

# Hello, dear parent...

If you find yourself overwhelmed by the thought of all you have to do during Lent, this little booklet is for you. Or, maybe Lent isn't registering as all that important for you this year and you're kind of neutral on it. Or maybe, just maybe, you're excited by the season's possibilities and wondering how to help your family make the most of it. No matter where you are, you've come to the right place. We'll take just a few minutes each day to help you and your family grow a little more in understanding and love of God, each other, and the world around you. It begins with a short quote from each day's Mass reading—a perfect place to start any day! Then there's a reflection to help you apply the reading to your busy life, followed by a simple prayer to say with your family and an activity you can try together. As a mom and a grandma, I've stumbled and bumbled my way through a goodly number of Lents, and I'll share what I've learned—and am still learning—with you. I write with all the love and respect in the world for you and your family—and the many challenges we all face. So be assured of my prayers as we all grow together in love this season.

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## FEBRUARY 14 | ASH WEDNESDAY

Joel 2:12–18 ■ 2 Corinthians 5:20–6:2 ■ Matthew 6:1–6, 16–18

# True Love Day

Ash Wednesday and Valentine's Day on the same day? Whose brilliant idea was that? But I guess if we had a day to remind us about Jesus' words in the Gospel, it would be today, when we make big shows of love with goofy helium balloons and fancy cards and more candy than our kids see in a year. But love—real love— isn't a day or a card or even ashes. Love is the sacrifices no one sees you making for your family. It's the ways you give selflessly and receive graciously. It's the midnight diaper changes, early morning alarms, arguments in the car, after-dinner hugs, and sleepy bedtime stories. Love is just how you live. That goes for Lent too. We sacrifice, give, and pray because that's how we live our love for God. Ready? Let's go!

**FAMILY PRAYER** | Have one person read the prayer aloud; the rest of the family can respond after each line: *Jesus, we love you!*

*Jesus, help us grow in love for you through our actions...*

*Help us grow in love through our prayer...*

*Help us grow in love through our whole lives... AMEN.*

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**FAMILY ACTIVITY** | Make valentines for Jesus by cutting cross and heart shapes out of paper. Write your family's Lenten commitments on them (praying, fasting, etc.). Everyone can decorate and sign them with love.

*"And your Father who sees in secret will repay you."*

MATTHEW 6:4

# Kid Teachers

In 2021, Pope Francis invited children to share their thoughts for the Vatican’s annual Way of the Cross meditation. It was an unusual request. Normally, popes and theologians supply these reflections, but this was an unusual time—the height of the pandemic. The kids didn’t hold back, sharing honestly about times they failed to love or judged others unfairly. They shared joys and sorrows. One child wrote about the frightening moment his grandfather was taken away in an ambulance: “I prayed for him every day. That way I was able to be there with him during his final journey on this earth.” It’s a reminder that our kids often carry their crosses better than we do. What can your child teach you about this today?

**FAMILY PRAYER** | All respond after each line: *Be with us, Jesus.*

*Jesus, help us carry our crosses as you carried yours...*

*Help us grow in love...*

*Remind us that you are always with us, in happy and sad*

*times... AMEN.*

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**FAMILY ACTIVITY** | To read the kids’ reflections and prayers mentioned above, go to [vatican.va](http://vatican.va) and search: Way of the Cross 2021. You’ll get an index of messages by year. Find the 2021 meditations. Try reading and discussing one of the fourteen reflections together each day.

*“If anyone wishes to come after me, he must deny himself  
and take up his cross daily...”* LUKE 9:23

## Practice Reminders

I can't remember what my toddler was crying about, but he obviously didn't think he was getting through to me. So, pointing to the tears streaming down his face, he helpfully announced, "I'm cryyyiiing," just to make things clear. Sometimes I do the same kind of thing to God. I present my sacrifices, prayers, and almsgiving, hoping for some kind of reaction or reward. But there's nothing any of us can do to make God love us more than he already does. Our Lenten practices are meant to draw us closer to God and closer to the way he wants us to live. So, as we give up meat or whatever we sacrifice today, let's ask ourselves, what does God want me to see and learn here? How can this small sacrifice remind me of God's presence in my day?

**FAMILY PRAYER** | All respond after each line: *Teach us, Jesus!*

*Jesus, help us see the many ways you help and bless us today...*

*Give us the peace of knowing you are here...*

*Give us courage to act with love in your name... AMEN.*

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**FAMILY ACTIVITY** | Work together on a reminder system for Lenten practices. You could post the valentines you made on a family bulletin board or do a simple weekly, non-judgmental check-in. Talk about how it's going and what everyone is learning.

*"Why do we fast, but you do not see it?"*

ISAIAH 58:3

## Weekend Listening

The little guy had been playing quietly all morning until I announced it was time to get ready for Mass. Suddenly, his stomach hurt. “You’re fine,” I said hurriedly as I got his little brother ready. “You’re fine,” I said as we drove to church, proud of myself for standing my parental ground. But little guy was not fine, I learned later, as I held his head in the church restroom while he was being sick in the toilet. I’d been too wrapped up in my own affairs to really listen. Is there someone who needs your full attention right now? Make your sabbath delightful by putting aside your own interests for an hour or two and listening to what they have to say.

**FAMILY PRAYER** | All respond after each line: *Jesus, teach us to listen.*

*When someone is talking and we want to interrupt...*

*When someone is silent and we are uncomfortable...*

*When you speak to us... AMEN.*

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**FAMILY ACTIVITY** | Play a listening game like this one: Take turns telling a familiar story but throw in some things that aren’t quite right. No one can interrupt until the speaker finishes. Then everyone can say what the speaker got wrong—and right.

*If you call the sabbath a delight... If you glorify it by not following your ways, seeking your own interests, or pursuing your own affairs—Then you shall delight in the LORD. ISAIAH 58:13–14*

# Under the Radar

Luke's Gospel contains a long conversation between Jesus and the devil that's loaded with juicy details and vibrant images. We get stones, kingdoms, and the Temple rooftop. But this Sunday, we get Mark's version: just three words that are deceptively easy to miss: Tempted by Satan. Poof. Did that just happen? But isn't that what temptation is sometimes? We're not even aware it's there—until the moment we lash out in anger or return an insult or pass along gossip. Temptation can also be background noise—that low, angry murmur we've carried around for so long we've forgotten it's there. Lent calls us to address our temptations. We ask Jesus to reveal them for what they are, and we invite him to walk with us as we deal with them. Start that journey today, in whatever way it looks for you.

**FAMILY PRAYER** | All respond after each line: *Show us your ways, Jesus!*

*Jesus, you were tempted in the desert...*

*Help us when we are tempted...*

*When we fall, help us get up and come to you seeking forgiveness... AMEN.*

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**FAMILY ACTIVITY** | Read Luke 4:1–13 together and talk about how Jesus himself was tempted. Brainstorm practical ways you can overcome temptations by turning to Jesus. (Kids usually have great ideas for this.)

*[Jesus] remained in the desert for forty days, tempted by Satan.* MARK 1:13