

# Our Journey to Remember

Greetings as we begin the holy season of Lent.

“Are we there yet?” we would plead from the backseat of our family Buick. My sisters and I could barely contain our excitement as we headed

to the Jersey shore for vacation. Memories of sand, surf, Kay’s Bakery, late-night card games, and the rare dinner out at a nice restaurant fueled our anticipation. Without our memories of what had come before, we would hardly have been so excited!

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Lent is the Christian community’s annual journey of remembrance and joy. We spend forty days in preparation, so that when we arrive at Easter we are completely ready to fill ourselves with the miracle of the Resurrection and the joy that it brings. Our daily lives can reflect this, especially within our families. Ash Wednesday starts our journey by reminding us of the frailty and sinfulness of human life. We take an honest look at ourselves and remember that we can return to God with open hearts and request forgiveness.

We bring ourselves without fear or hesitation to the Sacrament of Reconciliation: Jesus loved sinners, and wanted nothing more than for them to be free; at peace with God, neighbor,



and self. We not only say the prayers we have been given as our penance but change our hearts and behavior so we don’t make those same mistakes again. This is called repentance. In our par-

enting, we can gently help our children see this important distinction.

Lent is a time of almsgiving. We take time to ask how we, as a family, share the physical and spiritual gifts that we’ve been given. It’s a good time to look through our possessions and give away those rarely worn coats, forgotten stuffed animals, and books and other items to people who would truly enjoy having them. We remember our tradition’s call to offer “first fruits,” and make sure that what we give is something that we, too, would enjoy having.

Adults and youth fourteen years old and older abstain from eating meat on Ash Wednesday, Good Friday, and the Fridays of Lent. In my home, we need to be careful that our meatless meals aren’t opportunities to have dishes that we typically wouldn’t have, such as broiled salmon. A simple soup or noodle casserole reminds us that many people have so much less to eat than we do.

Prayer, penance, repentance, almsgiving, and self-denial help build our anticipation through Lent’s forty days, allowing us to come to Easter Sunday ready to rejoice in the experience of the Risen Lord.