

Making Lent “Great” for Your Family



What about Lent at home?

Lent is a time that we are invited to change our lifestyle in preparation for Pascha-Easter; Resurrection of Our Lord Jesus Christ. In this sense it is a preparation for something beyond itself. Lent is a period during which the Church calls on us to do more and to do less — more prayer, more worship, more good works; less T.V., less eating, less entertaining. In a real sense we are asked to slow our lives down so that we might open them up more fully to the opportunities God presents us to be with Him.

Planning for Lenten activities is important

With the beginning of Lent, decide as a family what your Church Service schedule will be. Families do this all the time at the beginning of the soccer, football, or basketball season. Families look ahead to commit their evenings and weekends to the sport schedule. The school or coach demands it and the families do this. We do this for earthly rewards or to help our kids develop their sports skills. During the journey of the Great Fast-Lent, plan in advance that you will attend Wednesday evening Liturgy of Presanctified Gifts, or the Friday evening Akathist Hymn Service. This is a COMMITMENT towards heavenly rewards of peace and healing. Planning ahead what Services you will commit to is a way of setting your family’s Lenten journey with the life of the parish, right where it belongs.



Make a Commitment to Family Prayer at Home during Lent

Kids are more likely to feel at home at Church...if their home feels more like a Church. Lent is a great time to build your family Icon corner or to come together before your Icon corner in prayer. If we are singing Church hymns at home, our children will feel a familiarity when the hymns are sung at Church. Lent is a time to consider coming before the Icons instead of before the television.

Consider specifically incorporating the Lenten Prayer of St. Ephraim as a family. Each evening, following dinner, or before bedtime when everyone is together, gather at the family Icon corner and say the pray all together:

O Lord and Master of my life, keep from me the spirit of indifference and discouragement, lust of power, and idle chatter. (prostration)



Instead, grant to me your servant, the spirit of wholeness of being, humble mindedness, patience, and love. (prostration)

O Lord and King, grant me the grace to be aware of my sins, and not to judge my brother or sister. For You are holy, now and forever and ever. Amen. (prostration)

Make a Commitment on how you will Fast during Lent

As Christians, we fast from food to be able to fast from sin. And it is our sin that keeps us from experiencing God fully. This connection between how we eat and how we sin is what the Fathers of the Church are clear on. Essentially the more we indulge ourselves in whatever we want, the more we become enslaved to our desires, rather than free to love. Fasting rules for families is a personal thing. Each family will do it differently. Consider following the fasting guidelines of our Church. Consider what you did last year, and take a step further this year. Lent means letting go of control of our diet and giving this to God. Fasting is not just about food, but also about healing our souls. It is a challenge for us today, but like any sacrifices we make in faith, God's blessings that come from it are uncountable.

And Finally...

The goal of Lent is to experience God directly. Helping our children “get more out of Church”, means helping them experience God directly. Lent is a time for families to reopen themselves towards God, but it takes a commitment to open our families to the life in Christ and open our homes to God's saving Grace. The feast is there for us to partake of, but we can also walk right by. But God promises those who partake, that **“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled.”**

