

# Participating in Lent as a Family

Greetings!

The Lenten disciplines of prayer, fasting, and almsgiving provide an opportunity to reflect more deeply on our relationships with God and one another. Through such reflection, we can remove obstacles so that we may grow in love.

Often, each family member chooses Lenten practices on their own, but your family might want to decide how to pray, fast, and give alms as a unit.

If you struggle to find time to pray together, it can be helpful to block space on your electronic calendar and set a reminder. What time is the best time to pray? Any time that you can consistently commit to it. Saying grace before meals reminds us that all gifts come from God. Over dinner, parents and children can talk about where they see God's presence in their day.

After dinner, a shared reading of Scripture, with each family member reading a verse in turn, offers a chance to listen to God's Word together. You might ask children, "What did you hear?" or "Did you hear anything that surprised you?"

## Families can make a point of taking time out for prayer and reading Scripture together.

Through the things that are noticed, we can reflect on how God is working in our lives.

In our family, I pray with each child one-on-one before bed. You may have noticed that children bring up concerns, worries, and insights at bedtime. This reflective mood can inspire thoughtful prayer.

Lent can be a time to introduce your children to silence in their prayer life. Encourage small children to find silence by closing their eyes, taking slow breaths, and listening. A darkened space or a lit candle may help older children and teens achieve quiet. Even a minute or two of intentional silence can change the pace of the day.

Often a treat such as candy is given up during Lent, but your family might want to consider a fast from electronics. The family could decide together on an hour daily that is free of devices and limit or fast from social media. Replace



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the time spent with technology to be present to the people in the room.

As for almsgiving, many agencies provide ways to share what you have with those in need. Alternately, you can choose one work of mercy and incorporate it into your family life. Working to bear wrongs patiently, for example, would benefit many families.

These practices—and many others—can help us to grow in holiness during the season of Lent. When they are added to the prescribed days of fasting and abstinence, the Sacrament of Reconciliation, and the Eucharist, they provide an annual opportunity to reflect on what holds us back in our relationships with God and one another. By working to remove these obstacles, we prepare ourselves to celebrate the Resurrection with great joy!