



# Opening our Hearts

*A Lenten journey for families*

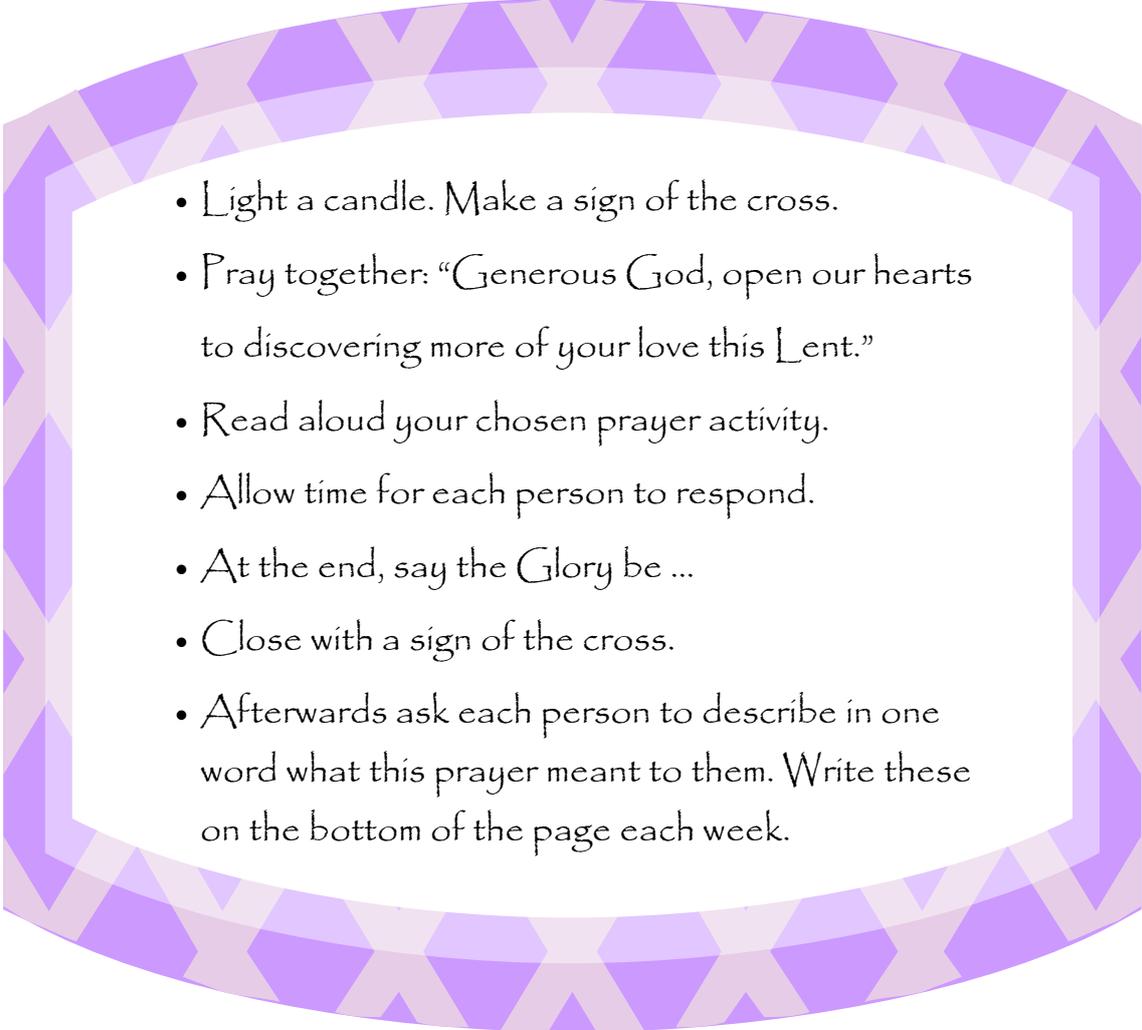


**Deoise Chiarraí**

# Invitation

Lent is a time when we are invited to start afresh on our faith journey and attune to the reality of God's abundant love. Traditionally, we do this through prayer, fasting and almsgiving. Helping children pray in different ways deepens our relationships with one another, with God and with creation. Simply put, prayer helps us to grow in love.

This booklet serves as a resource to pray with your family during the six weeks of Lent. Each week you are invited to choose one prayer activity to nourish your family faith. What is involved is commitment, perhaps 15 minutes every week, and some small preparation. Before your prayer, plan where and how this will take place at home. Who will be present at this time of family prayer? Having selected your prayer option, gather as a family, reminding your children why this time together is important to you.

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- Light a candle. Make a sign of the cross.
  - Pray together: "Generous God, open our hearts to discovering more of your love this Lent."
  - Read aloud your chosen prayer activity.
  - Allow time for each person to respond.
  - At the end, say the Glory be ...
  - Close with a sign of the cross.
  - Afterwards ask each person to describe in one word what this prayer meant to them. Write these on the bottom of the page each week.

**In asking God to open our hearts this Lent,  
may we discover God's loving presence  
amid all our family realities.**

# Ash Wednesday

All around the world, Catholics begin the season of Lent on Ash Wednesday. The ancient ritual of having damp ashes smudged on our foreheads serve as a physical reminder of the invitation to refocus on God's abundant love. Pope Francis reminds us that small acts of kindness, not great speeches, show God's love best.



## Week 1: Opening our Hearts

Select one of the following for your family prayer focus



Write an echo of your family prayer experience...

## Week 2: Sharing the Good News



Pray for the work of Trócaire:  
hold in your heart the people  
of Uganda, Lebanon and  
Guatemala.

[www.trocaire.org](http://www.trocaire.org)

Name all the countries  
your extended family has lived in.  
Pray for all living far from home,  
especially missionaries  
and humanitarian aid workers.

Write an echo of your family prayer experience...

## Week 3: The Lord is Compassion and Love

In *Rejoice and Be Glad*,\* Pope Francis invites us to “Live the present moment, filling it to the brim with love. Seize the occasions that present themselves everyday.” He also reminds us that God bends down and uses us, you and me, to be his love and compassion in the world, each in his or her own way, wherever we find ourselves.



Close your eyes.

Picture yourself looking at God.

Bask in God's gaze.

Let God's love warm your heart.

What does God say to you?

Name the many ways you see  
God's love and compassion  
present in our world.

How are you an expression of  
God's love and compassion  
at home and in school?

Write an echo of your family prayer experience...

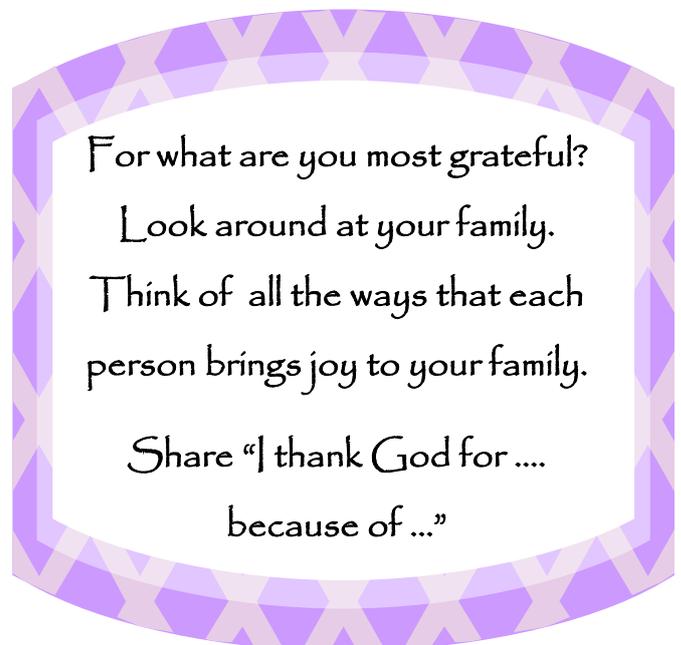
\**Rejoice and Be Glad*: On the Call to Holiness in Today's World, 2018

## Week 4: Generous Love

The fourth week of Lent begins with Laetare Sunday which invites us to rejoice and be joyful.

What gives you joy?

Read the story of the Prodigal Son in Luke's Gospel, chapter 15.



Write an echo of your family prayer experience...

Who else might you share this joy with? Visit an elderly neighbour.

## Week 5: Forgiveness

Pope Francis has a message of encouragement for all families: “The family is a great training ground for the mutual giving and forgiving without which no love can last for long. There is a simple secret to healing wounds and avoiding recriminations. It is this: do not let the day end without apologizing, without making peace between husband and wife, between parents and children, between brothers and sisters ... Build bridges, not walls.”



Pray the Our Father...

Talk to God about some situations that need the gifts of forgiveness and peace at home and throughout our world.

How can you be a peacemaker?

Pause a moment and think about someone you're not getting on with.

Talk about it with God.

If it's something you did, say sorry.

If it's something that was said or done by the other person, forgive her or him.

Write an echo of your family prayer experience...

Call into your local church and light a candle, asking God to help you.

## Week 6: Holy Week and Easter

On Holy Thursday Jesus asked us to remember him through acts of loving service , like washing the feet of others, and through sharing his life in Communion. Jesus totally trusted in God. On Good Friday Jesus suffered death by crucifixion. He died and was buried. We celebrate God raising Jesus to New Life on Easter Sunday .

Prepare a basin of warm water and wash each other's feet, one at a time.

What would you say to Jesus if you were washing his feet?

Hold a cross in your hand.  
Share what gives you hope and why.

Read back over your family prayer experiences. Write some highlights of where you were aware of God's presence at home, at school, and in our world...



Bring Easter holy water from your parish church. Bless each room in your home.



[www.dioceseofkerry.ie](http://www.dioceseofkerry.ie)

**May you know God's love  
and abundant blessings  
in your life.**