

CHOOSING AN “ACTIVE” LENT

What can we do to grow in appreciation of our love and desire to share with others?

In my preparation for Lent, I mentioned that traditions would have us give something up for Lent so that we could spend the time otherwise used for ourselves to talk to God. Perhaps instead of “giving up” we could get involved in something that builds our relationship with Father-Son-and Holy Spirit through a spiritual practice of meditation, prayer or getting active in caring for others. This gives us the opportunity to be “Lent” and be active in Lent.

The reason that choosing and acting Lent is so important is that we are body-persons. We experience things with our senses, relish them with our imaginations and we share in God’s own creative and loving activity when our hearts and hands work together for and with others.

These ideas represent a variety of choices and acts that have come to our minds as we reflect upon our Lenten journey. There are countless others that will fit our experience as we continue to reflect on the question: What might I do to grow in my appreciation of God’s love and my desire to share it with others?



Here are a few ways to choose and act **Lent**:

Symbols in Our Home

We need to choose to let our homes be a place full of the holy – things that help raise our minds and hearts to God. Our world is full of so many images that lure our minds and hearts elsewhere. Here are some symbols that will carry the ongoing meaning we give them, for us and for our families and loved ones.

A Cross

We probably all have an empty cross or crucifix in our home. If not, Lent might be a wonderful time to buy one and place it in a central place. Even a child’s drawing of Jesus’ death for us can be a powerful, stirring reminder of God’s love.

Water

A simple bowl of water, in a central place, can be transformed into an ongoing reminder of our journey to the font of baptism for the renewal of commitment and life in Christ. Perhaps we can pray over it. “Lord, may this water remind us of our baptism and be a blessing for our home, where our dying and rising in you is lived each day. Bless us, as we sign ourselves with it each day.”

Sand

Perhaps a bowl of sand can help us remember our journey. God led the people in their journey in the desert. Jesus himself reenacted that journey to face his own temptations. The desert can be a place of retreat, where there is a freedom from distractions. It can be a good place to be led and to face our temptations.

A Candle

Imagine having a candle in a central place in our home. Imagine praying over it together as we begin Lent. "Lord thank you for the gift of your Light in the midst of all darkness. Let this candle be a symbol of our faith in your presence among us." And imagine if we light this candle whenever we feel tempted away from the Light of Jesus, when we are experiencing tensions in our home, whenever we need special graces. Imagine how powerful experiencing the lighting of the New Fire will be at the Easter Vigil.

Perhaps we have Baptismal candles that were given to us or our children at Baptism. It might be very meaningful to bring them out and lay them near our central candle. We can remember the words that were spoken when we received this candle: "Receive the Light of Christ. ... Keep this flame burning brightly."

Perhaps we have the white baptismal garments that have been used in our family for baptism. These could be taken out. We can remember the words, "See in the white garments you wear, the outward sign of your Christian dignity. Bring this garment unstained to the joys of everlasting life." We can let it remind us of our white garment, when we see the newly baptized come out of the font of baptism, and be given their new white garments. It is a symbol of the priesthood in Jesus that we all share.

A Bible

The Word is so important for us during Lent. Perhaps the prominent presence of a Bible in our home can represent for us our desire for God's Word in our lives. Imagine the experience that could be ours if - when we feel a new inspiration or a softening of our heart, or just a sense of God's love – we pick up that Bible and simply, reverently kiss it.

A Symbol for Almsgiving

Many of us grew up with a simple box for contributions to the poor around the world on our kitchen table. Operation Rice Bowl, a Lenten practice from Catholic Relief Services, (*yes a reference to our Roman Catholic brothers and sisters*) has offered a simple tool to make this way of making almsgiving at home very concrete and focused on solidarity with those who have so much less than we do. The key is to give a focus to our sacrifices as a family - eating or living more simply during Lent - in a way which directly connects those sacrifices with the needs of others.

Are there other symbols which make our particular journey full of meaning and faith?

For some additional activities and consideration "to be and act Lent" please check out this link to Creighton University's helpful site:

<http://onlineministries.creighton.edu/CollaborativeMinistry/Lent/choosinglent.html>

Blessings for a Holy Lent.... Fr. David