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IDEAS FOR LIVING BETTER FROM THE FAMILY LIFE OFFICE

Family Ritual

Unless you came into the Church as an adult, most of us don't remember what your **baptism** was like. As Lent approaches, take time to go back to the beginning with your kids. **Tell them about their Baptism:** who was the priest or deacon, who else was there, how you prepared for it, how they responded to it - did they cry or stay asleep, and what you did afterward. Be sure to bring out pictures or videos to help the memories come alive.

Andre McCarville

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Do more with Radical Love

Perhaps it stems from watching a webinar about **St. Teresa of Kolkata** ... or reading about legendary Catholic activist **Dorothy Day** ... or reading about the selfless devotion of parents with babies in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU) of hospitals around the country.

Whatever the source, I have found myself of late contemplating the concept of **radical love**. Indeed, it must be the most powerful force on earth, and its origin is in the One Who loved us first—our Father in Heaven.

But I recognize within myself a lack of that nobility that distinguished the saints. I know no lepers I can care for, and my cramped apartment will not accommodate multiple struggling families.

It would be easy, then, to think that **radical love** is beyond my capability. But in my heart, I know that is not the case — that with God, all things are possible.

However, neither Earth nor Heaven were built in a day. I need to take baby steps to



(Continued) It occurred to me that others — even heroic mothers — may wonder how to love to their full capacity. Therefore, I would like to offer three ways to start to unleash the power of **radical love**:

- **Pray** for those who are on the “**other side of the fence**.” These may be people who openly dislike you, or who oppose your values. They may be people you know well or who you are only acquainted with through news headlines. I recall a woman I knew, whose confessor believed she was an unheralded saint. On the day of a famous dictator's death, she asked me to join her in praying for his immortal soul. Somehow, I moved past my initial reluctance and joined her in praying for an enemy—a moment of profound grace I will never forget.
- **Forego** buying something you really want, **and give** the money you would have spent to a homeless shelter, soup kitchen, or other charity. When I make such sacrifices, I can almost hear the crackle of icicles melting from my heart. With each little treat I pull from my greedy hand, I can lend a helping hand to someone else.
- Do something extravagant for God. Spend an **extra hour this week in prayer**. Don't worry, if you are pressed for time, you can divide it into 15-minute morsels. The extra love you give to God will come back to you ten-fold. I strongly believe that, what this world of ours needs most in 2020 is the power of **radical love**. The good thing is — it's highly contagious. The love you give will be multiplied by others, making your neighborhood a model of a Heavenly home.

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World Marriage Day February 9, 2020

World Marriage Day takes place on **February 9, 2020**. World Marriage Day is an observance sponsored by the American organization Worldwide Marriage Encounter, associated with the Catholic Marriage Encounter movement and observed on the second Sunday of February each year. Its purpose is declared to be: “World Marriage Day **honors husband and wife as the foundation of the family**, the basic unit of society. It salutes the beauty of their faithfulness, sacrifice and joy in daily married life.

This text has been taken from www.cute-calendar.com

Families and the Gospel

February 2

Feast of the Presentation
Luke 2:22-40

Family life provides opportunities to grow in holiness. We are never perfect on this side of Heaven. Each of us has areas that could be presented to the Lord for purification. Ask the Holy Spirit to guide your family in finding those areas and offering them to God.

February 9

Matthew 5:13-16

Today's gospel challenges us to be a "light" to our family. Parents shine their guiding light, not in front but behind them, inviting their children to follow their "good deeds."

February 16

Matthew 5:17-37

To experience the peace which Christ promises we must shed our grudges, jealousy and feelings of being misunderstood, unappreciated or ignored. Peace and anger don't mix. Today's gospel warns, if you want peace in your heart and home, get rid of your anger. Anger is too costly.

February 23

Matthew 5:38-48

Giving the shirt off your back, turning the other cheek or walking / driving the extra mile is normal stuff in families. We do that for one another. Today's gospel reminds us all people, even those we don't like, are our brothers and sisters. Our family should prepare us to be FAMILY to others.

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A Family Perspective by Bud Ozar



**February 26—
Ash Wednesday**

**March—
Five Sundays of Lent**

**April 5 -
Palm Sunday of the
Passion of the Lord**

**April 9 & 10
Holy Thursday and Good
Friday of the Passion of the
Lord**

**April 12-
Easter Sunday of the
Resurrection of the Lord**

Question:

Every year during Lent I'm asked why Catholics fast and abstain. How can I explain our Lenten practice?

Answer:

Explain that **Lent is the 40 days before Easter in which Catholics pray, fast, contemplate, and engage in acts of spiritual self-discipline.**

Catholics do these things because Easter, which celebrates the Resurrection of Christ, is the greatest holy day of the Christian year (even above Christmas) and Catholics have recognized that it is appropriate to prepare for such a holy day by engaging in such disciplines.

(Archbishop Fulton Sheen noted that the Protestant attitude is summarized by the line, "First comes the feast, then comes the hangover," while the Catholic attitude is "First comes the fast, then comes the feast.")

The reason Lent lasts 40 days is that 40 is the **traditional number** of judgment and spiritual testing in the Bible (Gn 7:4, Ex 24:18, 34:28, Nm 13:25, 14:33, Jon 3:4). Lent bears a particular relationship to the 40 days Christ spent fasting in the desert before entering into his public ministry (Mt 4:1-11). Catholics imitate Christ by spending 40 days in spiritual discipline before the celebration of Christ's triumph over sin and death.

Fasting is a biblical discipline that can be defended from both the Old and New Testaments. Christ expected his disciples to fast (Mt 9:14-15) and issued instructions for how they should do so (Mt 6:16-18). Catholics follow this pattern by holding a partial fast on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday.

Abstinence from certain foods is also a biblical discipline. In Daniel 10:2-3 we read, "In those days I, Daniel, was mourning for three weeks. I ate no delicacies, no meat or wine entered my mouth, nor did I anoint myself at all, for the full three weeks." Catholics use a practice similar to Daniel's when, as a way of commemorating Christ's Crucifixion on a Friday, they **abstain from eating meat on that day of the week** during Lent. The only kind of flesh they eat on Friday is fish, which is a symbol of Christ. **Even the Ash Wednesday practice of having one's forehead signed with ashes has a biblical parallel. Putting ashes on one's head was a common biblical expression of mourning (1 Sm 13:19, Est 4:1, Is 61:3; see also Est 4:3, Jer 6:26, Ez 27:30, Dn 9:3, Mt 11:21, Lk 10:13). By having the Sign of the Cross made with ashes on their foreheads, Catholics mourn Christ's suffering on the cross and **their own sins**, which made that suffering necessary.**

Catholic Answers, "Why Do Catholics Practice Fasting and Abstinence during Lent?" (San Diego: Catholic Answers, 2019)