

LENT



In his [Lenten message for 2015](#). . . , Pope Francis asks us to "make our hearts firm" (Jas 5:8) and to be "merciful, attentive and generous." Embrace his call to mercy by reaching out to those in need. Be attentive to the Lenten call to prayer; be generous with your time and treasure.

"Through prayer, charity and humility before God, people receive a heart "which is firm and merciful, attentive and generous, a heart which is not closed, indifferent or prey to the globalization of indifference," Pope Francis says in his Lenten message. Lent begins February 18 for Latin-rite Catholics.

Raise Up. Sacrifice. Offer.

Take inspiration for your Lenten journey from the pope's message and our [calendar](#).

This Lent, you are encouraged to *raise up* the needs of the world in [prayer](#), to [sacrifice](#) by giving up food and material wants, and to [offer](#) your time, talent and treasure as good stewards of the gifts God has given you.

"...how greatly I desire that all those places where the Church is present, especially our parishes and our communities, may become islands of mercy in the midst of the sea of indifference!" — Pope Francis, [Message for Lent 2015](#). . .

During Lent, the Church asks us to surrender ourselves to prayer and to the reading of Scripture, to fasting and to giving alms. The fasting that all do together on Fridays is but a sign of the daily Lenten discipline of individuals and households: fasting for certain periods of time, fasting from certain foods, but also fasting from other things and activities. Likewise, the giving of alms is some effort to share this world equally—not only through the distribution of money, but through the sharing of our time and talents. Contemplate the meaning and origins of the Lenten fasting tradition in this [reflection](#).

In Lent, the baptized are called to renew their baptismal commitment as others prepare to be baptized through the [Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults](#), a period of learning and discernment for individuals who have declared their desire to become Catholics.

The key to fruitful observance of these practices is to recognize their link to baptismal renewal. We are called not just to abstain from sin during Lent, but to true conversion of our hearts and minds as followers of Christ. We recall those waters in which we were baptized into Christ's death, died to sin and evil, and began new life in Christ.

On these pages, you will find a variety of suggestions and resources to help you "raise up," "sacrifice," and "offer" during this Lent and to embrace your baptismal commitment.

Catholics are also encouraged to make going to confession a significant part of their spiritual lives during Lent. The U.S. Bishops' statement, "[God's Gift of Forgiveness: The Pastoral Exhortation on the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation](#)" can be distributed and shared in parishes. Dioceses are encouraged to make the sacrament available often during Lent and to use [these resources](#) to promote participation. We also have [resources to help individuals](#) who have not been to confession in a while "rediscover" the sacrament