



Ten ways to Celebrate Lent at Home

In the early Church Lent began as a period of intense preparation for those preparing for baptism. Today it is celebrated as a period of repentance and renewal for all Christians as they prepare to celebrate Easter.

1. Talk it over

On Ash Wednesday gather as a family or household for a simple meal (in keeping with the Lenten fast). Table topic: What does Lent mean to you and what practical steps will you take in your Lenten observance this year?

2. Set up a sacred space

Set up a sacred space in a corner of your home. Spread a purple cloth on a small table. Add a bible and a candle, a bean bag or chair nearby. Make it a restful and inviting place where members of your household can go, whether alone or in company, to read the scriptures.

3. Pool family funds

As a family or household adopt a Lenten project. This might be Project Compassion or a particular project such as the building of a hospital or school in an impoverished town. Invite household members to contribute a portion of their income or pocket money each week during Lent towards this cause. Give from your substance not just your surplus.

4. Hold simple meals

Come together for the simplest of meals during the week. Invite a different family member to prepare the meal each week. Discover joy and creativity in plain foods: bread, rice, water. Be mindful of those who hunger. Talk about how your Lenten plans are progressing.

5. Organize a family action

Pool your talents and resources to assist someone in your local neighbourhood. This might involve mowing the lawn of an elderly person or serving meals at a shelter for the homeless.

6. Make Sundays special

Sunday is the Day of the Lord. During Lent make an effort to celebrate it well, uncluttered by work and activities of your regular week. Include rest, prayer, Mass, time for family and friends.

7. Celebrate the saints

Buy a book on the saints (or search the internet) and read a short excerpt each night, perhaps just after dinner and while everyone is still seated at table. This needn't be a long reading, just enough to spark a few thoughts and comments. Close with a short prayer, calling on the chosen saint of that evening to pray with you.

8. Gaze upon the cross

Take a special cross or crucifix (the kind designed for hanging on a wall) and give it in a prominent place in your home. If you don't have such a cross, buy or make a rustic one out of two bits of wood. During Lent stop to touch or look at the cross as you go about your day. At family prayer time, bring it down and pray with it. Use it to bless or commission a member of your family before an important event.

9. Gather your friends

Invite some friends to your home for a couple of hours each week during Lent. Use that time to reflect and pray together. [See also: "Ten Ways to Hold a Lenten Group."]

10. Say sorry

Make forgiveness a natural part of your Lenten journey. Look for everyday ways to say 'sorry'—in word and gesture—for the ways we have hurt one another.

Helpful Hint

Translate terms like 'repentance' and 'renewal' into specific challenges tailored to your life situation. E.g., this Lent you might decide to work at an aspect of your marital relationship or pray each day for a particular intention. A Lenten commitment has more chance of success when it is specific and practical, challenging but achievable.

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