

Pretzels and Lent

During Lent we practice fasting from rich foods as a sacrifice.
Pretzels contain very basic ingredients
and are considered to be a traditional food for Lent.

2 pkg yeast (2 ½ tsp)
1 ½ cups water
4 cups flour
1 tsp sugar
1 egg
1 tsp salt
½ cup coarse salt



Mix 2 packages of yeast with 1 ½ cups of warm water.
Add 4 cups flour.
Add 1 tsp salt.
Add 1 tsp sugar.
Mix, place dough on a floured surface, punch down, then fold.
Repeat punch/fold 10-20 times.
Make 6-8 small balls. Roll and shape. Brush with beaten egg.
Sprinkle with coarse salt.
Put in preheated 425° oven. Bake 12 minutes.

Making pretzels with your children can begin a discussion about making sacrifices for Lent.

Talk with your children about what they might give up during the season of Lent (or new healthy habits they want to begin) to help them strengthen their faith life with Jesus.

FUN FACT: Pretzels were created to be a Lenten food by monks in the Middle Ages and first shaped in the form of **praying hands**.

Family Activities For Lent





Ash Wednesday, the first day of Lent, is on Wednesday, March 5 this year!

On Ash Wednesday, Catholics attend a special service where ashes are applied to their forehead in the form of a cross. Ash Wednesday signals the beginning of Lent, our 40-day journey with Christ, that ends with the celebration of the Resurrection of Our Lord, Jesus Christ. This 40-day period (not counting Sundays) represents Christ's time of temptation in the wilderness where he fasted, was tempted, and relied on God the Father to sustain Him through prayer.

Ashes are a symbol of penance made sacramental by the blessing of the Church. The ashes that are used on Ash Wednesday come from the burning of the blessed palms from the previous year's Palm Sunday Mass. Wearing ashes on Ash Wednesday reminds us that the Lenten season ahead is a time of reflection, repentance and renewal which we achieve through prayer, almsgiving, and fasting/sacrifice.

Crown of Thorns

Make a crown of thorns from salt dough and wooden toothpicks with your children on Ash Wednesday [recipe below].



While making the crown, parents can explain to their children about sin and the suffering Jesus endured for our salvation. Lent is a time to examine our lives and ask for forgiveness for the things that we do that are wrong. It gives us a chance to make sacrifices in our lives as penance for our sins and helps us remember not to sin again.

Explain that each toothpick placed in the crown represents a good deed or sacrifice that each member of the family will be making during Lent, to be later removed when sacrifices or good deeds are accomplished. The idea is for the family to make enough sacrifices during Lent so that all the "thorns" will be gone by Easter. On Easter you can paint the crown gold and decorate it with gems to make it a crown for our risen King!

Salt Dough Ingredients

4 Cups Flour
1 Cup Salt
Water
Toothpicks

Directions:

- *Mix the flour and the salt & mix enough water to make a stiff clay.
- *Knead the dough until smooth.
- *Roll three long ropes and loosely braid them.
- *Form the braid into a circle and stick toothpicks loosely throughout the entire crown (do not put them in too deeply or they cannot be pulled out intact).
- *Bake at 350 degrees for an hour or until dry & light brown.

Finally, place your crown of thorns on a deep purple cloth in a prominent place so that you will remember your Lenten sacrifices!

Almsgiving

One of the important disciplines we practice during Lent is almsgiving. Alms are funds we set aside for the care of the poor. The money we collect during Mass and through Operation Rice Bowl is used to help the poor all over the world.

Your family can use a Rice Bowl as an opportunity to teach even the smallest child about Catholic Social Justice teachings.



Each time a family member goes without a treat - or forgoes dessert - and places money in the Rice Bowl box (or a small box decorated by the family to bring to the Church poor box/collection at Mass), they are learning about sacrificing for others. When Lent is over, you can continue this practice by encouraging children to put money in the box for the poor located in your local parish. [This is also a great opportunity to pull one of the "thorns" from your Lenten crown of thorns!].



Rising to New Life!

As Lent begins, help your children plant some crocus bulbs in a bowl of soil, covering them halfway. Leave them in a dark space for two months, making sure to keep them moist (this process is known as "forcing"). When the shoots appear, take them out and put them in a sunny location.

Don't forget to leave one bulb unplanted as a reminder of what they looked like before they "came to life!"

A Lenten Cross

This is an activity that can help create an atmosphere of prayer and thankfulness for all the good things we have in our lives.

Have children cut out crosses from cardboard (or have them pre-cut for them). Next, have them cut out small pictures from magazines of things they are thankful for and glue them on their crosses. They can choose whatever pictures they want and as many as they want. Then, once the project has been completed, encourage your children to tell you why they chose each of the pictures on their cross.



Explain to them that the reason they placed their gratitude on the cross was so that they would understand that we should also be very thankful for the sacrifice that Jesus made for us. This can lead to a discussion with older children about "Good" Friday.

Remind children how they can make Jesus a part of their everyday life just like all the other things they are thankful for.