

40 Easy Lenten Traditions for Families:

1. Go to Mass as a family on Ash Wednesday. This is so great because even the smallest members of the family can have ashes.
2. Read the scripture about when Jesus goes into the desert.
3. Motivate your children to do good deeds and make sacrifices. Don't forget to make your own sacrifices and set the example.
4. Give something up for Lent as a family, even if your kids are young enough that you don't "have" to or we are "old" enough that we don't have to. Give up candy or sweets as a blanket sacrifice, and then decide on other things. Other good "blanket sacrifices" are no music in the car, no eating out, silent "monastery" lunches, or drinking only water during Lent.
5. Set up an almsgiving box– you simply set out a box, and take 1 thing from your own pantry every day of Lent. At the end of Lent, take the box to a food pantry (St Vincent de Paul at St Callistus).
6. Set up an offering jar– all you need is a jar or piggy bank of some kind. Spare change goes into the jar for the length of Lent, and then is donated (this can go to your parish "Rice Bowl").
7. Add extra prayers to your daily life. This could be extra prayers in the morning or at bedtime, during any car ride to or from school, grocery store, errands etc. If you have older kids, encourage them to set extra goals for personal prayer as well. Have them include a 1-5 minute prayer before doing homework, workouts, sports, youth activities, etc.
8. Pray the sorrowful mysteries of the rosary together as a family: daily, weekly, mealtime prayer, whatever works for your family. Each member can do a decade and if this feels overwhelming for the younger children alternate the "Hail Mary's" with them. Encourage the older children to help with the decade. And for that busy family, work on 1 decade at a time.
9. Pray the Divine Mercy Chaplet together- this is also a faster option than a rosary for those with younger children.
10. Light Lenten candles on your dinner table each night (much like an Advent wreath, but for Lent)

11. Make pretzels together. If you don't have time to do this from scratch, get the Pillsbury bread sticks in a can and make them that way.
12. Go to daily Mass whenever possible. For those busy families during the week, Saturday morning is a great way to start.
13. Go to adoration. If you have young children, spend what time you can. It will teach your children (and yourself) the value of spending time with our Lord.
14. Go to confession as a family.
15. Read the penitential Psalms.
16. Count down the days of Lent with a Lenten calendar for your kids— a lot easier than making paper chains! The website is full of printable options.
17. Bury the Alleluia- this can also be very easy. Create your "Alleluia" with either a string of letters or simply a poster. Display the "Alleluia" before Ash Wednesday, and then on Ash Wednesday, put away (Bury) your "Alleluia" until Easter at which time you bring out and display for your family to rejoice over.
18. Attend Stations of the Cross at your church. Especially on Good Friday.
19. Cook simple meatless meals together with your kids. This will be a good sacrifice opportunity for you (especially on Fridays)
20. Listen to the Stations of the Cross on CD. Listen at home or on car trips, especially if you're traveling to see family on Easter.
21. Sing "The Lent Song" with your kids.
22. Wash your children's feet on Holy Thursday.
23. Encourage better attention during Mass by assigning each member of the family a reading to pay special attention to (first reading, Psalm, second reading, and the Gospel). Have everyone give a re-cap of "their" reading on the way home in the car. Have a family discussion if anyone had thoughts about the readings.
24. On Good Friday, have an hour of silence at your house from 3-4 (because Jesus died at 3). Allow your kids to read spiritual books during this hour of silence.
25. 40 bags, 40 days. You pick the size of the bag (Paper bag, Wal-Mart bag, trash bag, lunch sac) and you get rid of 1 bag full from your house every day. Donate what you get rid of. This is an excellent exercise in living simply.

26. Lenten cleaning– rather than the idea of “spring cleaning”, clean 1 area of your home every day during Lent. Your house is beautiful and clean for Easter!
27. Sing a Lenten hymn together each day as a family. Try doing this in the morning. You can sing the same hymn each morning until everyone has learned the words, then move onto another one.
28. Attend extra activities happening at your parish, such as Friday fish fries.
29. Do some of the works of mercy together with your kids.
30. Watch a Lenten movie together as a family- Try watching The Greatest Adventure Easter Story for little kids.
31. Read one Saint Story per day. (The stories are short, and there’s a picture for each one)
32. Read the Bible together as a family daily. This can be done in the morning at breakfast, and doesn’t have to take long. You can just read a paragraph each day.
33. Decide one day of the week during Lent to go “screen free” as a family.
34. Light a candle at church on Sunday.
35. “Un-decorate” your mantle to keep things simple for Lent. Put a purple table cloth out on the table. Explain liturgical colors to your kids.
36. During Holy Week, read the story of Palm Sunday, the Last Supper, and the crucifixion from the Bible.
37. Memorize a new prayer together as a family.
38. Bake unleavened bread together.
39. Basically, make sure you’re including more prayer, fasting, and almsgiving than during ordinary time.
40. And the number 1 *easy* thing that takes *no* extra effort Save all of the Easter celebrating for Easter!