

# Family Lenten Guide

By Lorene Hanley Duquin

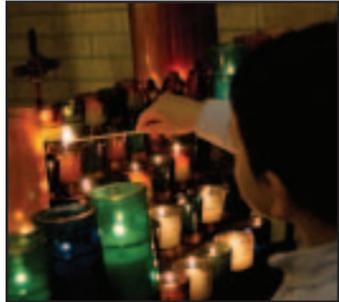
## What are you doing for Lent this Year?

Lent is a time for self-sacrifice, repentance and conversion of heart. Like Jesus, we enter a spiritual desert where we listen to God and respond by changing our lives.

What needs to be changed in the lives of your family members? Do you need to spend more time together? Do you need to pray more? Are there good intentions to be acted upon? Sacrifices to make?

Here are 10 Lenten ideas to help bolster your family's spiritual life:

1. Take the kids grocery shopping for the poor and bring the food to your parish pantry or local food bank.
2. Let children light a candle at church for people who are sick or suffering.
3. Sample Lenten foods such as hot cross buns or pretzels. If you're really adventurous, check the Internet for recipes and make your own.
4. Turn off the television and spend quality time together.
5. Read the lives of the saints to your children.
6. Encourage each family member to do something nice for someone every day.
7. Take the whole family to a Lenten program in your parish.
8. Clean out closets. Donate gently used items.
9. Google "Catholic Missions." Pick a mission and send money, clothing or supplies.
10. Volunteer as a family to help your parish. Whether it's cleaning the church or assisting with the food drive, it gives you a chance to serve together.



## PRETZELS

Pretzels originated in Europe during the Middle Ages. A monk was making unleavened bread for Lent with flour and water because eggs, milk and lard were not consumed as part of the Lenten fast. He twisted some dough into the shape of people praying with both arms folded across their chests. He called them "pretiola," the Latin word meaning "little reward," and gave them to children learning to say their prayers.



## ASHES

Ash Wednesday, the official beginning of Lent, is the day you can bring the family to church to receive ashes. Marking a person's forehead is an ancient symbol of ownership. Receiving ashes in the shape of a cross identifies you as a disciple of Jesus Christ. The ashes also serve as reminders of human mortality and the need for repentance.



## Lenten Prayers and Devotions

Begin breakfast with the prayer, "Lord, we offer you this day, and all that we think, and do, and say."

Say an Our Father together every day.

At dinnertime, let each family member mention one person or problem that they would like to pray for.

Attend Mass together.

Pray the Sorrowful Mysteries of the Rosary.

Abstain from meat for an extra day or two each week.

Pray the Stations of the Cross at your parish.

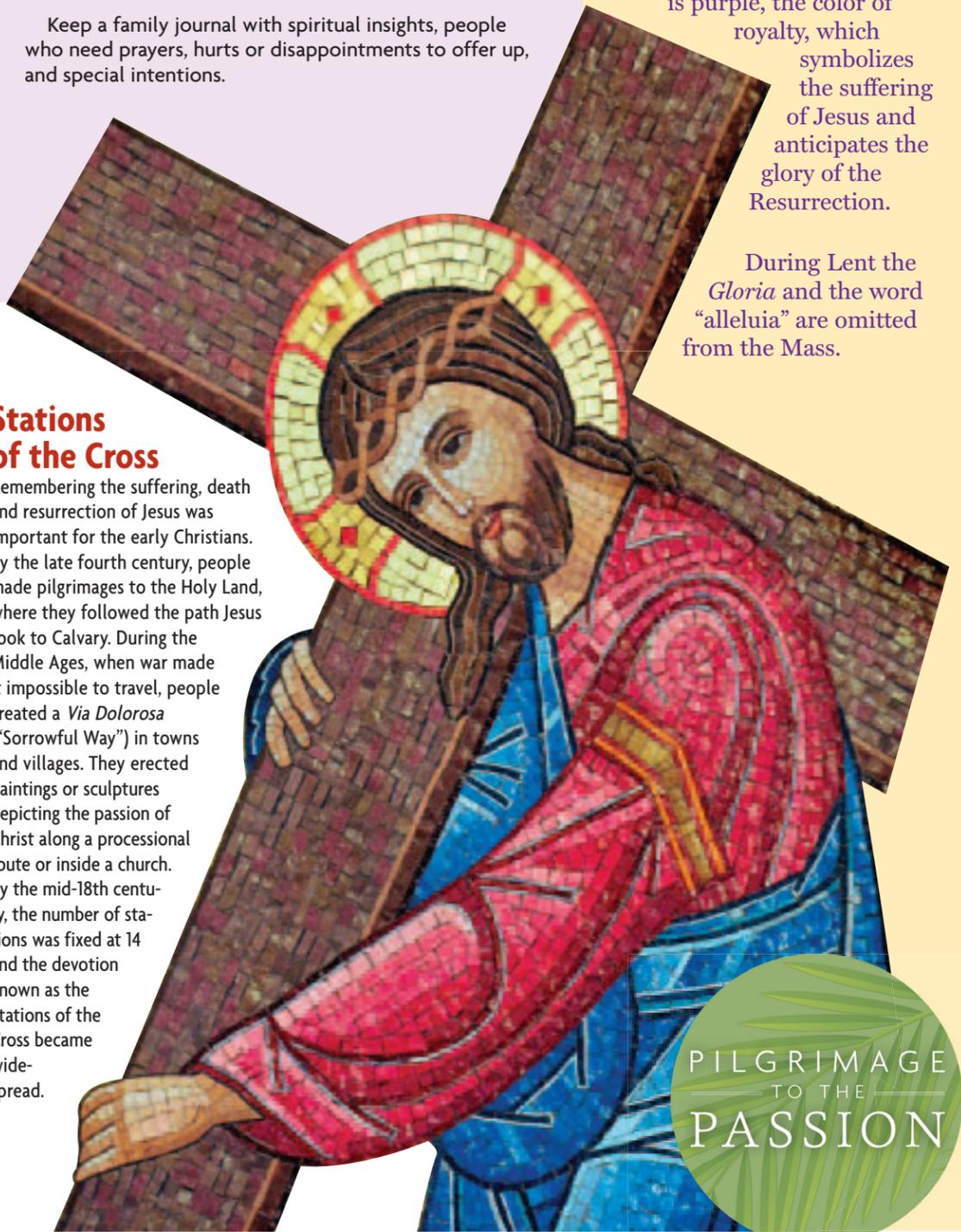
Attend your parish penance service together.

Keep a family journal with spiritual insights, people who need prayers, hurts or disappointments to offer up, and special intentions.



## Stations of the Cross

Remembering the suffering, death and resurrection of Jesus was important for the early Christians. By the late fourth century, people made pilgrimages to the Holy Land, where they followed the path Jesus took to Calvary. During the Middle Ages, when war made it impossible to travel, people created a *Via Dolorosa* ("Sorrowful Way") in towns and villages. They erected paintings or sculptures depicting the passion of Christ along a processional route or inside a church. By the mid-18th century, the number of stations was fixed at 14 and the devotion known as the Stations of the Cross became widespread.



## Lent Facts



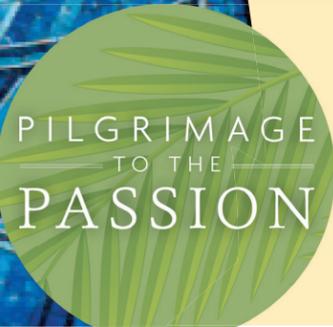
The word "Lent" comes from an Anglo-Saxon word which means "lengthen," a reference to lengthening days as spring approaches.

Lent lasts for 40 weekdays, beginning Ash Wednesday and concluding at sundown on Holy Thursday.

The remainder of Holy Week — beginning with the Mass of the Last Supper on Holy Thursday, and including Good Friday and Holy Saturday — are called the "Triduum," which means three days.

The Lenten liturgical color is purple, the color of royalty, which symbolizes the suffering of Jesus and anticipates the glory of the Resurrection.

During Lent the *Gloria* and the word "alleluia" are omitted from the Mass.



## FAQs About Lent

### WHY DO THE DATES OF ASH WEDNESDAY AND EASTER CHANGE?

Easter is celebrated on the first Sunday after the first full moon following the spring equinox. It can occur as early as March 22 or as late as April 25. Ash Wednesday is 46 days before Easter Sunday.

### WHERE DO THEY GET THE ASHES?

Palm branches from the previous Palm Sunday are burned. The ashes are



blessed, sprinkled with holy water and incensed.

### WHY DO WE HEAR TWO DIFFERENT THINGS WHEN RECEIVING ASHES?

It's because ashes have two different meanings. "Remember you are dust" helps us recall our mortality. "Turn away from sin and be faithful to the Gospel" reminds us we are disciples of Christ.



### HOW LONG MAY WE LEAVE THE ASHES ON OUR FOREHEADS?

They may remain all day. Wash them off before going to bed.

### WHY DO SOME PARISHES NOT USE WATER IN HOLY WATER FONTS DURING LENT?

It is a reminder that Lent is a "desert experience" during which we thirst for the baptismal water of Easter.

### WHAT IS LAETARE SUNDAY?

It is the halfway point in the Lenten season. Rose-colored vestments are used and there is a more joyful tone as we anticipate Easter.