

FIRST TEACHERS

YOU ARE THE MOST IMPORTANT TEACHERS IN YOUR CHILDRENS LIVES!
FEBRUARY 2024

Dear parents and guardians, we have hit mid term already and here at the Marriage and Family Life Commission we are well under way in our Lenten preparations! The season of Lent began this year on Ash Wednesday, 14th February, where we focus on three main aspects of our spirituality: prayer, fasting and almsgiving. We want to support the wonderful teaching our schools provide during Lent by encouraging you and your families in a walk of faith by offering easy and practical ideas which help bring our beliefs alive in our homes.



Prayer

In preparation for the Holy Year of 2025, Pope Francis has dedicated 2024 as a Year of Prayer which is a great excuse to re-invigorate or introduce prayer into our daily family life. There is no 'right' way to start to pray, but exploring the Stations of the Cross during Lent should remind us of the great sacrificial love that Jesus has for us. You could look at all the stations or

start with one or two at a time. There are plenty of images available online to focus on each station, or involving children in making their own stations is a wonderful way to include them. They could make their own pictures or even 3D stations with found objects; it doesn't have to cost any money. Some further ideas and resources can be found here: [Doing the Stations of the Cross with your kids](#), [Children's Stations of the Cross](#), [Share the Journey Stations of the Cross original.pdf \(sciaf.org.uk\)](#)

For older children and teens, reading short scripture together and praying afterward, perhaps singing a favourite hymn together could be a wonderful thing to try. Especially if you focus on the Gospel, the story of Jesus in the lead up to his sacrifice.

Fasting

The famous question, 'What are you giving up for Lent?' often immediately brings food to mind. Of course, fasting CAN be from food but it can also be from many other things. Coming together as a family to think about what we can fast from can be an eye-opening experience. Children often see places where, as a family, we give too much of our energy, more clearly than the adults. We may choose to cut down tv or screen time, bad habits or pursuits that we spend too much time/money on. [101 Practical Fasting Ideas for Lent](#) In our



society of excess, fasting of any kind can be difficult, but introducing our children and teens to sacrifice encourages a deeper gratitude and can bring us closer to God, especially when we use that extra energy towards almsgiving.

Almsgiving

In the Book of Tobit, Tobias stated: "Prayer and fasting are good, but better than either is almsgiving accompanied by righteousness ... It is better to give alms than to store up gold; for almsgiving saves one from death and expiates every sin. Those who regularly give alms shall enjoy a full life" (Tob 12:8-9). Encouraging and practising generosity, both practical and of spirit is an inspiring example we can give them, perhaps by going to Confession together as a family and making it a regular habit. Furthermore, fundraising together for some of our wonderful Catholic charities or on a smaller scale (perhaps saving and donating the money that you would have spent on those chocolate bars you have given up!) is a wonderful extension of fasting. Of course, we can also sacrifice our time in prayers, or perhaps volunteering help and skills to others in need. Mary's Meals suggest sharing the Mary's Meals prayer with children as well as encouraging them to get involved in their campaign [Move For Meals | Mary's Meals UK](#) which is a great opportunity for a class to get outdoors and support Mary's Meals.

Prayer for Mary's Meals

Our Father,

Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us for the times when we take more than our share of the bread that belongs to all.

Let us help You fill the starving with good things, not with scraps from our table.

Teach us how to share what is not ours to keep.

Clothe us with Your love that we may complete each good work You created us to do.

Place in our hearts Your compassion for each starving child and use our little acts of love so that they starve no more. Amen.

You could also choose to support SCIAF's Lenten Wee Box appeal which this year aims to tackle violence against women and girls. [2024 SCIAF WEE BOX Appeal | SCIAF](#) and some broader Lenten ideas can be found here, [Fasting, giving, praying: 25+ ideas for what kids & teens can do for Lent](#), [RESOURCES | Missio Scotland](#)

Whichever ways you choose to observe and practise your faith this Lent all of us here at the Family Life commission hope that your season is blessed and holy and your Easter be a wonderful celebration of Christ's sacrifice for us!

