, too!

Each day, each child would write (or have mom write) who they are offering their sacrifice for -- that way they are really thinking about it each day. They could also color/draw a cross to "mark off" that day.

Lastly, when we made the calendar they would draw things on the special days: feet on Holy Thursday, a cross on Good Friday, etc.

When Lent is over, on Holy Saturday, we turn the posterboard over and make a fun Happy Easter poster to put up for the Easter Season.

This whole idea comes from a book called *Guiding Your Catholic Preschooler* -- it's a great book! I highly recommend it.

It encompasses both sacrifice and almsgiving, and in a way that they can really understand. It's not just "give this up" but they can more easily see they are doing it for a purpose/person. They learn to love the idea of giving and sharing, and it makes even Lent "FUN!" I can't tell you how many times I heard my kids say on Ash Wednesday, "Mom, we have to make our calendar!" Oh -- and it keeps us Moms on track, too. :)

Samantha in Whitmore Lake, MI

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Stations of the Cross every Friday as a family at our parish church. This is in the evening so it highlights the fact that our Lenten journey to Christ comes before any activity. We also do our best to attend the evening daily Mass offered at our parish during Lent as a family. These two activities are my favorite because they force us to climb out of our comfortable spots in the day (or delay activities) to come together as a family (and faith community) to pray and worship. The kids see that dad has a struggle to leave work on time to meet us. Dinner is delayed and we are usually hungry. Activities are interrupted... for Christ.

It's not only the sacrifice but the beauty of living a full liturgical life with the entire family. Daily Mass is always an option for us in the mornings but my husband is unable to join us. This way, we are walking the journey together even though mornings are easier and less disruptive.

The public Stations are a weekly adventure and resistance at the beginning of Lent from the littles, fades into happy familiarity. We can always do the Stations at home, but coming together with our parish family to do them changes the way the kids see things.

Melody in North Royalton, OH

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Counter beans for sacrifices made into a jar. It shows how much my children are willing to sacrifice throughout all of Lent.

Rachel in Helotes, TX

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Out of our four children, the oldest is only 5. Last year I took her to the Stations of the Cross for the first time. It was particularly special because it was also my first time. It happened to be the one time that the youth of the church participated and they were in full costume. It was very moving for both of us and she came home and "taught" her younger siblings about what we had seen. I hope to take more of my children this year to witness it. It is especially helpful for children to see things to help them understand. Seeing the stations of the cross acted out, with characters in full costume, really helped her understand more deeply the events of the Passion.

Brianne in La Grange, TX

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We take 40 plastic eggs - for the 40 days of Lent - and stuff each one with a piece of paper detailing a sacrifice that each member of the family can offer for that particular day, such as no television, no chocolate, read a book to your younger brother, write a letter to (or visit) someone who is lonely, etc. The

kids love opening these eggs every morning and making every effort to fulfill that sacrifice for the day! This daily activity reminds ALL of us of the meaning and importance of sacrifice... and it often prompts us to continue many of the behaviors (sacrifices) beyond just one day.

Molly in Green Bay, WI

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Stations of the Cross, Praying the Sorrowful Mysteries of the Rosary, Fasting. Focus on Jesus' great sacrifice to save us

Maria in Cumming, GA

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Giving up something like sweets during Lent helps our kids learn about sacrifice. It teaches self control and sacrifice and helps them to appreciate what Jesus did for us.

Erika in Nashua, NH

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Our bishop will say the stations of the cross with our local catholic university students. My husband and I are graduates and look forward to the live reenactment of the road to Calvary with the youth. We see our children soaking in the prayers!

Holly in Miami, FL

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Something I really liked one year was an activity that came from our parish's religious ed program. It was a paper chain that had one chain for each day of lent - gray for Ash Wednesday, purple for the weekdays, white for Sundays, red for Palm Sunday, and black for Good Friday. I think Easter was yellow or gold. Each strip had a prayer and/or activity

on it that we could work on for that day. This was a really nice, hands on activity that was very visual - the kids could see how long until Easter. Also, it gave us things to think about each day and helped make Lent more real.

Jen in West Fargo, ND

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Stations of the cross. It's my favorite because it reminds my children and I the journey Christ took for our salvation.

Maria in Columbus, OH

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Our family's Lenten tradition, since our children were very small, is a crown of thorns which we display in a prominent place in our home. We construct the crown of thorns from a straw wreath, available very inexpensively at craft stores. Into this straw wreath, we put 500 pointed end toothpicks. This in itself is a sacrifice, since being poked with the toothpicks can be painful! We spray paint the entire crown dark brown. It looks very realistic. Then we place the crown on a small table covered with a purple cloth in front of our "prayer station". As the children make sacrifices, they remove a thorn from the crown, and put it in a basket alongside the table. If they disobey, bicker, or fight, etc, they are reminded that this offends our Lord and they put a "thorn" back into the crown. This activity teaches the children that, by their sacrifices, they please Our Lord and alleviate the suffering He endured because of our sins. It is a tangible reminder of the sufferings of Jesus and our obligation to do penance to make reparations for our sins and the sins of the whole world. It is also a great deterrent to sin, when we must put a thorn back into the crown because we have offended Jesus, and helps foster a deep hatred of sin.

Katie in Escondido, CA

For us, the Stations of the Cross, praying the Rosary, and reading selections from St. Francis de Sales - Sermons for Lent have been truly rewarding and edifying. Our children and family have grown by doing them together, studying Christ's suffering and how to apply that to our daily lives - offering up our daily inconveniences and sufferings for Christ, for the conversion of sinners, etc. It also has helped to see Christ in others and thus, clarify why charity toward each other is necessary and fruitful.

Suzanne in Jacksonville, NC

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Attending the Stations of the Cross at our parish, giving up something that they love to do or a favorite food, doing something extra for someone. We usually give up something as a family such as TV, desserts, etc. We hope our children will learn sacrifice and not to look for instant gratification in everything they do.

Mary Ann in Evansville, WI

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At our church every year we receive the CRS cups for lent. As lent goes on and we "give up" something we bring in the act of giving as well. If we give up sodas the money we WOULD have spent on sodas goes in the CRS cup. Also, if we slip in our sacrifices then we put a little extra in the CRS cup as well. We also read the stories of the missions around the world throughout Lent. I like this activity because it is not something we all have to sit down and schedule a lot of time for. It is incorporated through our day every day of lent. We help each other with their sacrifices through this activity and we are learning about the needs in other parts of the world.

Kerri in Boerne, TX

Stations of the cross. It seems to engage my son in the passion in a mystical and grace-filled way. My son is older and appreciates this journey of love.

Judith in Lexington, KY

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We use the St. Therese Sacrifice Beads, the alms jar and praying the Stations of the Cross. The children are more easily able to participate in these activities we have found and the beads and jar give them a particularly good feeling of satisfaction. The Stations are something they need to grow into but they are very moving when they really understand what Jesus physically went through.

Karen in St. Louis, MO

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We haven't tried a lot of things, but at church last year we received a baby bottle to collect money for the crisis pregnancy center, and my boys put all their coins in there for "poor babies." It was so touching how generous they wanted to be, and I hope to try more things this year.

Jessica in Dexter, MI

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To celebrate the season of Lent, it is a tradition in our family to first discuss what it is that we are going to sacrifice for forty days and to listen to the New Testament on audio every day for thirty minutes for the full forty days of Lent. During this time we make a cardboard rice bowl and begin to place money and change in the bowl to give to the poor when the Lent season is over. We, as a family, also get encouragement and inspiration from watching the mini-series "Jesus of Nazareth" and the movie "The Gospel of John," both are now available on dvd. This activity

is very powerful because children and teens learn by using their senses. The two movies provide a mental picture and a glimpse into the life and teachings of Christ and what those times were like visually. By listening to the Bible in audio format, I believe that this method helps with education and understanding, it is also very relaxing to have the Word of God whispered in your ears.

Adela in San Antonio, TX

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We have gone from The Jelly Bean jar when the kids were a bit younger which was wonderful to see all their sacrifices and works of mercy in a rainbow of treats for Easter Morning, to a couple of our favorites now. As a family we have found great peace and connection with the Stations of the Cross - we attend on Fridays at our Church and when we are not able to go, we do them at home. At home we tailor it to the kids and relate our Way of the Cross to Jesus'. We also have a bowl that goes on our dining table with slips of paper with spiritual and corporal works of mercy on them. Each day we pick one and perform it that day. And we will continue a new one we started last year, saying the rosary every Sunday and as many nights during the week as possible.

All of these activities we have found shows our family that Jesus' life was planned out to give us a template for ours. That the saints are the same fashion as that. As much as they struggled and suffered, so do we, and our faith is a special gift to be given to others.

Danielle in Lumberton, NJ