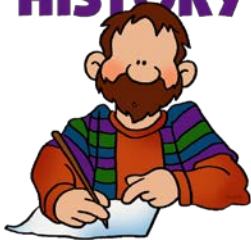


## MAKING LENT A HOLY TIME IN OUR SCHOOL

The following information might help us understand more about Lent and how to make it a holy time in our classrooms, in our schools and in our lives.

### HISTORY



Christians began to fast in preparation for Easter very early in the Church's history. St Irenaeus, who died in 203 AD, wrote to the pope about the different length of time that people spent fasting before Easter. The early Christians believed that Jesus spent 40 hours in the tomb and so some fasted for 40 hours, others for just a day and others for longer. It seems that it may have been a simple mistake in translation that led to 40 hours becoming 40 days. But we also know that the number 40 is a very special number in the bible and that Jesus spent 40 days fasting in the desert before he began his work for God. It probably doesn't really matter how they decided on the number and it is clear that by the end of the fourth century Christians were fasting for 40 days before Easter and we still do this today.

### A HOLY TIME?

The Church offers a lot of options to help us keep make Lent a holy time when we try and keep our hearts and mind fixed on Jesus, his love for us and his invitation to each one of us to live like he wants us to in everything we do and say. During Lent we are asked to Fast, Pray and Give Alms!

**FAST:** Many of us associate Lent with giving up something that we like or choosing to do something positive to help those who are not as lucky as we are. For many years Friday was a fast day for all Catholics and no meat was eaten. Friday was the day chosen because Jesus died on Good Friday. Although many Catholics still do this it is no longer common practice.

This Lent consider re instating **Meat Free Friday**. Talk to the pupils in senior classes about how they could fast from meat, choosing instead to bring lunch that includes vegetables, cheese, fruit or fish on the Fridays of Lent. Some of the pupils might talk about their decision on Ash Wednesday at an Assembly, Prayer Service or on a Thought for the Day over the Intercom and encourage staff members to fast with them. For junior pupils Friday might be a day when they are encouraged to fast from a treat that they really like.

#### Have a Meat Free Friday

Encourage senior pupils and staff to give up meat on Fridays for Lent

**PRAY:** In Lent we are asked to spend more time in prayer, helping our relationship with Jesus to grow stronger. Take time to revise traditional prayers during the weeks of Lent. This could be a whole school activity with every class being encouraged to pray at the same time each day. If your school has an intercom system, the prayers could be led over the intercom each day by a pupil or teacher. Create a **Prayer Sheet** for each week and send it home to encourage prayer at home.

**Week 1:** **Sign of the Cross, the Hail Mary and Glory be to the Father**

**Week 2:** **Our Father**

**WEEK 3** **Act of Sorrow, The Confiteor**

**Include the Morning Prayer for the infant classes.**

**Week 4:** **Pray a decade of the Sorrowful Mysteries of the Rosary** each day to honour Mary our Mother in preparation for the celebration of Mother's Day on the fourth Sunday of Lent.

**Week 5:** **Teach the response to the Stations of the Cross and pray three of the Stations each day.**

#### **PRAY TOGETHER**

Make a commitment to pray together as a school community during the weeks of Lent

**GIVE ALMS:** The Trocaire Box will arrive in every classroom during the first week of Lent. Remember that Trocaire is the official Development Agency of the Irish Catholic Church and it is really important that we support the work especially at this time of the year. Make the box with the children and use the Trocaire Resources on [www.trocaire.org](http://www.trocaire.org) Tell them how some of the money that Trocaire will get from this year's boxes will help the people of Honduras. Think about a whole school approach to the Trocaire Campaign this year. Decide on a target and put together a Trocaire Box Group made up of students from all classes to develop a strategy to reach the target before the end of Lent. Think of some activity to do each week. Make a display in a public area in the school so that everyone is aware of the target. Make sure that there is a Trocaire Box in every Prayer Space in every classroom and in public areas in the school. Encourage the use of the excellent Trocaire Resources by teacher during Lent.

#### **SUPPORT THE TROCAIRE CAMPAIGN 2017**