

# Observing Lent

*Ideas and inspirations for keeping a holy Lent with our families*



**by Kortney Garrison**

from [One Deep Drawer](#)

## Lent Means Spring

It's March. By now the New Year doesn't feel all that new anymore. Time keeps on spinning, and sometimes I feel like I'm unraveling.

One of the graces of the church year is that each year we get to spiral back to the same fasts and feasts. We get to return. We get to practice.



Remember, Lent means Spring—green, new life just under the surface! What is waiting to be born in you? What has been hibernating all winter? What is going to emerge?

These reflections might be just what you need to find the thread back to the center.

### Out with the Old

Make sure to mark the outgoing of Ordinary Time. Make pancakes for Fat Tuesday, or maybe just grab donuts for teatime. Let there be sweetness at the beginning.

### Sing--Pray Twice

Learn a new song for the season. We have really been enjoying singing along with grand organ accompaniment from [Traditional Hymns](#). We'll be singing "Be Thou My Vision" all through Lent.

## Get Moving

Go for a walk every day during Lent. I know a homeschooling family who puts soup on to simmer and then heads out for a walk each day.

You might even consider creating a Calendar of Firsts--a nature almanac recording what you see on your walks. When did the moon come full? What day did the buds on the apple tree burst? What stars are out? Heather has [a beautiful calendar to print](#) where you can record what you see.

## Something New

Try learning a new prayer to say when you are gathered at meals. Or maybe this is the right time to try hiding a little Scripture in your heart. Sally Clarkson has [a good list](#) to get you started.



## The Seasonal Table

Try bringing a little nature inside--buds and branches you've gathered on your walks...or even supermarket daffodils. You might add a bowl of fresh water to

remember our baptism or a bowl of sand to remember the desert years and our own dustiness. Make a space where your eye call fall and you can recall your intentions for the season.

## A Little Green

Wheat berries sprout and then grown long, green grass that's perfect for hiding eggs in when the time comes! But beans and lentils will work in a pinch. Last year we made [an Easter Garden](#).



## Make Bread

It's the perfect thing to go along with the soup that's simmering. The earthy smell that fills the house always makes me smile. And while you wait for the bread to rise, you can curl up on the couch and trade stories. These natural pockets of time are rich for seasonal observances.

## Light Candles

Especially at meals. Turn off the electric light. Enjoy the darkness. You might even try to keep silence for a few moments after the candles are lit. Not perfectly--there will be giggles. And not for long. But you can make a beginning.

## Celebrate

Lent is 40 (long) days. Make sure you remember the saint days mixed in--a little sweetness to look forward to. It does our hearts good to call to mind the great cloud of witness that surrounds us. Your observance doesn't have to be complicated or elaborate. Maybe a candle lit at dinner, a reading from *The Loyola Treasury of Saints* or a [picture to color](#) together. We'll be celebrating

- March 17--St Patrick
- March 19--St Joseph
- March 25--Annunciation



## A Compass to Guide You

So, you've got a little list. Maybe these ideas have sparked your own thinking and you've got a nice, long list! I've started using the image of a compass rose to help me focus and limit my Lenten observances. Four things to practice. Here's this year's list.

**North** :: Prayer :: I'm going to read *Pilgrim Principles* by Lacy Clark Ellman this year. Lacy's [blog](#) and [podcast](#) have been such an encouragement to me these past couple of years. I can't wait to dig into her book—even though my pilgrimages are rather local these days!

**South** :: Remembering :: I'm using [the free printable](#) that Ann Voskamp created years and years ago. Seven gifts each day. Seven chances to come awake again the the wonder of this life.

**East** :: Community :: As the days grow longer, I want to return to evensong. I know I won't make it every week, but it does me such good to pray with that small and mighty group of people.

**West** :: Fast :: Our family is fasting from meat on Fridays, and I am not drinking alcohol. I'm also trying a spending freeze. There will be trips to the grocery store, meals out and probably some new socks in time for Easter, but non-essentials can wait.



### **Meet Kortney**

Kortney Garrison lives with her family on a peninsula in the Northwest.

She homeschools her three children and works as the Community Director at the Read-Aloud Revival.

Books + long walks are her love language.