

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.

Third Sunday of Lent

7th March 2021

An aerial photograph of the Temple in Jerusalem, showing the large courtyard and the central building with a golden roof. The surrounding city of Jerusalem is visible in the background.

Today, the Third Sunday of Lent brings us to almost the half-way point in our Lenten Pilgrimage. In the Gospel, we get a rare glimpse of Jesus being angry. He is angry because due reverence was not given to the sacredness of the Temple in Jerusalem. “Take all this out of here and stop turning my Father’s house into a market”. (Jn. 2:15) There follows a tense moment with the Jews. After which, Jesus begins to sense his impending death and speaks of resurrection. This Sunday affords us an opportunity to reflect on what clutters and desecrates our hearts and our lives making them less free and less capable of loving God and others.

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 at hand a small empty box.

As we begin ...

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

Let us pray (pause)

Heavenly Father, author of every mercy and of all goodness, who in fasting, prayer and almsgiving have shown us a remedy for sin. Look graciously on this confession of our lowliness that we, who are bowed down by our conscience, may always be lifted up by your mercy. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, for ever and ever. **Amen**

Let us listen to God's Word ...

John 2:13-25

Jesus went up to Jerusalem and in the Temple, he found people selling cattle and sheep and pigeons, and the moneychangers sitting at their counters there [...]. He drove them all out of the Temple, cattle and sheep as well [...] and said to the pigeon-sellers, "Take all this out of here and stop turning my Father's house into a market". The Jews said, "What sign can you show us to justify what you have done?" Jesus answered, "Destroy this sanctuary, and in three days I will raise it up." [...] Jesus was speaking of the sanctuary that was his body, and when Jesus rose from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this, and they believed the scripture and the words he had said.

Let us reflect ...

In contrast to Jesus' Temple visit at the age of twelve, when his parents found him in discourse with the Elders, today's Gospel describes a different scene. Imagine Jesus' disgust on finding his "Father's House" used as a market where people sold sheep, cattle and pigeons while moneychangers sat at counters. We learn that Jesus was angry and ordered those irreverent people out. Jesus knew the Temple as home to the tablets of stone on which the Ten Commandments were written. They were kept there in the Ark – the Holy of Holies. It was inconceivable that any Jew would desecrate this special place, so Jesus ordered the traders out, warning them to stop turning his "Father's House" into a market.

The Jews asked, "What sign can you show us to justify what you have done?" Jesus' reply, "Destroy this sanctuary and in three days I will raise it up," must have stunned them as they did not understand it. We know that Jesus was foretelling his death and resurrection. What can we learn from today's Gospel? Are the temples of our hearts marketplaces where greed and worldly interests displace the love of God and neighbour? If so, let us turn again to the Lord's "message of eternal life". (*Sister Mary Corcoran RSM*)

Pause for a few moments of silent reflection

Children's Activity

Research the Temple in Jerusalem – draw a picture of it – see if you can name some of the areas of the Temple.

Ritual Action

Place the empty box in or near your sacred space. Pause for a moment, to mentally place in that box, some of the things that are cluttering your heart right now. Pray together this prayer of St Ignatius of Loyola:

**Take, Lord, and receive all my liberty,
my memory, my understanding, my entire will,
all that I have and call my own.**

You have given it all to me.

To you, Lord, I return it.

Everything is yours: do with it what you will.

Give me only your love and your grace.

That is enough for me.

Your love and your grace are enough for me. Amen

Intercessions

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

We pray for the gift of reverence, wonder, and awe before the presence of God. (pause)

Lord, in your mercy. Hear our prayer.

We pray for the commitment to bring to a good end, the work of personal and spiritual renewal we began this Ash Wednesday. (pause)

Lord, in your mercy. Hear our prayer.

We pray for a kind heart, openness to all and a willingness to help those in need, especially the poor and the marginalised. (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, walk with us on 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

Meditate on how what we traditionally call the corporal and spiritual works of mercy might mean for you in your life: **The Corporal Works of Mercy:** Feed the hungry, Give drink to the thirsty, Clothe the naked, Shelter the homeless, Visit the sick, Visit the imprisoned, Bury the dead. **The Spiritual Works of Mercy:** Admonish the sinner, Instruct the ignorant, Counsel the doubtful, Comfort the sorrowful, Bear wrongs patiently, Forgive all injuries, Pray for the living and the dead.



Online Celebration of the Eucharist



Before the broadcast begins:

- Gather with other members of your household, if you can.
- Light a candle in your prayer space. Place there an empty box – what is cluttering your heart? What do you need to get rid of? How can you make more space for God and others in your life?

During the broadcast look out for the following:

- The priest will wear **purple vestments** today a sign that we are still on our penitential Lenten journey.
- For the Season of Lent the **Gloria** and **Alleluia** are omitted.
- The central theme of the readings is God's relationship with us and our response to God. In the **First Reading** from the Book of Exodus we hear God proclaiming the right to be at the centre of our lives and naming the Ten Commandments which outlined the rules that God's people should follow. In the **Psalm**, we hear praise for God's laws. The **Second Reading** from St. Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians, speaks of a Crucified Christ, which makes sense only to those who have been "called". The **Gospel** tells the story of Jesus' anger at the irreverent activity taking place in the Temple in Jerusalem. In response to the anger of the Jews, he begins to speak of his own death and resurrection.
- The Eucharist will be celebrated as normal. At communion time make an Act of **Spiritual Communion**. Take some time to consider how much space there is in your heart for Jesus today? Is there clutter there that you need his help to dispose of? Are there things there that are turning your heart into something less than it should be? Pause for a moment, to mentally place in the empty box, some of the things that are cluttering your heart right now.

Take away ...

How much spiritual spring-cleaning do I need to do during the week to come? How will I do it?



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