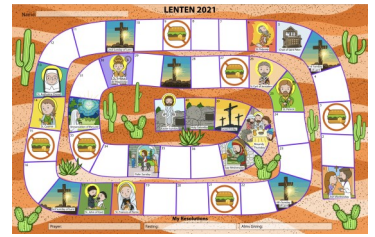


Lent

Teaching:

- Watch this video on [Lent](#) by Catholic Central.

Click on the picture for a kid-friendly Lenten Calendar:



Lent began last week with the celebration of Ash Wednesday and ends at sundown on Holy Thursday, the beginning of the Easter Triduum. Lent is 40-days long when we examine our spiritual lives to help us remember Jesus' sacrifice on the cross for us. The three pillars of Lent are: Prayer, Fasting and Almsgiving.

A Season of Prayer



The first pillar of Lent is prayer. If we want to be close to God, we need to pray regularly (this is the way we talk with God—you wouldn't be in a relationship with someone if you never talked to him/her). This Lent, try one of these options: start a [family prayer box](#) (add prayer intentions and use them to pray as a family), add an extra 5 minutes of time for prayer each day, pray the [Rosary](#) as a family, go to Stations of the Cross at 5:30 pm (St. Clara-Wednesdays, St. Mary-Thursdays, OLOL-Fridays, Spanish at St. Mary-Fridays at 6:00 pm).

A Season of Fasting

Fasting is meant to help us empty ourselves (physically and spiritually) to better focus on God. There are only two days that we are required to fast as Catholics: Ash Wednesday and Good Friday. Fasting is one full meal and two smaller meals (that together do not equal a full meal) with no snacking.

How are Lent and pretzels connected? The pretzel is in the shape of arms folded in prayer. Pretzels also have very few ingredients and remind us of the simplicity we can return to in Lent. Check out this [super easy pretzel recipe](#) to make as a family this Lent.



A Season of Abstinence

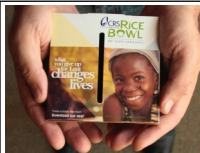


We **abstain** from meat on Ash Wednesday and the Fridays in Lent for two reasons: to unite us in solidarity with the poor and with the sacrifice of Jesus. For centuries, eating meat was a luxury for the rich, it was too expensive for the poor to eat on a regular basis. When we give up meat, we shouldn't be eating lobster instead. We should eat simply to remind us of those in the world who struggle to feed their families. We also give up meat to remind us of the sacrifice of Jesus' flesh on the cross on Good Friday.



Many people also give up (abstain) from something during Lent as a way to bring them closer to God. Ask yourself, what is getting in the way of your relationship with God? For some it's candy (every time one thinks of candy, say a prayer). For some it's television (find other ways to be connected as a family). For others instead of giving something up, decide to do something extra (reach out to someone who is lonely).

A Season of Almsgiving



Jesus said we must give to the poor. "...Amen I say to you, whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me." (Matthew 25:40) Giving alms might be difficult if we're on a tight budget, but most of us are better off than much of the world's population. As Christians, we are to see Jesus in everyone. The prophet Tobit says, "For almsgiving delivers from death and keeps you from going into Darkness. Indeed, almsgiving, for all who practice it, is an excellent offering in the presence of the Most High." (Tobit 4:10-11) Help the poorest of the world through the [CRS Rice Bowl](#) (check their website for great family information). Click [here](#) for a fun daily calendar to add coins to your Rice Bowl by counting shoes, light switches, etc. If you don't have a Rice Bowl, use another container or a Ziploc bag. When you drop it off at church after Lent, make sure it says "Rice Bowl". Did you know 75% of donations go to help the poorest in the world, 25% stay in our diocese to help here.