
FROM THE CHAPLAINCY



Dear Woodrose Parents

St. Josemaria taught us that we have to finish well what we have started. This teaching applies to everything that we do, including our observance of Lent. What we have started with Ash Wednesday four weeks ago will soon give way to the Holy Week and will culminate with the celebration of the Passion, Death and Resurrection of Our Lord Jesus Christ. Living and ending well the Lenten season will help bring about the conversion and renewal the Lord desires for each one of us. To end well the season of Lent and as our immediate preparation for the Easter season, we share with you some ideas of this short but insightful article written by Michele Chronister entitled *How to Finish Lent as a Family*.

How to Finish Lent as a Family

MICHELE CHRONISTER APRIL 2, 2019

I love doing artistic projects independently, but I find art projects with my children stressful. I am not very good at planning projects or special meals in advance (although I occasionally manage it). I find pictures and blog posts about other families' liturgical practices stressful. Yet, I love the Church year, and so do my children.

Maybe you are like me. Maybe you have a desire to celebrate the Church year with your family (especially Lent) but the thought of special recipes and projects feels overwhelming. How can you practice Lent as a family?

Don't Reinvent the Wheel

You don't need to look up special activities to do with your family for Lent. The Church has already given us special activities to do. Even if you only do the bare necessities, you will likely find that Lent is fruitful for you family. Can you give up some small thing as a family? Can you stop serving dessert after dinner during Lent? Can you pray an extra decade of the rosary (or even an extra Hail Mary!) together as a family every day? Pick something very simple and stick with it.



Ultimately, you may be able to work up to the threefold practice of Lent – prayer, fasting, and almsgiving. In the meantime, try to do what you can. Even a small sacrifice during Lent, or a small additional prayer added, makes a difference.

Rely on the Traditions of the Church

The Church has many Traditions and traditions around Lent. In the United States, parish fish fries are a staple of Lent. We recently took our daughters to their first parish fish fry and they loved it. It wasn't that they loved fish (they don't), but rather that there was something encouraging and edifying about eating with our parish family, who were also abstaining from meat on that Lenten Friday. Another tradition that our family has done in the past has been to go to the Stations of the Cross at our parish. Again, there is something encouraging about praying during Lent with your fellow parishioners.

With a toddler and two other young children (and a parish Stations of the Cross time that coincides with bedtime for them) we no longer go to our parish for the Stations of the Cross, but even praying them together at home is beneficial. In fact, the Stations of the Cross were originally only prayed in Jerusalem and praying them at our parishes is meant to connect us to that practice. Likewise, praying the Stations of the Cross in our homes can connect us to the prayer of the Church. (I recently wrote a short scriptural Stations of the Cross that takes about five minutes to pray together as a family.)

Participate in the Sacraments and Liturgies of Lent

Again, the Church is generous with her opportunities for prayer during Lent. Most parishes offer extra opportunities for the Sacrament of Reconciliation during Lent. How often do you currently receive this Sacrament? Can you make an effort to receive it more frequently during Lent?

Many parishes also offer additional opportunities for prayer and spiritual growth during Lent, such as additional daily Masses or Lenten days or evenings of reflection. Not everyone is able to attend these, but can you maybe attend one of these extra events? Or can you find an edifying spiritual talk or homily to watch online?

Read Something Beautiful

There are so many beautiful options for Catholic literature for both adults and children. A visit to any Catholic bookstore (or even searching for “Catholic books for kids” online) can give you plenty of options for faith focused books for children. For both adults and children, Sophia Institute Press has beautiful options.



HOLY WEEK SCHEDULE

at the
Chapel of Our Lady of the Rose

OPEN RETREAT
for ladies

April 15-17

CONFESSION
for families

April 18 at 10am-12nn
April 19 at 9:30am-12nn
April 20 at 9:30am-12nn

But we also can't underestimate the power of a good story in turning our hearts (or the hearts of our children) to God. Reading through the Chronicles of Narnia (ending with The Last Battle and its foreshadowing of heaven) would be a beautiful way to stir children's hearts (or your own!) to a deeper faith this Lent. Catholic literature is a broad category, with many narratives whose themes point the way to Christ. Sigrid Undset's Kristin Lavransdatter trilogy is steeped in themes of conversion and is filled with Catholic culture. Willa Cather is always an excellent option (especially the books in her Prairie Trilogy or Death Comes for the Archbishop), as is Graham Greene (especially The End of the Affair and The Power and the Glory).

Good literature, like all beautiful things, points us to heaven. Adding in some good literature and beautiful Catholic books into your Lenten reading life will help to better align your desires to God's.

Don't Be a Perfectionist

Lent is not about perfection in our eyes. It is about perfection in God's eyes. God's view of perfect is very different than ours. Taking your Lenten family practices to prayer can help you to discern what God is asking of your family during Lent. Often, it is something much less complicated that we expect. It is easy to enter Lent with a goal-oriented mindset, but that's not what God wants for us during Lent. He wants our ongoing conversion.

Don't expect your Lent to be perfect. Simply give your family's Lent to God, and trust that he will make even the simplest practices fruitful ones.

