

# First Week of Lent



## Blessing for a Lenten Meal

Gracious God,  
bless our Lenten meal—  
the food we eat,  
the words we share.  
Bless all of us gathered here  
with simplicity of heart,  
and moderation in all things.  
Give us thirst for the living water  
of your Spirit.  
Fill us with the hunger for justice.  
In this Lenten season,  
join us at our table  
as host, as friend, as family, and guest.  
Help us to prepare for the joyous feast  
of Easter.  
We ask this through Christ our Lord.  
Amen.

March 1, 2009

## The Time to Start Living Is Now!

The psalmist in today's Responsorial Psalm (25:4–5, 6–7, 8–9) confidently awaits the love and mercy of a God who faithfully enters into covenant, sends prophets to call the people to repentance, and mercifully forgives the people again and again. In today's Gospel (Mark 1:12–15), we hear Jesus begin his ministry with these words: "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news." This is a call to turn our lives around, believing that God can and will save us. The moment that all of creation has been waiting for has arrived. Time is fulfilled.

When people fall in love, every moment together is precious. Parents can watch their newborns for

hours. Love, before we start taking it for granted, is fascinating and transforming. We have also seen lives transformed in profoundly positive ways when someone receives a diagnosis of a life-threatening illness. Suddenly, every moment matters and is full of possibilities. Values are re-evaluated, dreams are honored, and words that should have been spoken years ago are said at last. Even bad news can become good news for us when we hear in it the call to start living our lives fully. With the coming of Christ, time is fulfilled. We pray, fast, and give alms during Lent to turn our lives around, so that we can begin to live lives transformed by the fullness of God's love.

# This Week at Home

## Monday, March 2

### A Balanced Life

Catholics 14 and older abstain from meat during the Fridays of Lent. In addition to this abstinence (denying oneself a particular food; namely, meat) we are encouraged to fast (limiting the quantity of food eaten). The early fifth-century monk, John Cassian, passed on the wisdom of the desert fathers and mothers: "Excesses meet. Too much fasting and too much eating come to the same end." A healthy, balanced approach to food is a good foundation for a life of virtue, charity, and prayer. Try eating simple meals (such as soup and bread) this Lent, with modest portions and no between meal snacking. Does moderate eating give more balance to other areas of your life?



## Tuesday, March 3

### Almsgiving

Contributing to Operation Rice Bowl is a popular almsgiving tradition. Those who participate eat a simple meal one day a week, putting the money saved into the "rice bowl" collection box to be used by Catholic Relief Services (CRS) for the hungry of the world. Many parishes give out Operation Rice Bowl boxes to parish families during Lent, then donate the money collected to CRS. You can contact CRS by e-mail at [educationprograms@crs.org](mailto:educationprograms@crs.org) or by phone (1-800-222-0025).

## Wednesday, March 4

### Pretzels

These traditional breads are not difficult to make. *Brezel*, from *bracellae* ("little arms") are shaped in the form of two arms crossed in prayer. (Even food prays during Lent!) To make, dissolve 1 package active dry

yeast with 1 tablespoon sugar in 1½ cups lukewarm (100–110°) water. Mixture should bubble. Add, stirring: 1 teaspoon salt and 4 cups flour. Knead in ½ cup more flour, kneading on floured board for 8 minutes. Divide into pieces, roll into ropes and shape into pretzels. Let rise. Preheat oven to 425°. Place pretzels on a greased cookie sheet. Brush with mixture of 1 egg yolk and 2 tablespoons water, and sprinkle with kosher salt. Bake for 12 minutes, until golden brown.

## Thursday, March 5

### Teaching Justice

During Lent, we seek balance in our own lives, but also in the world. Our world is out of balance when great injustice exists. Lent is a perfect time to teach our children about the needs of others, and to get involved as a family in helping others. Go to Catholic Relief Services (CRS) Kids site ([http://crs.org/kids/index\\_flash.htm](http://crs.org/kids/index_flash.htm)) for resources that teach young children about the developing world, for coloring pages, recipes, and more, or call CRS at 1-888-277-7575.

## Friday, March 6

### From Anger to Amends

In today's Gospel reading (Matthew 5:20–26) Jesus goes beyond the commandment that speaks against murder to say that even if we harbor anger against someone or insult them, we have sinned. Even if we want to make an offering to God, if we are at odds with someone, we must go and seek reconciliation with that person before we make our offering. Lent invites us to amend our lives, one relationship at a time.

## Saturday, March 7

### Saints Perpetua and Felicity

Perpetua and Felicity were martyred in 203 AD in Carthage, Africa. Perpetua herself wrote part of the moving account of their martyrdom. Her dream diary, written while in prison before her martyrdom, is one of the earliest Christian women's voices to speak to us from the ancient world. You can read this work by going to <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/perpetua.html>. God revealed himself to Perpetua in spiritual dreams. What does God wish to reveal to you? Consider keeping a dream journal this Lent, keeping a pad and pencil near your bed and writing down the dreams you remember. Are any of them meaningful or revealing?



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