

Lent & Easter

A time of reflection, sacrifice and renewal

Family Lenten prayer guide
with liturgical devotions
and reflections

Outline for celebrating the
Easter Triduum

Easter-themed activities for
children



Caritas
AUSTRALIA

End poverty
Promote justice
Uphold dignity



Lent and Easter in Australia today

In our busy lives, the power of ritual – whether it is based on community practice, national days of remembrance and memorial or religious tradition – can offer us solace and healing.

All over the world, Easter is the high-point of the Christian calendar. After the six weeks of Lent, the 40 days which represent Christ's temptation in the wilderness, we come together to celebrate the grace and mercy of God through the power of Christ's resurrection.

Caritas Australia has prepared this practical guide to Easter and Lent, to offer a comprehensive outline of weekly prayers which can help you dive deeper into this Holy Season.



This guide will also equip you with:

- Prayer and reflection tools for families (p 4-7)
- A check-list for the Easter Triduum, beginning on Good Friday and ending on Easter Sunday (p 8-9)
- Easter activities for children (p10)

May you find, in this holy season, the silence and peace of Lent and, finally, the hope and joy of Easter and Christ's glorious resurrection.

Vatican City, October 16, 2019.
Pope Francis kisses a child as he leaves
at the end of the weekly general audience
in St. Peter's Square.
Image: Riccardo De Luca/ Shutterstock.com



A prayer for Hope in difficult times

Loving God, help us to find you once again.
Our search for you asks us sometimes to be still,
For You are all tenderness and compassion, slow to anger, rich in graciousness.
You call us 'fellow workers.'
May Lent renew our energy to serve your kingdom of justice and peace.

- Michael McGirr

Guide for the six weeks of Lent

Ash Wednesday | Wednesday, Feb 17

Reflection

Lent starts small. Over forty days it will grow into a movement to change the world and us with it. But at the outset it asks us to remember that we are dust. To wear ashes on our foreheads as a reminder to keep what goes on behind our foreheads in perspective. To take a moment of honesty. To go into our private places and shut the door and to discover the God who finds us in our secret places and brings us into the light.

Thought for families

How can we acknowledge the ways that we have all fallen short or can do better, be kinder or more considerate of the needs of others?

Practical tool to prayer

Attend a mass somewhere in your diocese and let the Ashes you wear today be a reminder of our deep need for God's love.



First Sunday of Lent | Sunday, Feb 21

Reflection

The reading for the First Sunday of Lent describes Jesus' temptation in the wilderness (Mark 1:12-15). Christ's devotion to the Love of his Father allowed him to overcome all the temptations of life, including power and pleasure. May we be reminded, as people of faith, to treat the world and its resources lightly, valuing people above things.

Thought for families

In communities where access to the basic necessities of life are sparse, including [Jamila's in Bangladesh](#), the struggle for survival which the Lord Jesus also experienced in the wilderness, is real and ongoing. Let's all stand in solidarity with our global brothers and sisters in poor or difficult circumstances by joining with them through prayer and almsgiving.

Practical tool to prayer

Lord God, strengthen us through the difficulties of everyday life – help us, through our Lenten abstinence, to find our truest satisfaction in the embrace of your mercy and not the passing pleasures of this world, Amen.

Mitrapur, India - February 26, 2020:
Ash Wednesday celebration in Mitrapur
village, West Bengal, India
Image: Zvonimir Atletic/Shutterstock.com

Second Sunday of Lent | Sunday, Feb 28

Reflection

The story of Jesus' transfiguration on a high mountain (Mark 9:2-10) is symbolic of the deep transformation that love can affect in all of us. By observing the three pillars of Lent: prayer, almsgiving and fasting, we can also be a source of shining light in our families and communities.

Thought for families

[Running water](#) in the Solomon Islands is a source of life that allows students to complete their educations without leaving campus. What are some other practical ways that you

can share acts of love and service to bring light and hope to your own community or communities around the world?

Practical tool to prayer

Lord God, your mercy is the hope that shines in the darkness. Through practical acts of kindness, help us to be a source of light for those who need it most. Amen.

*A general view of Camp 20 extension
Rohingya refugee camp in Cox's Bazar
region of Bangladesh in July 2020.
Photo: Caritas Bangladesh.*



Guide for the six weeks of Lent

Third Sunday of Lent | Sunday, March 7

Reflection

When Christ cast the money changers out of the temple (John 2:13-25), he demonstrated that the call to true love and justice rejects all exploitation and misuse of money in our economy. Today's Gospel is a reminder of the need to buy and sell in a way that protects the wellbeing of the earth and the dignity of everyone who is involved in the supply-chain.

Thought for families

As well as meeting our own needs, is there a way that our finances can help support the thriving and prosperity of our global brothers and sisters? Can we consume less by recycling or reusing existing products?

Practical tool to prayer

Lord God, there is so much unfairness in the world. The rich continue to take while the poor can barely access the basic necessities of life. We pray for our leaders, that they pursue an economy of justice for all people, without corruption, and with strong systems that keep greed and exploitation in check.

Fourth Sunday of Lent | Sunday, March 14

Reflection

In today's Gospel reading we read the way that Christ gave himself to a life and ministry of service. "God did not send his son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through him." (John 3:17)

Thought for families

By reading about the lives and saints of heroic figures of social justice, we can enter more deeply into a true understanding of Christian service. Begin with [these Caritas Australia resources](#) about the life of the courageous Bishop of El Salvador, Saint Bishop Oscar Romero. Like Bishop Romero, we are here to bring light into the world.

Practical tool to prayer

Lord God, your love restores the dignity of the broken-hearted. Please help us to lift each other up in our words and through our actions.



A South American crucifix from El Salvador.
Photo: Michael McGirr

Fifth Sunday of Lent | Sunday, March 21

Reflection

In today's gospel, Jesus foretells the pain and suffering of his passion and explains that "unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains just a grain of wheat; but if it dies, it produces much fruit." It is a reminder of the reality of suffering in our lives and the possibility of finding grace within it.

Thought for families

Sometimes it's not huge and heroic feats that give life and love to our communities, but small acts of service. What are some of the ways that we can give the gift of service to those who need our love and support?



Pay a COVID safe visit to a friend or family member in need



Help a struggling neighbour buy their groceries or perform a small task around the house



Prepare a simple meal for someone facing a difficult time or challenging circumstances

Practical tool to prayer

Lord God, give us the generous spirits and patient hearts we need to continue showing each-other compassion, even when we face the demands of our busy lives.

Palm Sunday, Sixth Sunday of Lent | Sunday, March 28

Reflection

On Palm Sunday, the Lord Jesus is carried into Jerusalem on a colt (a female donkey). The story (Mark 11:1-10/John 12:12-16) is one of joy as well as pain. The joy of our Lord's appearance as a king of peace and justice, signified by the palm branches laid at his feet, give us hope for a better world. Yet we also anticipate his terrible suffering that culminates in his crucifixion on Good Friday.

Thought for families

When we see goodness being overlooked and bad behaviour being rewarded, we are reminded of Jesus' Palm Sunday procession. Jesus was celebrated as a King but then cruelly mistreated soon afterwards. Let's always pursue social justice even when it is inconvenient or unfashionable.

Practical tool to prayer

Lord, in an unjust world, let us practice virtue in small ways and raise our voices to create a more just world in big ways.

Celebrating the Easter Triduum

A spiritual guide for contemplation

Good Friday | Friday, 2 April

Reflection:

The Friday before Easter Sunday is the day on which the Crucifixion of Christ is commemorated. It is traditionally a day of fasting and penance, being the day upon which Christ was tried, hurt with the crown of thorns, whipped, made to carry his cross and executed under the cruel Roman practice of crucifixion.

"He was spurned and avoided by people, a man of suffering, accustomed to infirmity, one of those from whom people hide their faces, spurned, and we held him in no esteem." (Isaiah 53:3)

Thought for families:

Social injustice looms large across the world. The crucifixion of Christ is proof of God's solidarity with us, his ability to overcome pain and injustice by submitting to it and ultimately, turning it to good; this is the great power of his love and compassion.

Practical tool to prayer:

Today as we contemplate the stations of the cross, we can prayerfully reflect on the ways that compassion, love and sacrifice give hope in the midst of despair and sorrow.

Holy Saturday | Saturday, 3 April

Reflection:

Our churches have been stripped as we quietly wait to celebrate the risen Lord.

Thought for families:

As we contemplate the silent tomb on Holy Saturday, we can also remember the many communities for whom Easter this year will be a cause of great difficulty and uncertainty.

Practical tool to prayer:

In marginalised communities globally, Easter is often a bitter-sweet time.



This statue of Christ was left damaged but standing after 269 were killed in the suicide bombing of a Sri Lankan church on Easter Sunday 2019.

Photo: Caritas Sri Lanka.

Easter Sunday | Sunday, 4 April

Reflection:

At the Easter vigil, as we light a candle, we hear the words 'May the Lord, rising in glory, dispel the darkness of our minds and hearts.' The risen Lord is the heart of all our hope, the fulfillment of all our longing. Alleluia!

Thought for families:

Let us try to make Easter special and give time to each other as we share the gift of new life. As we renew our baptismal promises, may we grow in faith and love.

Practical tool to prayer:

Read the story of Jesus in the garden (John 20:11-18). Mary did not recognise him. Our prayer this Easter is to recognise the face of Jesus in the world around us, especially in the poor we are called to serve.



This resource was brought to you by Caritas Australia. Be part of the biggest Lenten fundraising activity in the country, Project Compassion. Help build the Kingdom for which Christ died. Thanks to your generous support, in 2019-20 Caritas Australia reached 3.6 million people worldwide including Australia.



Why Easter bunnies?

The story of the Easter Bunny is thought to have become common in the 19th Century. Rabbits usually give birth to a big litter of babies (called kittens), so they became a symbol of new life. Legend has it that the Easter Bunny lays, decorates and hides eggs as they are also a symbol of new life.

Source: BBC.co.uk

Practical tools for families

- Plant an Easter Garden to mark this time of renewal. Use Autumnal plants such as peas, spinach, spring onion, garlic, lavender, parsley, rocket and sage.
- Decorate an Easter Egg Tree.
- Journey to Easter through Scripture.
- Attend an Easter Parade or organise an Easter hat parade in your own backyard.

Source: www.signupgenius.com



PROJECT COMPASSION BE MORE

"Aspire not to have more,
but to be more."

- Saint Oscar Romero

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