

# Design your own Lenten journey

What are you doing for Lent? Are you giving something up? Taking something on?

I do something different every year. One Lent, before we had children, I went to daily Mass almost every day. At the time I could hit Fr. Jennings's 15-minute Mass on my way to work, so it wasn't as difficult as it might sound. Another Lent I gave up iced tea. That was much harder and not as fulfilling.

Some years I haven't chosen a particular sacrifice because I felt life was handing me enough on its own. But this year is looking promising, and I am excited to take something on. I also know that for me I need to be specific and intentional or it will suddenly be Easter and I will regret not using this time as a time of penance and prayer.



So this year I am creating what you might call a Lenten bucket list. I am not typically a bucket list person, but I am seeing this as my Lenten smorgasbord—a few things to choose from and integrate into my days. And I'm figuring that whatever I don't manage to achieve during Lent can spill over into the Easter season. I'm trying, though, to keep these as manageable, realistic goals.

Here is my approach for this year:

- 1. Share the journey with a companion.** A friend and I are setting concrete goals together. Each week of Lent we will attend one weekday Mass and say one Rosary. We are also reading the Gospel of Mark (and maybe more of the Bible if we fly through Mark). They are manageable goals. And I am hoping we will keep each other accountable.
- 2. Make a pilgrimage.** This might just mean attending one weekday Mass at a church that isn't our parish church. But I am actually hoping we might make a joint family trip to an area shrine or church. John and I took our boys to St. Anthony's Shrine in Ellicott City for Good Friday services last year and it was a highlight of our Lent.
- 3. Get more screen time.** No, not that kind of screen time. I mean checking in with Jesus through the screen in the confessional. And yes, I prefer going through the screen to face-to-face. But you can do whatever works for you.
- 4. Find simple ways to mark Lent as a family.** We are going to try to take our boys to the Stations of the Cross—and the simple soup dinners our parish holds on Friday nights during Lent. We also have a few child-friendly Lenten countdowns to measure our progress

toward Easter, and our sons are excited to start putting a fish a day into the Disciple Ship (yes, it's called that), create a sticker scene, and build a Lenten mobile. They come with Bible verses and prayers and stories. I feel a little overwhelmed by the amount of work involved, to be honest, but I'm sure Leo and Daniel will keep us on task.

If I happen to do more than this, great. If I miss some, that's OK, too. Jesus isn't sitting in Heaven putting a black mark next to my name. In fact, I'm pretty sure He's cheering us on as we try to grow closer to Him.

How will you spend your Lent? Do you have specific goals?

*Joining Theology Is a Verb and Reconciled to You for Worth Revisiting Wednesday on March 8, 2017.*