

St. Matthew Moms Group

Body, Mind, Spirit



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Reminders:

- *Childcare reservations are required for Moms meetings. Please call ahead 48hrs in advance 704-543-7677.*
- *We will be participating as a group in the LIVE LENT! Program at St. Matthew. We will meet EVERY Thursday during Lent, starting 2/15. Please bring \$7.50 to cover the cost of the book.*

The Pretzel and Lent

Pretzels come in many flavors, shapes, and sizes — not unlike us. These treats are great with cheese or other dips or just by themselves. But have you stopped to consider they actually have an historical place in Lent?

If you take a moment to look at the typical twist pretzel, you can see that it is a model of the common prayer position from the early 600s of folding your arms over each other on your chest and putting your hands on your shoulders.

Pretzels were developed as an option to satisfy abstinence and fasting laws of the time. Eggs, fat, and milk were forbidden during Lent. So, the remaining ingredients that one could use included water, flour, and salt. A young monk baked the first pretzel — making a Lenten bread of water, flour, and salt, forming the dough into the prayer position of the day, and baking it as soft bread. These first pretzels would have been much like the soft pretzels we have today.

Greg Dues, in his book *Catholic Customs and Traditions*, explains more of the pretzel history:

"These little breads were shaped in the form of arms crossed in prayer and were called braccellae (Latin, 'little arms'). Among the Germans the word became 'bretzel'. These pretzels were a common Lenten food throughout the Middle Ages

in Europe, and became an all year round snack, in its original shape only in the last (19th) century."

The suggestion of arms crossed in the form of prayer may have led to pretzels being given as a reward to young children when they could recite their prayers. *Pretiola* means *little reward*, which could also be a derivative of the term pretzel. The three holes in a pretzel are also said to represent the Holy Trinity.

After their invention, pretzels became a symbol of good luck, long life, and prosperity. They were commonly given to the poor and hungry. The legend of the hard pretzels that we snack on today tells of an apprentice baker who fell asleep while preparing pretzels and let the fire begin to die out. When he noticed, he restarted the fire, but the result was overcooked pretzels. The surprise was a tasty treat that was less perishable than the soft pretzels and easy to have available to give to those in need.

Food has long played a role in our faith, especially during Lent. We abstain from certain foods, such as meat, and spend time fasting. This practice can provide us with a deeper religious experience by joining us with people throughout the world who struggle to survive. Fasting is an opportunity to be in solidarity with

those who experience physical and spiritual hunger.

Pretzel twist

When the monk first baked pretzels so long ago, I don't think he could have imagined all of the different types and flavors that we have today. There are roasted garlic, Italian herb, Parmesan, and butter pretzels. Auntie Anne's makes a seaweed-flavored pretzel in Singapore and a banana-flavored pretzel in the UK. Even a flavor of M&M's includes pretzels inside their candy-coated exteriors.

I had no idea that pretzels were a Lenten food. Through the years, I've spent time trying to understand the importance of Lent and trying to remember not to eat meat on Fridays. I admit, some years I'm more successful than others. Yet I can see how pretzels tie into Lent in a spiritual way. In the life of a faithful person, there are many times you may feel twisted up inside, struggling with your beliefs or dealing with frustrations. But if you take a look at a typical twist pretzel, remember its origins in Lent, and move into a position of prayer (spiritually or physically), you are exactly in the position you need to be in when you feel twisted up inside.

<http://bustedhalo.com/life-culture/pretzels-and-lent>

Family Prayer from Ash Wednesday to Saturday

This prayer is designed to be said within the family before a Crucifix from Ash Wednesday to Saturday at the beginning of Lent.

Mother or a child: From the words of St. John the Evangelist (14:1-6).

Let not your hearts be troubled. You believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house there are many mansions. Were it not so, I would have told you, because I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I am coming again, and I will take you to myself, that where I am, there you also may be. And where I go, you know, and the way you know.

Father: We ought to glory in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ

Family: in whom is our salvation, life and resurrection.

Father: Let us pray. Grant to your faithful, Lord, a spirit generous enough to begin these solemn fasts with proper fervor and to pursue them with steadfast devotion. This we ask of you through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son.

Family: Amen. Favor this dwelling, Lord, with your presence. Far from it repulse all the wiles of Satan. Your holy angels—let them live here, to keep us in peace. And may your blessing remain always upon us. This we ask of you through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son.

Father: Let us bless the Lord.

Family: Thanks be to God.

Father: May the almighty and merciful Lord, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, bless and keep us.

Family: Amen.

Prayer Source: *Holy Lent* by Eileen O'Callaghan, The Liturgical Press, Collegeville, Minnesota, 1975

How to Live Lent as a Busy Mother

"Have patience with all things, but first of all with yourself."

~Saint Francis de Sales

"The Lord measures out perfection neither by the multitude nor the magnitude of our deeds, but by the manner in which we perform them."

~Saint John of the Cross

We moms who want to nurture our relationship with God—but also lead busy lives with children—often find ourselves caught between a rock and hard place.

Prayer practices seem to require 1) undivided chunks of time; 2) quiet 3) a peaceful environment. I don't know about you, but those three almost NEVER occur at our house. And never at the same time.

Over the years I've tried to live by these 3 simple ideas for busy moms-

1. Lower your expectations.

I want to do All The Things, and then I set myself up for failure. So for the past few years, I've deliberately tried to be cautious about my plans for Lent. I try to care for myself like I think God would: gently, lovingly, with forgiveness

and understanding. So I let myself stumble, and then I celebrate when I pick myself up.

Lent is a time for growth, for discipline and self-reflection, and for deepening our relationship with God. It's not a time to feel lousy about ourselves for not doing enough.

2. Make short time for small prayer.

My spiritual director always reminds me of two truths: *your work as a mother is prayer* and *your desire to pray is prayer*. I try to let go of the expectation that I can pray like a monk in an abbey with all the time, space, and place set neatly before him. That's not my life. Nor is it my call.

Instead, I can pray like a busy

mother. In this season of my life, that is what I have to give. And I think God, who cares for us all like a loving parent, understands and blesses that truth.

3. Get creative. *Shake up everyday habits in little ways.* Change your homepage from email to something more meaningful, like a website with prayer and scripture for daily reflection. Stop yourself before turning on the radio or TV first thing in the morning, and simply sit in the silence. Make your cup of coffee at home instead of grabbing a latte while running errands, and donate the extra \$3 instead.

Read more at -

<http://www.motheringspirit.com/2011/04/how-to-live-lent-as-a-busy-mother/>

Creating a Lenten Prayer Space at Home

In a family with small children, how do you create the space to journey through Lent in a developmentally appropriate way? Our family has tried different practices and readings through Lent, but one thing has been constant in our Lenten practices: creating a collection of symbolic items in a central place in the home (i.e. on the family table or on a stand in a main living area).

As my boys grow and our family changes, this sacred space changes. Items I always include are a candle, a cross, an empty bowl to represent fasting, a scripture passage and/or prayer, and a small Bible. All of these items are placed on a purple cloth. We've also included a poem, art postcard or alms tin some years.

These items are helpful as talking points with

children. They serve as a guide to other disciplines you choose to take on as a family. As you explore and explain the items, children wonder in ways that also help you to journey through Lent together. A variety of items, and giving room for questions and conversation, allows for differentiation in meeting everyone's needs and understandings.

Candle: Always a symbol of God's presence with us. I often say as I light the candle, "We light the candle to remind us that God is with us in this place, at this time."

Purple cloth: For children who traveled through advent, the purple of lent will be familiar as a color for a time of waiting. Use a circle calendar of the church year to show the children that we are in Lent, waiting for the great feast of Easter.

Empty bowl: Explain that we fast so that we have

more time or energy to remember to talk to God during Lent. We are getting ready for the great mystery of Easter. Older children can be encouraged to write down something they want to fast from and place the paper in the bowl.

Scripture, poem, or prayer: This can be written on cards that can be read liturgically (we've found every night at dinner works well for our rhythm). The Good Shepherd of Psalm 23 is a wonderful image to meditate on with young children.

Cross: Take time to look at the cross together and talk about the crucifixion and the resurrection.

Read more from Emily Watkins at -

<https://www.buildfaith.org/creating-lenten-prayer-space-home/>

Outside the Box: 66 Things to Give Up or Take Up for Lent

In our house, we now view Lent as a time to try adding or taking away things from our personal and family lives to see if we are improved. We make it a time, not of suffering (necessarily) but rather of increased focus on God and others and decreased focus on self and personal comfort. I have found that I can take up or give up just about anything, no matter how big or small, and use it as a reminder to pray more and love more. With that in mind, here are 66 ideas of things to consider giving up or taking up, in beginning, intermediate, and advanced levels, for beginning, intermediate, and advanced Lenten.

1. Don't take the best spot available in the parking lot
2. Take the worst parking spot you can find
3. Don't drive: walk or take public transportation

1. Make the bed everyday
2. Make the bed everyday before you leave the bedroom
3. Put the throw pillows on and everything

1. Go to daily Mass once per week in addition to Sunday Mass
2. Go to daily Mass 2-3 times per week
3. Go to daily Mass every day

1. Don't leave dishes in the sink overnight
2. Do the cooking dishes before dinner and the dinner dishes immediately after dinner
3. Don't use the dishwasher

1. Don't use credit cards, spend only cash
2. Keep a list of things to buy and only shop one day per week
3. Don't buy anything (except maybe food)

1. Don't eat out at restaurants
2. Make all your food from scratch

3. Grow/raise all your own food

1. Watch only specific, preselected movies or TV shows, not just whatever is on
2. Watch TV and movies only as a planned family event, not spur of the moment, not alone
3. Don't watch TV or movies

Continue reading Kendra's other ideas by clicking [here](#).

If you need more, [here](#) are Busted Halo's 25 Great Things You Can Do for Lent, Besides give up Chocolate.

Saint Blaise – February 3rd

Blaise lived so long ago that we know nothing about his early life. We do know that he was both a doctor and a bishop in the area that is today either Armenia or Turkey. In the beginning of the fourth century, Christians were being persecuted by the Romans. The Roman Emperor believed that arresting and punishing important leaders like Blaise would prevent other people from becoming followers of Christ. Blaise's prison was a dark cave. One of the legends that is told about him is that wild animals came to the cave so that he could treat their wounds. It is said that a mother brought her young son to Blaise. The boy was choking on a fish bone. Blaise saved the boy's life by saying a prayer and blessing him with candles crossed upon his throat.

Tradition tells us that the grateful mother visited Blaise's in prison to bring him food and candles. During his time in prison, Blaise was sentenced to death. He was martyred in the year 316.

St. Blaise is the patron saint of people with diseases of the throat. On St. Blaise's feast day, many parishes bless the throats of their parishioners in a special ceremony. Two unlit candles are held next to each person's throat as the priest or deacon says, "Through the intercession of Saint Blaise, bishop and martyr, may God deliver you from every disease of the throat and from every other illness: In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit."

St. Blaise reminds us of the importance of taking care of our health and also to thank God for

doctors and medicines that can help us to recover from illnesses. We honor St. Blaise for his faith and care for his people.



<http://saintsresource.com/blaise>

***There will be a special blessing of the throats after the 9am Mass on Saturday Feb. 3rd at St. Matthew.**

O glorious St. Blaise, who by your martyrdom left to the Church a precious witness to the Faith, obtain for us the grace to preserve within ourselves this divine gift, and to defend — without concern for human respect — both by word and example, the truth of that same Faith, which is so wickedly attacked and slandered in these our times. You miraculously restored a little child who was at the point of death because of an affliction of the throat.

Grant us your mighty protection in similar misfortunes. And, above all, obtain for us the grace of Christian mortification, together with faithful observance of the precepts of the Church, which keep us from offending almighty God. Amen.

Saint Valentine – February 14th

February 14th, St. Valentine's Day, is based on the life of St. Valentine, a Roman martyr who was beheaded in c. 269-273 AD. Emperor Claudius II declared that unmarried men were potential soldiers, so he outlawed marriage. However, St. Valentine refused to accept this pernicious error and the saintly priest continued to marry young couples. Claudius attempted to convert St. Valentine to paganism, but St. Valentine resisted and attempted to bring Claudius to the Church and Jesus Christ. For this, the Emperor had St. Valentine beheaded. In prison he helped imprisoned, soon-to-be martyrs. The jailer saw that Valentine was a man of learning, so he brought his daughter, Julia, to Valentine for lessons. Julia

was a young girl, who had been blind since her birth. During the lessons, St. Valentine would read to her about the history of Rome. And, he taught her about God. The following is an account of St. Valentine:

"Valentinus, does God really hear our prayers?" Julia asked one day. "Yes, my child, He hears each one." "Do you know what I pray for every morning and every night? I pray that I might see. I want so much to see everything you've told me about!" "God does what is best for us if we will only believe in Him," Valentinus said. "Oh, Valentinus, I do believe! I do!" She knelt and grasped his hand. They sat quietly together, each praying. Suddenly there was a brilliant light in the prison cell.

Radiant, Julia screamed, "Valentinus, I can see! I can see!"

"Praise be to God!" Valentinus exclaimed, and he knelt in prayer. On the eve of his death Valentinus wrote a last note to Julia, urging her to stay close to God. He signed it, "From your Valentine." His sentence was carried out the next day, February 14, 270 A.D., near a gate that was later named Porta Valentini in his memory. He was buried at what is now the Church of Praxedes in Rome. It is said that Julia planted a pink-blossomed almond tree near his grave. Today, the almond tree remains a symbol of abiding love and friendship. On each February 14, Saint Valentine's Day, messages of affection, love, and devotion are exchanged around the world."

After her healing, the jailer too was converted to Christianity.



<https://acatholiclife.blogspot.com/2006/02/st-valentines-day.html>

Ash Wednesday

At the beginning of Lent, on Ash Wednesday, ashes are blessed during Mass, after the homily. The blessed ashes are then "imposed" on the faithful as a sign of conversion, penance, fasting and human mortality. The ashes are blessed at least during the first Mass of the day, but they may also be imposed during all the Masses of the day, after the homily, and even outside the time of Mass to meet the needs of the faithful. Priests or deacons normally impart this sacramental, but instituted acolytes, other extraordinary ministers or designated lay people may be

delegated to impart ashes, if the bishop judges that this is necessary. The ashes are made from the palms used at the previous Passion Sunday ceremonies.

— *Ceremonies of the Liturgical Year*, Msgr. Peter J. Elliott

The act of putting on ashes symbolizes fragility and mortality, and the need to be redeemed by the mercy of God. Far from being a merely external act, the Church has retained the use of ashes to symbolize that attitude of internal penance to which all the baptized are called during Lent.

— *Directory on Popular Piety and the Liturgy*

From the very early times the commemoration of the approach of Christ's passion and death was observed by a period of self-denial. St. Athanasius in the year 339 enjoined upon the people of Alexandria the 40 days' fast he saw practiced in Rome and elsewhere, "to the end that while all the world is fasting, we who are in Egypt should not become a laughing stock as the only people who do not fast but take our pleasure in those days." On Ash Wednesday in the early

days, the Pope went barefoot to St. Sabina's in Rome "to begin with holy fasts the exercises of Christian warfare, that as we do battle with the spirits of evil, we may be protected by the help of self-denial."

— *Daily Missal of the Mystical Body*

The use of [Sacrifice Beans](#) may help children to keep track of their Lenten penances.

<http://www.catholicculture.org/culture/liturgicalyear/calendar/day.cfm?date=2018-02-14>

Feasts for February

The feasts on the General Roman Calendar celebrated during the month of February are:

2. [Presentation of the Lord](#), Feast
3. [Blaise; Ansgar](#), Opt. Mem.
4. [Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time](#), Sunday
5. [Agatha](#), Memorial
6. [Paul Miki and Companions](#), Memorial
8. [Jerome Emiliani; Josephine Bakhita](#), Opt. Mem.
10. [Scholastica](#), Memorial
11. [Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time](#), Sunday
17. [Seven Founders of the Orders of Servites](#), Opt. Mem.
18. [First Sunday of Lent](#), Sunday
21. [Peter Damian](#), Opt. Mem.
22. [Chair of St. Peter](#), Feast
23. [Polycarp of Smyrna](#), Memorial
25. [Second Sunday of Lent](#), Sunday

SMMG Meeting Dates

Thursday Mornings:
February 8, 15*, 22*
March 1*, 8*, 15*, 22*, 29*
April 12, 26
May 10, 24
June 7

All meeting times are 10am – 12pm in NLC 239/240/241

*Lenten meetings, we will be participating in the LIVE LENT! Program with the parish.

February 2018 – Liturgical Year Overview for the Month

- ❖ The month of February is dedicated to the [Holy Family](#). This year the first thirteen days of February fall during the liturgical season known as [Ordinary Time](#), which is represented by the liturgical color green. Green, the symbol of hope, is the color of the sprouting seed and arouses in the faithful the hope of reaping the eternal harvest of heaven, especially the hope of a glorious resurrection. The remaining days of February are the beginning of [Lent](#). The liturgical color changes to purple — a symbol of penance, mortification and the sorrow of a contrite heart.
- ❖ The Holy Father's Intentions for the Month of February 2018: That those who have material, political or spiritual power may resist any lure of corruption. (See also [Apostleship of Prayer](#))
- ❖ Highlights:
 - **February 2 – Presentation of the Lord** This feast is a festival of light. The procession, in which the blessed candles are carried by clergy and faithful, recalls by its symbolism the manifestation of Christ, the Light of the world, received in the temple. "A light to the revelation of the Gentiles, and the glory of Thy people Israel."
 - **Recipe of the Month: Heart Cakes**, St. Valentine's Day is a joyful feast, and there's no better way to observe it than by exchanging sweet, heart-shaped confections.
 - **Activity of the Month: Candlemas Ceremony** The family, who with lighted candles goes in spirit to the Temple with our Lady, will learn a wonderful lesson of her humility.

Resources and Reads – Click for link

- ❖ [12 February Activities for Catholic Families](#)
- ❖ Meal idea: [CRS Rice Bowl Lenten Recipes](#)
- ❖ FREE Printable [Religious Valentine's Day Cards for Kids](#)
- ❖ Busted Halo's [Ash Wednesday and Lent in Two Minutes](#)
- ❖ [Strong Catholic Family Faith – Lent](#) This website has a *WEALTH* of links for Lenten ideas for your families, take some time to check it out!
- ❖ [40 Ideas to Get the Most out of Lent](#) This, of course, is not an exhaustive list of Lenten ideas. But it's a start!
- ❖ [Lenten Activities for Children](#) Lent is a wonderful season during our liturgical year to share the concepts of prayer, fasting and almsgiving with our children.
- ❖ [Fasting, Giving, Praying: 25+ Ideas for What Kids & Teens Can Do for Lent](#) Here are some strategies for helping your kids get involved in these traditional penitential practices.
- ❖ Reads:
 - [Forty Days, Forty Ways: A New Look at Lent](#) by Marcellino D'Ambrosio Ph.D.
 - [A Mother's Rule of Life](#) by Holly Pierlot
 - [The 10 Habits of Happy Mothers: Reclaiming Our Passion, Purpose, and Sanity](#) by Meg Meeker

St. Matthew Upcoming Events

- 2/1. Divine Mercy Holy Hour, 7:30pm
- 2/2. First Friday Ministry 10:30am
- 2/3. St. Blaise Throat Blessing after 9am Mass
- 2/4. Boy Scout Sunday Mass, 12:30pm
- 2/8. VBS Sneak Peak, 6:30pm
- 2/11. Knights of Columbus Breakfast, 8:00am
- 2/14. Ash Wednesday
- 2/22. St. Peregrine Healing Prayer Service, 7:30pm

Please see bulletin or [church website](#) for more information.

Check out the St. Matthew [REACH website](#) for service opportunities for your family!



St. Matthew Moms Group

Mission: St. Matthew Mom's Group supports the vocation of motherhood by strengthening faith through various readings including Scripture, the Catechism and various books applicable to Christian family life. Many moms find the open discussion format to be encouraging and inspiring in developing loving parenting tools and creating a solid Catholic domestic church.

St. Matthew Mom's Group meets every other Thursday throughout the school year. You can drop in for a session at your convenience or attend them all. All mothers are welcome!

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