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First Edition

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## Dedication

For Mary and Meghan

## Acknowledgments

I find myself, once again, indebted to Mama Mary  
for her continued intercession and work in my life.

Thank you to my husband, Bob, for his unflagging support and unconditional love.  
To Ann, Susie, and Ali, who made this book possible. Your swooping in and taking care of things was not only appreciated, it was invaluable. You inspire me with your love.

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and Walt Staples for their comments and suggestions on the early draft.

# Introduction

**E**aster might not seem as big a deal as Christmas, but the truth is, it's a BIGGER deal. Jesus rose from the dead!

Before we get to the joy of Easter, however, we have a lot of preparing to do, a sort of spring cleaning of our souls. In the Church year, this time is called Lent.

Lent is the time we set aside before Easter to help us clear out the things that get in the way of our goal of eternal life in heaven. We have a lot of clutter and sin separating us from God.

For most of us, however, spending forty days—six long weeks—in a penitential mode is challenging, and it's easy to lose steam and give up on the whole thing.

This booklet will help you and your family focus each day on the three pillars of Lent: prayer, fasting, and almsgiving. Each day offers a Scripture quote from the Sunday gospel readings, a brief reflection, a suggested activity on behalf of others, a suggested fast for the day, and a prayer.

I hope your family can use this booklet to deepen your faith life during Lent. Try to plan a quiet moment each day, and spend it together as a family. Whether you work together or individually, whether you are able to complete everything or just a portion for each day or each week, I pray that at Easter you find yourself more firmly rooted in your faith and ready to welcome the risen Jesus.

After the chocolate bunnies are long gone and the Easter eggs are forgotten, we still have before us our risen Savior. He is the reason for our alleluias, and he should be the hope we hold on to long after this book is put on the shelf.

May your Lent be filled with blessings this year, and may your Easter be more joyful due to your time spent together throughout the days ahead. Our reward, we hope, will be eternal life with Jesus in heaven.



—Sarah Reinhard



**Take care not  
to perform  
righteous  
deeds in order  
that people  
may see them;  
otherwise, you  
will have no  
recompense  
from your  
heavenly  
Father.**

**MATTHEW 6:1**

# Ash Wednesday

**Think** If you receive ashes on your forehead today, you will likely hear, “Remember you are dust, and to dust you shall return.” This reminds us that we are not made for this world. We are made for the world to come. Our goal is to live so that we can get into heaven.

Think about some of the things that come between you and God. Do you have a hard time getting along with a certain person? Do you find it hard to pray regularly? Is there an area in your life that needs to be improved?

This week, think of ways you can sacrifice, whether it's doing something extra or fasting from something you like. As you do so, remember today's Scripture reading and avoid calling attention to yourself.

**ACT** As we focus on the dust we came from and the dust we are going to become, make a card in memory of a loved one who has died. Say a prayer for that person. Share the card and the prayer with someone who also loved the person.

**Fast** Today is one of the two days of fast and abstinence in the Church year. For most people, this means no meat and eating less than normal. Besides fasting, try to remember in some way those who have less than you do.

Many children around the world go to bed hungry, so hungry they cry themselves to sleep. Mothers in some places in the world feed mud to their children to stop the hunger pains. When you feel hungry today, say a prayer for those children, and then try to keep from eating just a little while longer if you can.

**PRAY** *Jesus, sacrifice is hard. I'm used to getting what I want when I want it. When I feel hungry today, help me to remember just how much you love me.*

# Thursday

## AFTER ASH WEDNESDAY



**Think** Today's Scripture reminds us of the importance of keeping quiet about our generosity. "Alms" is usually a money donation, but it can also be food or other items given to the poor.

Sometimes it's so easy to tell everyone what we're doing and how we're sharing. You might intend to be a good example to others or encourage them, but it can be tricky. Today's Scripture tells us not to brag or make a big deal out of it. It says that when others tell us what a good job we're doing, we have already received our reward.

The alternative is to keep quiet about the good works we do or the gifts we give. This isn't always as rewarding right away, but God sees and knows what we're doing.

One way to practice this is to do small acts of charity. Help your little brother tie his shoes but don't point it out to your mom. Clean your room, sweep the floor or pick up the yard, and keep quiet when someone notices it's been done. You can work on this during Lent and form a habit that stays with you all year long.

It's not easy. Sometimes it doesn't even feel all that good. But these sacrifices will make you strong and prepare your soul for the work ahead of you in life.

**When you  
give alms,  
do not blow  
a trumpet  
before you, as  
the hypocrites  
do in the  
synagogues  
and in the  
streets to win  
the praise of  
others. Amen,  
I say to you,  
they have  
received their  
reward.**

MATTHEW 6:2

**ACT** Do you have lunch money or some saved allowance? Give all or part of it to a food pantry or soup kitchen.

**Fast** Give your dessert—or the favorite part of your snack—to someone else.

**PRAY** *Jesus, I don't like sacrifice. I'm not used to it. Walk beside me and help me not to feel discouraged when I fail or when I forget and tell everyone what I've done. Guide me to be closer to you.*



**When you pray, go to your inner room, close the door, and pray to your Father in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will repay you.**  
**MATTHEW 6:6**

# Friday

## AFTER ASH WEDNESDAY

**Think** Though we aren't necessarily supposed to be secretive about our prayer life, today's Scripture reading tells us we should have a private prayer life.

Think of going to your inner room as sharing your closest secret with your best friend, and that friend is Jesus. You don't have to call attention to the fact that you're praying, but you should DO it. Lent is a good time to start a prayer practice. When Easter comes, you will have prepared yourself in the best way possible: time spent with God in prayer, just the two of you.

When we put ourselves in the limelight and make ourselves seem holy and pious, we get our reward when others are impressed. When we pray and carry out our devotions in secret though, we receive a far better reward from our heavenly Father.

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**ACT** Pray "Jesus, have mercy on me" each time before speaking to someone today.

**Fast** Every time you eat today, pray for those who are hungry.

**PRAY** *Jesus, I want to spend time with you. Give me the strength and perseverance to form a habit of prayer this Lent and to spend that time with you.*

# Saturday

## AFTER ASH WEDNESDAY

**Think** Fasting is hard, whether it's a food-related fast or something else we're giving up. It's even harder not to mope or complain about the fast.

We're told in today's reading not to look gloomy, which must mean we should act normal or even CHEERFUL when fasting. So in addition to doing something hard, we're challenged to go above and beyond by being happy about it!

The first four days of Lent are some of the hardest. We're settling into our Lenten practices and perhaps finding that things are going to be more difficult than we thought. In the midst of this, we're supposed to smile and not just ACT like we are enjoying ourselves, but we're actually to do so.

As we move into the first full week of Lent, think of sacrifices you can make. As you work toward making those sacrifices, try to build a spirit of joy in yourself.

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**ACT** Pray a special prayer—maybe even a decade of the rosary—for someone who made you angry this week.

**Fast** Do not complain today.

**PRAY** *Jesus, fasting isn't easy. And Lent is so long! Hold my hand and help me remember that the sacrifices I make for you are worth the effort.*



**When you fast, do not look gloomy like the hypocrites. They neglect their appearance, so that they may appear to others to be fasting. Amen, I say to you, they have received their reward.**

**MATTHEW 6:16**

# First Sunday

**He fasted for forty days and forty nights,  
and afterwards he was hungry.**

**MATTHEW 4:2**

**Think** We're still at the beginning of Lent, but we already have a little break: it's Sunday, after all! On Sundays, even during Lent, we commemorate the resurrection of Jesus by our participation at Mass.

This week we'll consider fasting in a special way, though it's still part of our whole Lenten journey. This week's readings consider Jesus' own time of fasting, when he went into the desert after being baptized by John the Baptist.

Jesus was tempted, and we should expect that we will be too. You might fail and then wonder if there's any reason to keep going. But there is! Sometimes the important part of a fast isn't being perfect but getting back on track after a slip and continuing with it.

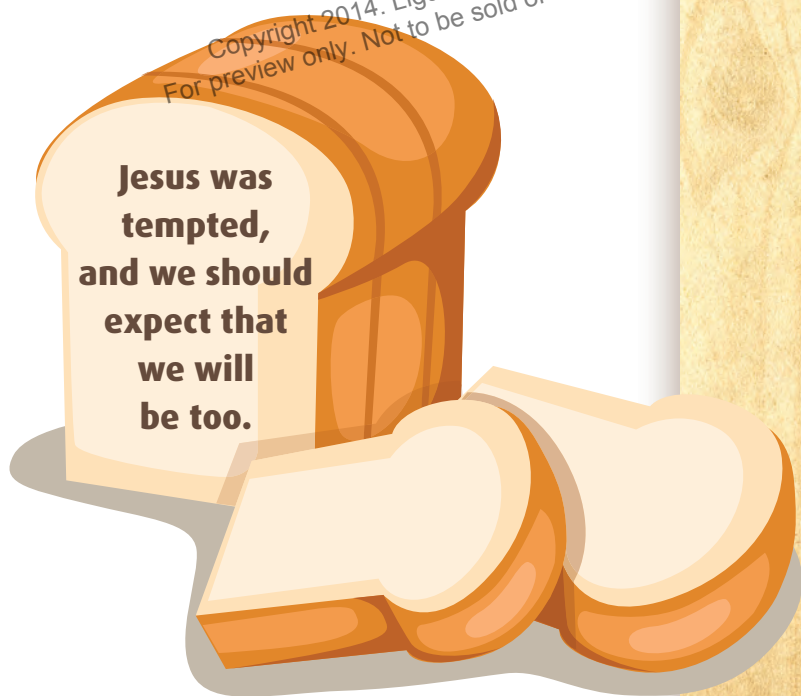
Jesus gives us an example of how we should respond to temptation. With each of his responses, he uses the Word of God. When we find ourselves tempted, let's remember to turn to God as Jesus did.

# ay of Lent

**ACT** Get up early and make (or help make) breakfast for your family.

**Fast** Skip second helpings at meals today.

**PRAY** *Fasting is hard, Jesus, but I know you'll walk beside me as I struggle. Remind me to keep your Word in my heart to pull me up when I fail.*



**FAST**



# Monday

**FIRST WEEK OF LENT**

**He said in reply, “It is written: ‘One does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes forth from the mouth of God.’”**

**MATTHEW 4:4**

**Think** Jesus gives us something to think about in his response to the devil. When tempted with bread, he answers that we should live “by every word that comes forth from the mouth of God.”

God’s Word—Scripture—is food for our soul. Saint Jerome once said that ignorance of Scripture is ignorance of God. We can see this as our cue to take the Bible to heart.

One of the ways in which God speaks to us is through the Bible, so we need to be familiar with what it says.

We fill ourselves with plenty each day—food, TV, talk, play. Let’s not forget to fill ourselves with God too, through prayer and spending time with God’s Word.

**ACT** Pick a Bible verse—maybe today’s selection above—and make it into a decorated sign. Give or send it to someone who could use a reminder of God’s Word.

**Fast** Don’t watch any TV today.

**PRAY** *I want to be a good friend, Jesus. Open my heart to your Word.*



## Tuesday

### FIRST WEEK OF LENT

**Think** Many things distract us each day: our favorite TV show, a fun computer game, a conversation on the phone. We have lots to keep us busy and many ways to spend our time.

We must not forget, though, that the most important thing in our lives is God. It's all too easy to begin to treat all those other things as more important than God.

Today, Jesus' words remind us that our worship should be reserved for God alone. Our service to God can take the form of things we do for the people in our lives, including our family and friends.

What are you putting before God? Are you behaving in a way that shows you're letting something take precedence over your Lord and Savior? What can you do to change how you are living?

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**ACT** Recognize someone who has put God first with his very life by writing a thank-you letter or making a thank-you card for a priest in your life.

**Fast** Give up play time to do at least two helpful chores around the house.

**PRAY** *Jesus, show me how I can serve you better and make you number one in my life.*

## FAST

**At this, Jesus said to him, "Get away, Satan! It is written: 'The Lord, your God, shall you worship and him alone shall you serve.'"**

**MATTHEW 4:10**

## FAST

**He remained in the desert for forty days, tempted by Satan. He was among wild beasts, and the angels ministered to him.**

MARK 1:13



## Wednesday

FIRST WEEK OF LENT

**Think** When we start to think that Jesus couldn't possibly understand our lives, we should remember today's reading. In the desert, Jesus faced temptations just like we do every day. He was hungry and lonely, and maybe even scared.

Jesus knows how we struggle: he faced a more rigorous fast than most of us will ever undertake. In becoming an actual human being, God proved his love. He experienced the pain we face in our lives, so we can turn to him, confident that he understands.

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**Fast** Don't eat anything sweet today.

**PRAY** *Jesus, hold my hand as I struggle and help me persevere in the challenges I face in my life.*



# Thursday

FIRST WEEK OF LENT

**Think** Today's Scripture reminds us that Jesus was human. Jesus' hunger was self-imposed. He chose to follow the Spirit into the desert and fast. This can inspire us as we journey through the forty days of Lent.

Many times when we are hungry—whether physical hunger or just longing for something we wish we could have—we are not easy to get along with. How can we change our attitudes so that we are a joy to those around us, no matter how hungry we are? This can be the gift we give to Jesus and to those we love this Lent.

**ACT** Help make dinner in whatever way you can, and give your help cheerfully.

**Fast** Don't eat between meals today.

**PRAY** *I want to be hungry for YOU, Lord. Help me to follow your lead this Lent and journey toward new life in you.*

**FAST**

**Filled with the holy Spirit, Jesus returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the desert for forty days, to be tempted by the devil. He ate nothing during those days, and when they were over he was hungry.**

LUKE 4:1-2

## FAST

**The devil said to him, “If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become bread.”**

**LUKE 4:3**



## Friday

### FIRST WEEK OF LENT

**Think** Jesus could have done whatever he wanted when he was faced with the temptations in the desert. Even as hard as it was for him, as hungry and grumpy as he probably was, he didn't give in to the temptations, and he didn't strike down the devil, either.

Ask Jesus to help you when you find yourself tempted to fight or argue. Call on him when you find yourself yelling or screaming at someone out of frustration. Turn to him, lean on him, when your anger boils inside you and you think life is just too hard.

The devil taunted Jesus and was every bit as annoying and frustrating as any person in your life is for you. Jesus shows us how to deal with the temptations in our lives.

Spend time with Scripture, learning the Word of God and his teachings. Listen for God's voice. Obey what he's telling you.

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**ACT** Respond the first time you're asked, every time you're asked.

**Fast** Do not yell or raise your voice in anger or frustration today.

**PRAY** *O Jesus, I get SO angry and frustrated. Help me to draw my strength from you and follow in the way of peace.*



## Saturday

FIRST WEEK OF LENT

**Think** It's easy to wonder sometimes if the people around us enjoy testing us. It's easy to get frustrated at them and to forget that Jesus reminds us not to test God. Have you ever thought of the ways you might be testing God?

Do you pick on your siblings or other kids in your life? Do you obey your parents right away? Are you loving to others, even when they're not being loving to you?

God loves each of us, and though it might seem hard to believe when we're in the midst of a bad day, each of us is a gift to one another. Try today to appreciate those you love and say a special prayer for them.

**ACT** Show your love in prayer. Begin a prayer chain—in a notebook or using strips of paper—for your family's intentions. Every day for the rest of Lent, add a link for the special prayers you say for them. Ask your family members if they have anything special they would like you to remember in your prayers.

**Fast** Give up some of your play time to pray all or part of a rosary.

**PRAY** *Jesus, thank you for the gift of the people in my life. Please bless them and help me to be grateful for having them in my life.*

**FAST**

**Jesus said to him in reply, "It also says, 'You shall not put the Lord, your God, to the test.'"**

LUKE 4:12

# Alleluia!



**Welcome Risen Jesus offers daily reflections and thoughts that encourage families to**

**THINK \* FAST \* ACT \* PRAY**

based on words from Scripture. These exercises are designed to engage your household during the Lenten season by tying Scripture and reflection to your daily life. With each passing Sunday, your family's

faith will grow stronger, and the true meaning of this season will be discovered.



In the midst of life on a farm with kids and critters, Catholic wife and mother **Sarah Reinhard** blogs about marriage and motherhood, book talk and rambling remarks, and observations and distractions on [SnoringScholar.com](http://SnoringScholar.com).

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