

Enhance your family prayer with  
**FAMILY ROSARY**

*The Next 40 Days*  
*Making the Most of this*  
*Year's Lent*

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THE FAMILY THAT PRAYS TOGETHER STAYS TOGETHER



# WELCOME TO OUR FAMILY

It's a new year! Take a moment to breathe in this fresh start. Begin or end each day with family prayer to get in the habit of praying together. Don't worry, it doesn't have to be perfect! Take comfort in knowing there is no one "correct" way of doing it.

It's a busy time of year for everyone, but it's especially important to slow down and enjoy each other's unique presence.

Know that we are joining you and your family in prayer. We promise to be with you, growing in faith, every step of the way. May God continue to bless you and your family.

## A LITTLE HISTORY

Father Patrick Peyton, C.S.C. began his ministry in 1942 with the goal of building **family unity** through daily prayer of the Rosary. Inspired by his own father who had a deep devotion to family prayer, praying the Rosary became the foundation for the life of Father Peyton (1909-92).

We at Family Rosary are ever so grateful Father Peyton's family instilled in him the importance of **family prayer**. Now it can be part of your family's tradition so you can fulfill the vision that "The Family That Prays Together Stays Together," the message created by Father Patrick Peyton, C.S.C., so many years ago.



A WORLD AT PRAYER IS A WORLD AT PEACE.  
VENERABLE PATRICK PEYTON



# MAKING THE MOST OF THIS YEAR'S LENT



I used to cower at the word “Lent” because it meant 40 long days of giving up chocolate or if I was feeling really ambitious, all sweets. But Lent offers us so much more than abstaining from our indulgences. Let me walk you through the ins and outs of this liturgical season so you (and your family) can squeeze every spiritual drop out of this year’s Lent:

## WHAT’S THAT ON YOUR FOREHEAD?

Attending a small public school, many of my peers looked puzzled when I’d show up late on a Wednesday morning with what appeared to be dirt on my forehead. If anyone ever asked me what was up, I’d bashfully answer that it was Ash Wednesday, the start of Lent, and carefully duck my head into class.

I implore you, don’t be like my younger self and shy away from those ashes on your forehead, wear them loud and proud! You are a son or daughter of God! It’s the perfect time to evangelize and educate others about the church season. If someone looks at you funny or gives you the side eye, smile back, show that you are completely aware that you have black ashes on your forehead and it’s for a good reason.

A refresher, if you need it: The ashes symbolize that you, a baptized son or daughter of God, are entering the next 40 days with the intention of penance and need to be redeemed by mercy. Remember that you are dust and to dust you shall return.

“By the sweat of your brow you shall eat bread. Until you return to the ground, from which you were taken; For you are dust, and to dust you shall return” (Genesis 3:19).

## MAKING LENT EXTRAORDINARY

Lent is a special time gifted to us by God. As we transition out of an “Ordinary Time” and into the Lenten season, we’re given space specifically for self reflection and prayer. Everyone in the Church is called to examine their hearts and determine what areas of their life need a little more spiritual TLC.

It’s so easy to get caught up in the patterns of normal life, especially after the jolly winter holidays are long gone: roll out of bed at 5:30AM, morning prayers, exercise, pour a cup of coffee, call mom, pour

another cup of coffee, work, make dinner, evening prayers, and on and on. It happens to all of us, we get stuck in a mundane routine and life suddenly has a thin film that reduces the sunshiny glory it's meant to have.

That is, until Lent rolls around. Forty days of devoting yourself, committing yourself to renew and strengthen your spiritual life with the most glorious incentive to keep you pushing, the Resurrection of Our Lord.

## **40 DAYS AND 40 NIGHTS**

Before Jesus began his public ministry he spent 40 days and 40 nights in the desert. He was tempted by the devil to choose evil and essentially test his devotion to God. But every time, Jesus stood his ground and was steadfast in his faith shouting, "Get away, Satan!"

Now we've all done the math and been let in on the Lenten loophole, "Sundays don't count." If you go to your calendar it does appear there are 46 consecutive days of Lent. According to the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, "The Sundays of Lent are certainly part of the Time of Lent, but they are not prescribed days of fast and abstinence."

Basically, it's not a "rule" that Catholics have to practice abstinence the entire consecutive time of Lent, but traditionally we're taught to choose another form of penance (which we'll discuss) to practice the entirety of Lent (so yes, Sundays are included). And these penitential practices aren't regulated by the Church, but by one's own conscience.

Like Jesus we mirror his experience and choose to spend (about) 40 days putting our faith to the test.

## **WHEN FISH IS YOUR ONLY OPTION**

Every Friday during Lent my lunchbox was always packed with a classic PB&J sandwich and a reminder note from my mom to "Not eat meat today!" I'd weakly smile at my friends downing the greasy cafeteria hamburger and not-so-secretly dread the stinky fish my mom was preparing for dinner.

Little did I know how the blessed solidarity of abstaining from meat on Fridays (and eventually partaking in a full day of fasting on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday) with fellow Catholics would deeply enrich my soul.

The significance of abstaining from meat on Fridays was designated because Jesus died on the cross on a Friday. So to unite our sufferings with Jesus, we offer up a specific type of penance on the day that he died (AKA we don't eat meat). This simple rule presents an opportunity for sacrifice and community.

Now, it may be a greater sacrifice for crazy-meat lovers out there who can't go a day without eating juicy goodness than for people who regularly eat rice and beans for dinner. But what really resonates with me about this practice is that we do it in solidarity. Even if your local parish doesn't have a huge fish fry where everyone brings extended members of their family, you're still united with Catholics

around the world on something we all love to do: eat food.

You can only grin when you realize how united we are: when you overhear someone order a chicken caesar salad, but asks to hold the chicken because it's Friday or you dramatically tackle your coworker before he absentmindedly bites into a steak. We're in it together, praying for one another and stomaching a mouth full of vegetables without profound remorse because we know it's all for Our Lord.

## LEAD US NOT INTO TEMPTATION

When I've had a rough day and I've expended every last bit of energy my body has, all I want to do is pop open a bottle of wine, turn on mindless television, crawl into bed and feel sorry for myself. Oh how easy (and real) it is to give in to these human temptations. Lucky enough, Lent gives us the opportunity to move away from sinful enticements through fasting.

I see fasting as having a sort of twofold role on our Lenten journey. The first part is the "required" fasting\* that all Catholics are called to experience (again it's all about #solidarity). That is on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday when we can only have one full meal (without meat) and if necessary, small snacks that should not add up to another full meal throughout the entire day (we're talking nuts and dried fruit here, people, keep it simple).

But we've all been there, desperately trying to hold out on eating your one allotted full meal because the tiny bowl of Honey Nut Cheerios wasn't enough to get you through the morning\*\*. Ah, but your hungry mind and greedy stomach can endure so much when it's for a Greater Purpose. Fasting coupled with prayer is a holy formula that has the potential to bring us closer to Christ.

When our stomachs growl and all we can think about is foodfoodfood, we're called to push past this very human temptation and focus on Jesus. In our fast we have a sharper mind and clearer heart, moving beyond earthly hunger and grasping a greater sense of peace and God's plan for us in prayer.

The other half of fasting is what you usually hear about when people "give up" a guilty pleasure for the entirety of Lent. Usually it's steering clear of sweet treats or if you're feeling really brave, caffeine (#Catholicsrunoncoffee). And growing in popularity; fasting from social media or Netflix.

This is how I see it, oftentimes when we're upset, stressed, or anxious, we turn to earthly materials, treats and over-indulgent practices that comfort us. But fasting snaps us back into a spiritual sense and encourages our hearts to turn elsewhere for resolution; to our greatest comforter of all, Jesus (can I get a whoop-whoop).

\*A fun fact that would surprise most Catholics: Although the traditional Church law that enforced abstaining from meat every Friday under pain of sin was terminated, the Church **strongly, strongly** encourages us, out of love for Christ Crucified, to abstain from meat by free choice *every Friday* or substitute this with a Work of Mercy, an act of charity or a pious practice.

\*\*Please fast wisely. Confer with your doctor before fasting if you have serious health concerns. Also note that fasting rules are relaxed for children under 18 years old and elders 59 and older.

So yes, fasting is an opportunity to bring us closer to Christ. It can be spiritually liberating and help us refocus on what's most important. We show our devotion and commitment by offering up a small sacrifice for Our Lord, freeing our hearts to Him in prayer.

## **THERE'S MORE TO LENT THAN FASTING**

Now don't get me wrong, fasting is a very important element of Lent and can provide great clarity. But if you've been doing the same thing every Lent for years and are seeking more from the season, I'm here to tell you there are other options!

C-H-A-R-I-T-Y. Did your brain immediately hop to monetary donation when you saw that word? Although your parish and other local and global organizations surely appreciate the generous contribution (what kid doesn't like filling up their Rice Bowl with loose change they find between couch cushions?), there are other ways to give back that will make your heart soar.

Watered down, charity is showing kindness to others. It looks like: Donating your extra clothes or toys, opening the door for a stranger, leaving joyful notes in the cafeteria or even promising someone you'll pray for them. Whatever form you choose to express kindness, you're giving of yourself. Which is why almsgiving and charity go hand in hand. Almsgiving is such a funny word that never made sense to me, but has a blaringly obvious context clue. The word literally means "the practice of giving," but it's what you're giving that's significant. Whether it's volunteering your time or offering a talent, Lent is the perfect time to give of yourself.

So this Lent be bold and commit to offering yourself up. Be the first to offer an extra pair of hands to a friend moving across town. Every Tuesday offer your listening ear to your lonely neighbor. Offer your extra afternoon off to God by attending Mass and adoration. Open your closet and offer your extra items to someone who really needs them.

Cultivate a spirit of generosity and surrender yourself entirely to charity and almsgiving this Lent. I guarantee it will draw you closer to Christ who, with love for each of us, made the ultimate sacrifice a person, or God, can make.

## **MAKING LENTEN MEMORIES WITH YOUR FAMILY**

I don't know when we started it, but every year my sister and I discuss our Lenten promises. I have records of letters we wrote in college and many minutes chipped away over the phone as we discussed our plans for the upcoming church season.

Mostly these conversations focus on what we hope to walk away with by the time Easter rolls around, which helps us narrow down our long list of unrealistic offerings. Once we've committed to our promises, we're able to check on each other, hold one another accountable and better pray for our endurance along the way.

Lent is a journey to experience and explore with your family and friends. Although much of the season focuses on personal spiritual growth, there is absolutely space to flourish with others. So make Lent a time to grow together as a family and strengthen your friendships.

Here are some suggestions on how:

- Pray together. Pray together. Pray together. Every. Chance. You. Get.
- If you're eating with your family, take turns offering special intentions before every meal you share together (for other prayer before dinner tips see our [eBook Grace Before Meals](#)).
- Use CatholicMom.com's [Lenten Activity Calendar](#) that offers up small suggestions you can do with your family each day of Lent!
- Blast some energetic music and devote an entire day to going through your closet and donate all your lightly worn clothes (and then go over to your friend's house to do the same).
- Make meatless meals together. CatholicMom.com has fresh [meatless recipes every Friday](#) for your convenience and perusal!
- Get up and get moving! Bundle up the kids or call your exercise buddy and walk or run while praying the Rosary. If you're going quite a distance, dedicate every mile marker to someone who needs a little extra love!
- Grab someone who needs a spiritual boost and attend Stations of the Cross, Adoration or Reconciliation. Sometimes you just need an invitation to get you there.

Who knows, maybe one of your promises (personal or familial) will seep into your everyday life after this Lenten season expires and will become an integral part of who you are. God's grace has a funny way of doing that!

## PRAYER FOR A FRUITFUL LENT

Lord, as my family and I enter the season of Lent please help us make promises and small sacrifices that only bring us closer to You. Each day show us how we can be better disciples and witnesses of Your Love. We put our complete trust in You, knowing You'll guide us on this journey. Amen.



### MELISSA FITZPATRICK

Melissa joined the Family Rosary team in 2016 after graduating from Saint Mary's College, Notre Dame, Indiana. Originally from a midwestern, corn-growing town, she's navigating her new life in Boston with lots of prayer and many well-sugared cups of tea.



# BRINGING FAMILIES TOGETHER IN PRAYER

We hope the time you've spent reflecting with this material has been enriching. Remember, we're with you in prayer, every step of the way!

For additional online resources for family prayer including a Prayer Petition Page and our World at Prayer Blog, please visit our website at [www.FamilyRosary.org](http://www.FamilyRosary.org).

This e-book and all our resources represent a culmination of Father Peyton's passion for family unity through prayer. We hope our services will enhance your family's prayer life particularly remembering Father Peyton's famous words, "*The Family That Prays Together Stays Together.*"

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