

Lift Up Your Hearts:

(Re)Discovering the Mass This Lent



at the
foot of the cross

A Lenten journey from Family Rosary

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Welcome to Our Family

Each year, the Church gives us the Lenten season to help us reorient our lives toward God. We encourage you and your family to enter into this season together, journeying with Jesus and Mary to the foot of the Cross and, ultimately, to the joyful celebration of Easter.

The traditional Lenten practices of prayer, fasting, and almsgiving (acts of love and service) help us to turn away from everything that binds and blinds us in order to make space for God in our hearts and our homes. He wishes to bring light and warmth to family life, to free us and fill us with Himself! This is the tremendous call of the entire Christian life, but the Lenten season bids us to respond to this call with even greater intentionality.

Orienting our lives toward God always requires an experience of the Paschal Mystery—the suffering, death, and Resurrection of Jesus. Notably, however, this experience does not end with the Cross; it leads to the glory of Easter! As you and your family find ways to practice prayer, fasting, and almsgiving this Lent, let Mary accompany you on your journey, so that she can show you how her Son redeems and brings new life.

To facilitate your Lenten journey, we are offering prayer resources and a 40-day Lenten family activity calendar on our website, FamilyRosary.org. May God continue to bless you and your family.

A Little History

Servant of God Patrick Peyton began his ministry in 1942 with the goal of building family unity through daily prayer of the Rosary. Inspired by his own father who had a deep devotion to family prayer, praying the Rosary became the foundation for the life of Father Peyton (1909-92).

We at Family Rosary are ever so grateful Father Peyton's family instilled in him the importance of family prayer. Now it can be part of your family's tradition so you can fulfill the vision that "The Family That Prays Together Stays Together," the slogan coined by Father Patrick Peyton, C.S.C., so many years ago.



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Almost exactly a year ago, church closures, the cessation of public Masses, and restrictions imposed upon the celebration of the other sacraments commenced a uniquely difficult period in the life of the Church. Lent 2020 was, in a sense, the beginning of a very long “lent” marked especially, for lay Catholics, by limited or nonexistent access to the sacraments.

If we maintain that the two “lents”—the annual liturgical season and the yearlong experience of privation—share some comparable features, we may also infer that they can share comparable results. What is the intended fruit of Lenten penance? The Collect (the prayer that the priest offers at the beginning of Mass, after the Penitential Rite) for the First Sunday of Lent proposes the following:

**Grant, almighty God,
through the yearly observances of holy Lent,
that we may grow in understanding
of the riches hidden in Christ
and by worthy conduct pursue their effects.**

The Collect indicates that the purpose of our Lenten practices of prayer, fasting, and almsgiving is something much more profound than bodily discipline. Self-control is a stepping-stone—albeit an indispensable one—for deeper objectives which, the prayer suggests, must be intentionally pursued. Among these objectives is reparation for sin. As we read in our Collect, however, there is an even greater fruit that can come from penance: “that we may grow in understanding of the riches hidden in Christ.”

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Our capacity to encounter Christ increases as our hearts become more like His Heart. This is why prayer, fasting, and almsgiving are necessary; they stretch the stiff, stony walls of our hearts to conform them, little by little, to the Divine Heart. All of these practices require a movement of self-denial, a small “death-to-what-I-want” that makes us increasingly capable of loving with God’s own love. Perhaps, then, we can liken the little deaths that come with our Lenten disciplines to the privation we felt when the public celebration of the sacraments ceased. Although the former are deliberately chosen while the latter certainly were not, both ushered in, for us, these moments of privation. Could both experiences, therefore, create new spaces for us to probe the “riches hidden in Christ”?

Nowhere does Christ make Himself more available to us than in the very place where we, for a time, were unable to approach Him: the Mass.

Yet our capacity to meet Him there increases in proportion to the faith and desire with which we come to Him, since He never inhibits our freedom and thus will not force Himself upon us. If spouses wish to strengthen the union of their hearts, both husband and wife must apply themselves to the task. Likewise, if we wish to encounter Jesus Christ in His word, to recognize Him in His sacrifice, and to welcome Him into our souls in Holy Communion, it is necessary that we apply ourselves—with the assurance that the lengths to which He is willing to go in order to be with us will always be infinitely greater than our own feeble efforts.

Amid the sadness and confusion of the past year, there have also been numerous blessings: the opportunity to form lasting habits of prayer in the home and within the family, for example, as well as an occasion to reaffirm the efficacy of the Mass—whether or not the faithful are present. Nevertheless, the sacraments are the ordinary means by which God dispenses grace, and the Mass is gift that He Himself commanded the Church to offer in His name. If we are able to attend Mass freely and without fear, we are not meant to stay away forever!

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Furthermore, as we return to Mass, we must not do so unchanged. The memory of privation should nourish within us a desire to take part in the Mass with greater understanding, fervor, and devotion.

Through prayer, study, and our daily striving for holiness, our minds are opened to the reality of His presence in the Mass, and our hearts are stretched so that they can be united to God who, in the Eucharist, extends to us His own Heart.

During these final days of Lent, perhaps we can offer to God this desire to deepen our appreciation of the Mass, submitting to Him whatever little efforts we can make in service of this goal. Let us set out along this way with Mary, taking her hand and allowing her to guide us to Calvary, which indeed is what the Mass truly is. We will never regret it.

May God bless you and your family as you continue your Lenten journey!

Some suggested resources:

- Venerable Fulton J. Sheen, Calvary and the Mass
- Josephine Nobisso, The Weight of a Mass (for children)
- Saint Louis De Montfort, True Devotion to Mary (paragraphs 266-273 deal with preparation for Holy Communion)

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Reflecting on the context of our Lenten practice this year, let us note that in the first place, Lent is the time to prepare for the great annual remembrance of the Passion, Death, and Resurrection of the Lord, so that we will be ready to stand at the foot of the Cross with Mary. Christ, both Victim and Priest, sacrifices Himself to the Father for the forgiveness of sins and to open the way to Eternal Life. Mary once more says YES, offering her Son as this Sacrifice of the New and Eternal Covenant. This is our Salvation. This is our true Hope.

Keep an eye on:

Family Rosary@ familyrosary.org

Catholic Mom@ catholicmom.com

Museum of Family Prayer@ museumoffamilyprayer.com

and on our Facebook and Instagram sites too!

#AtTheFootOfTheCross #Lent2021



We hope the time you've spent reflecting with this material has been enriching. Continue to pray with your family every day, wherever you are.

For additional online resources for family prayer including additional e-books and the mobile Rosary App, please visit our website at www.FamilyRosary.org.

This e-book and all our resources represent a culmination of Father Peyton's passion for family unity through prayer. We hope our services will enhance your family's prayer life particularly remembering Father Peyton's famous words, "The family that prays together stays together."

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