

SPRINGTIME

A Prayer Guide

for the Season of Lent
in a Time of Pandemic

2021

What is Lent?

The word “Lent” is a shortened form of the Old English word *Lencten*, meaning “the Spring”. Lent is one of the most significant seasons of the Liturgical Year. It originated from the period of preparation embarked upon by those preparing for the new life of baptism at Easter. Eventually, it became a time for the whole Christian community to seriously review and renew their lives in advance of the annual celebration of the death and resurrection of Jesus at Easter. Consisting of forty days (Sundays excluded), the season of Lent is modelled on the forty days spent by Jesus fasting in the desert prior to beginning his public ministry. (Mt. 4)

“Dear brothers and sisters, every moment of our lives is a time for believing, hoping and loving. The call to experience Lent as a journey of conversion, prayer and sharing of our goods, helps us – as communities and as individuals – to revive the faith that comes from the living Christ, the hope inspired by the breath of the Holy Spirit and the love flowing from the merciful heart of the Father”. (*Pope Francis, Message for Lent, 2021*)

Fasting, Prayer and Giving to the Poor

Traditionally, fasting, praying and giving to the poor are considered as important tools to help us on our Lenten Pilgrimage of renewal. Fasting is the reduction of one’s intake of food or the giving up of something we would normally do. It reminds us that at times we must sacrifice ourselves in order to put God and others first in life. Linked to fasting is the idea of abstinence, which is the abstaining from meat. In Ireland, Ash Wednesday and Good Friday are traditionally days of fast and abstinence. Nowadays, some people take on things for Lent. They spend more time in prayer, more time caring for others or giving to the poor. Prayer deepens our relationship with God while giving to the poor reminds us that to love and care for others, especially those most in need, is a central part of being a Christian.

Lenten Traditions

Over time, different traditions have developed as a means of making the most of the Lenten season. The Fridays of Lent are seen as special days for additional fasting and acts of penance. Prayer practices such as praying the Stations of the Cross, making a Holy Hour or joining a prayer or Bible study group are also important traditions. In Ireland, the Trócaire Lenten Box has become a means of giving to those less well off. What Lenten traditions will you take on this year?

Finding New Ways of Praying at Home

The restrictions in place because of Covid-19 mean that as a Christian Community we cannot gather for our usual religious services. This situation challenges us to find new ways of reflecting on our faith and praying in our homes as the “Domestic Church”. It is hoped that this guide will assist you in doing just that. When we gather again in Church, let us not forget to enrich our spiritual lives by continuing to pray at home.

Sacred Space

Catholicism has a long tradition of using images and symbols to help us to pray. One way of doing this is to set up a prayer space in a prominent place in your home. There, each day, you can place different symbols or things of meaning to you and your family. You might start by placing in the prayer space a Bible, which contains God’s Word.

For Younger Family Members

At various points throughout this guide there are places for the younger members of a household to get involved. Art materials – paper, pens, and paints would be helpful at these times. So too would a guiding hand from an adult.

Broadcast Masses



While nothing can substitute for gathering in person, we are blessed to live in an age where the celebration of the Eucharist can be broadcast on radio or television or by means of the internet. This guide is also designed to help deepen your participation in those broadcasts and to assist you in getting the most out of them spiritually.

Call to Action

The followers of Jesus are called to be a people of action. During each of our days of prayer there will be a call to action. To do something different or significant that puts the message of that particular day into practice.

Safety

This guide is designed for use by a single household. All health and safety advice should be adhered to. When using candles, please do so safely.

Second Sunday of Lent

28th February 2021



We continue our Lenten pilgrimage with the Second Sunday of Lent. Today the Gospel tells the story of what has come to be known as the Transfiguration. We are told that Jesus took with him Peter, James and John and led them up a high mountain (Mk. 9:2). What occurs there is an important moment in Jesus' life. He is affirmed as God's beloved son who is to be listened to. There, the divinity of Jesus shines through and his death and resurrection come into sight.

A Prayer Ritual at Home

Open a Bible in your prayer space and light a candle to symbolise that God is present. Place the Tro'caire Lenten Box nearby. Have some daffodils or spring flowers and a picture of Jesus to hand.

As we begin ...

In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. **Amen**

Let us pray (pause)

Loving Father, you have made us for yourself and our hearts are restless until they rest in you. Guide us as we seek and search for you in life. Grant us the insight to see your presence in ordinary, everyday things. Reveal to us, as you did to Peter, James and John, Jesus' divinity. Continue to walk with us on our Lenten pilgrimage of renewal. We ask this through Christ, our Lord.
Amen

Let us listen to God's Word ...

Mark 9:2-10

Six days later, Jesus took with him Peter and James and John and led them up a high mountain by themselves. There in their presence he was transfigured: his clothes became brilliantly white, whiter than any earthly bleacher could make them. Elijah appeared to them with Moses; and they were talking to Jesus. Then Peter spoke to Jesus, 'Rabbi,' he said, 'it is wonderful for us to be here; so let us make three shelters, one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah.' He did not know what to say; they were so frightened. And a cloud came, covering them in shadow; and from the cloud there came a voice, 'This is my Son, the Beloved. Listen to him.' Then suddenly, when they looked round, they saw no one with them anymore but only Jesus.

Let us reflect ...

This Sunday could be called Transfiguration Sunday as it always features the story of Jesus and three of his disciples ascending the mountain. Jesus is transfigured while meeting two ancient prophets long dead. The voice of the Father in the cloud exhorts us to "Listen to Him". What did the disciples make of this experience? Or indeed what can we ourselves make of it today? It could be said that the three disciples, that day, got a glimpse of heaven where the dead are alive and Jesus is resplendent in glory.

The disciples would soon have to leave the mountain, come back down to earth and head to Jerusalem where they would have to face the horror of Jesus' Passion and Death. On the mountain, Jesus was preparing them for this event by giving them a message of hope to hold onto no matter what was to come in the future. His Death would lead to Resurrection. This message of Jesus was endorsed by the Father with the words: "Listen to Him". This message is at the heart of our Christian faith. As we currently struggle with battling the Covid-19 pandemic, it could be said that our faith is being severely tested like Abraham's in the first reading, but the Gospel story of Transfiguration assures us there is always Christian hope. After every Cross comes Resurrection. (*Father Patrick Conroy*)

Pause for a few moments of silent reflection

Children's Activity

Find in the Bible, the story of the Transfiguration of Jesus – Mark: 9:2-10. Read the story and draw a picture of it.

Ritual Action

Place the daffodils and the picture of Jesus in the prayer space. After you do so, take a little time to try to see in them something of God himself. Slowly, read aloud either of the following poems:

Earth's crammed with heaven,
And every common bush afire with God;
But only he who sees, takes off his shoes,
The rest sit round it and pluck blackberries,
And daub their natural faces unaware. - Elizabeth Barrett-Browning

The Lord will always walk with you
Along life's blessed beach,
His footprints there beside your own,
Always within reach.
Two sets of footprints, side by side,
From dawn to setting sun,
Yet there may come a day, my child,
When you'll see only one.
But do not think the Lord has left you -
Nothing could be more wrong.
It's just that he has picked you up
To carry you along. – Unknown

Intercessions

We take a moment to bring before God our needs and the needs of the world at this time.

Lord, grant us a heart more open to the glimpses of your presence in the beauty of the world around us. (pause)

Lord, in your mercy. Hear our prayer.

We pray for a greater appreciation of Jesus, resurrected and present among us. Help us to recognise him as God's beloved son and listen to his word. (pause)

Lord, in your mercy. Hear our prayer.

We pray for those who suffer pain or want of any kind. May they experience God's presence in their suffering and hope in their hopelessness. (pause)

Lord, in your mercy. Hear our prayer.

Add your own intercessions here. (pause)

Lord, in your mercy. Hear our prayer.

Our Father ...

Prayer (pause)

Father, be with us in these first days of our Lenten pilgrimage of spiritual and personal renewal. Strengthen us for the journey and walk with us on the way. Through Christ, Our Lord. Amen

Blessing

The Lord bless us and keep us; The Lord make his face shine upon us and be gracious to us; The Lord turn his face toward us and give us his peace both now and forever. Amen

In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen

Call to Action

St Jerome said "Ignorance of the Scriptures is ignorance of Christ" (*Commentariorum in Isaiam*) – why not begin to read the Bible more – start with a Gospel. This week you might also stop to look and see God's presence in the beauty of the natural world around you.



Online Celebration of the Eucharist



Before the broadcast begins:

- Gather with other members of your household, if you can.
- Light the candle in your prayer space. Place a picture of Jesus and some flowers nearby.

During the broadcast look out for the following:

- The priest will wear **purple vestments** today as a sign that we are celebrating a penitential season.
- For the Season of Lent the **Gloria** and **Alleluia** are omitted.
- The Readings for this Sunday focus on faith and obedience to God. In the **First Reading** Abraham has his faith severely tested. He is asked by God to sacrifice his only son. God rewards him for his courage and faith by sparing his son and making him the father of many nations. The **Psalm** speaks of trusting in God “even when I said: “I am sorely afflicted.” In the **Second Reading** God does not spare His own Son but sacrifices Him for the salvation of the world. The Son willingly lays down His life in obedience. In the **Gospel** we hear the familiar story of the Transfiguration of Jesus on the mountain accompanied by three of his disciples.
- At communion time make an Act of **Spiritual Communion**. Invite Jesus to visit your heart, take some time to truly welcome his divine presence. Let him speak to you – what is he saying? – “listen to his word”.

Take away ...

In the week to come – where might I seek and find God?



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