

KidNews Today

The Catholic School Edition

Holy Family Catholic School

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Lent Begins! How Exciting!

Ooooh...you don't think Lent is exciting? 40 days of...no cookies? Picking one item to give away each day? Going on a swimsuit diet but pretending to do it for God, and wondering why God cares what you eat and don't eat? You are missing all the excitement!

The late Thomas Merton wrote about many things, and he wrote at length about the disciplined lifestyle of the Trappist monastery where he lived as a contemplative priest in the Cistercian Order. As he noted, this religious order of Catholic brothers and priests has perhaps the most extreme daily discipline of silence, prayers, work, fasting, and physical poverty. He also cautioned against seeing these practices as merely a lifestyle choice of being a "pious athlete." That misses the point. The point of all those details is to push aside things that ultimately don't matter to make room for what, or Who, does matter. It is tempting to see Lent as a chance or a duty to be a "pious athlete," but while that is commendable, it can make it a dry exercise of self-discipline without the learning and the act of following implicit in "disciple."

Perhaps a more effective way to think of Lent is as an invitation to enter more deeply into a relationship with God. Every relationship needs some attention and in our human relationships we are often well aware of when we have grown apart, or become bored or distracted, or have been disappointing or disappointed in some combination of ways. The primary practices of Lent—prayer, fasting and almsgiving—are maps and paths to put us on the right track in our most important relationship, the Relationship that makes any other relationship worthwhile.

God doesn't care what swimsuit size you wear, but you might feel more energetic, healthier and more whole if your lifestyle habits were healthier. We are supposed to take care of our health—whatever degree you've been blessed to receive—and not numbing ourselves in body, mind and spirit with excesses (as in addictions) or with unhealthy denial (such as in anorexia nervosa or bulimia nervosa).

Does God care how much television you watch, or what you watch? Consider author/speaker Matthew Kelly's question: will watching this, or reading that, make you a better person? That creates room for wholesome humor, sports, drama that elevates and illustrates, etc., but not for degrading or senseless pursuits.

Fasting helps us make space for what matters, and to discipline ourselves in small ways. If you can't give up snacks on certain holy days, how are you going to resist all the temptations of the world when you leave home for college, or make your wedding vows? If you can't sit in silent prayer with God for fifteen minutes, how will you be able to sit all night beside a feverish child? If you can't go without extras to buy some groceries for your church's food pantry, how can you complain about the failure of local government to "do something" about poverty or hunger in your area? Lent is a great opportunity for all of us to put our choices where our opinions like to sound off, to follow our Leader in action, as well as silent, hidden prayer. I don't know if "enjoy" is the proper verb, but let's share this journey with joy! - Dr. Lori Puterbaugh, LMHC, LMFT

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Faith-Friendly News
You Can Use

**Sister Flo Marino,
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February

Holidays

Ground Hog Day 2/2
Valentine's Day 2/14
Presidents' Day 2/20
Washington's Birthday 2/22
Ash Wednesday 2/22
Leap Year Day/
Sadie Hawkins Day 2/29

February resources for parents & professionals

Rediscovering Catholicism, by Matthew Kelly. Many Catholics will be familiar with Matthew Kelly, and a number of churches have been offering this book at a greatly reduced fee as part of our outreach to active parishioners, as well as non-practicing Catholics and others interested in learning about Catholicism.

Mere Christianity, by C.S. Lewis

Orthodoxy, by G. K. Chesterton

The Lord is My Shepherd, by Rabbi Harold Kushner

HEALTH NEWS: Fun online activities for parents and kids to explore together: at the National Institutes of Health' environmental health website, <http://kids.niehs.nih.gov/index.htm>, you can find games, information and activities for kids of many ages, including coloring pages and online story books to share. School age kids will enjoy science experiments you can do at home with simple materials. * * * *

Effects of poor sleep for kids can include symptoms more often associated with Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder such as restlessness and difficulty staying focused on tasks. Some studies link poor sleep in school-age children to a variety of causes, including snoring or even sleep apnea caused by overweight or enlarged tonsils or adenoids; poor sleep habits; inadequate exercise; caffeine and other stimulants; and, of course, stress and anxiety due to life issues such as relocations, parents' marital problems, and the child's own life stresses such as school, sports or other activities. According to WebMD, preschool children need about 13 hours of sleep per day (including naps), school age kids up to age 12 need 10 to 11 hours of sleep per night, and teens should be getting at least 9 hours. * * * *

Ipods and hearing loss: While plenty of baby boomers suffer hearing loss, both from natural aging and unnaturally loud rock music, the latest means of tuning out of the world and into your own music, via mp3 players, is being linked to an increased risk of hearing damage in young people. There are several reasons. First, mp3s mean you can listen for hours without interruption; no pauses to change records, cassettes or CDs. Second, modern players and headphones are capable of higher levels of decibel performance and the better-fitting headphones mean all that energy is directed into the ear. Exposure to 85 decibels of volume for 8 hours can be enough to cause hearing loss. That's the volume of a typical lawn mower. So, a young person who cuts grass and is listening to an iPod loudly enough to overcome the lawn mower is risking hearing damage. * * * *

Toddler meltdowns are often caused by fatigue and overstimulation. Practice tuning in to the early signs of your child's becoming tired and short-circuit the tantrums we associate with the "terrible twos" and "threes" by accommodating your child's natural, healthy need to get sufficient rest and less stimulation. Running errands, visiting with friends and family, and fun outings are all exciting for kids, and too much excitement for too long, too close to nap or meal time, will mean becoming too tired, overwhelmed and cranky. It's our job to teach kids how to manage their emotions, and we equip them for success if we notice early signs, verbalize what's going on and take positive steps to reduce distress before it gets out of hand. Tell your preschooler when you think it's getting to be too exciting to do all these errands at once, and it's better to go home and take a break. Say how nice it will be to have some quiet (or nap, or snack, or whatever time it is on your child's schedule). When we verbalize feelings and strategies, and model calmness, we are teaching without our child realizing it! -

Dr. Lori Puterbaugh, LMHC, LMFT

Relationship Corner: Acting "As If"

Sometimes relationships hit rough spots. Perhaps you are both working too hard, or distracted by concerns about children, finances, aging family members or other stresses. Sometimes one partner goes through a difficult time—a phase of life that may be very normal but still difficult for everyone involved. In these situations, you may not be able to change the circumstances very much. You may be tempted to stay stuck in the same routine; why should you change, you wonder, when the other person keeps on being selfish, distant or distracted by other demands? Thinking this way can set you up for even more relationship

challenges, because it is a step further into selfishness and failing to put the "we" before the "me." Both are important.

In difficult times, when it is tempting to respond to what looks like selfishness with more selfishness, or to indifference with hostility, consider an experiment: behave the way you would choose to behave if you knew, for sure, that your spouse loves you deeply. How would you greet each morning, react to terse responses, and tolerate crankiness, in the short term, if you were confident that an abiding love were under the surface grouchiness or self-absorption? Acting this

way—acting "as if" everything is truly going to be OK—can be a great first step in riding out what should be passing, difficult times. However, of course, there are caveats: neither you nor any children or animals should be subject to abuse of any kind, and it may be necessary to pursue other actions as well, such as Al Anon, if there are addictions driving the selfish behavior. Finally, consider having a time line, which culminates in what will be a very well-grounded request to seek counseling of some sort, to see what else needs to change. Acting "as if" shouldn't be an indefinite plan, but it can be a profoundly helpful first step.—Dr. Lori Puterbaugh, LMHC, LMFT



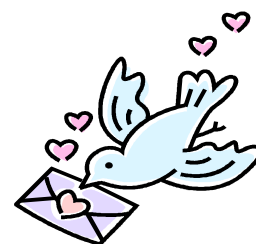
why should you change, you wonder, when the other person keeps on being selfish...?

Something to Talk About for Parents and Teens: Dating?

The question of dating is one that few parents and teens will agree upon easily! Many people begin dating or at least talking, texting, and hanging out with boyfriends and girlfriends before the teen years. There are all sorts of consequences and things to consider about dating, and it can be difficult to have the conversation without arguing. Here's a suggestion: visit the website

www.PamStenzel.com together, and talk about what you hear and read there.

Pam Stenzel is an internationally known speaker and writer on adolescent relationships. Her website has a lot of resources and things to talk about, such as: social networking, dating, questions about handling pressure to be physical in romantic relationships, setting boundaries, and self-respect. It can be a great jump-



ing-off point for parents and their middle-school and high-school age children, to have a meaningful conversation about dating that is rooted in scientific fact and solid morality. As we approach prom season, it's definitely something to talk about! - Dr. Lori Puterbaugh, LMHC, LMFT

Sharing Lenten Practices at Home

The three traditional pillars of Christian penance, and especially Lent, are prayer, fasting, and almsgiving. It can be tempting for kids to just give up something, like a favorite snack, and that may be very appropriate. However, giving up potato chips and replacing them with cookies defeats the purpose. A better option may be for family Lenten practices that help children learn the purpose of these disciplines: to put others first, to focus on God more than on ourselves, and to learn to discipline ourselves in small ways so that when big troubles and big temptations strike, our self-control muscles are strong and ready to work with God. For example, a family may decide to forego certain television shows and instead use that time for Bible-based reading, family prayer time, or faith-based activities such as visiting a chapel for private devotions. Lent begins with Ash Wednesday on February 22, so it's a good time for Catholic Christian families to begin exploring the options for the family's Lenten journey.

This issue of KidNews is focused on the of Lent. It is critical for Christians to realize that the pillars of our spiritual practices are deeply rooted in the Jewish faith and culture. Prayer, fasting and almsgiving didn't arrive on the scene 2000 years ago on the shores of Galilee; these disciplines are fundamental aspects of Judaic life and law. If you are unfamiliar with even the basics of Jewish culture and faith, you are missing the opportunity to understand our heritage as well as the life that Jesus led. You are also missing out on understanding friends and neighbors! With a strong appreciation and proper respect for Judaism, it will become clear why certain changes have occurred in Christian liturgy, e.g., Pope Benedict XVI's request several years ago to have certain terms for the Name of God removed from all Catholic liturgies out of respect for Jewish practices. It is always the right time of year to learn more about the Hebrew Scriptures (sometimes referred to as the "Old Testament" by Christians), and other resources about Jewish beliefs, practices, and history.

Grownup Tip of the Month: Keep Depression at Bay by Reducing Rumination



As has been discussed in KidNews in the past, ruminating—thinking about things over and over—is a recipe for anxiety and depression. While it seems obvious, learning to interrupt the rumination habit and replace it with healthier mental habits is easier said than done! We've had hints on this before, and it's worth revisiting, as, with the internet as a trusty tool, ruminators can find endless ways to keep "researching" and rethinking problems or potential concerns. Here are some tips to add to your arsenal of anti-ruminating strategies:

1. set a firm limit on how much time you will spend on any particular task or problem, e.g., how much time will you spend finding potential diagnoses for some symptoms and then make a doctor's appointment?
2. Practice visualizing a Stop sign (yes, it really does work!). When you catch yourself ruminating, say "Stop!" aloud if you're alone, or in your head if you're around others, and visualize the Stop sign. Over time, you'll be better at interrupting your ruminating.
3. Label what you're doing as "ruminating" instead of flattering yourself with positive terms for being "thorough," "prepared," "a good shopper," etc., when you're really just investing far more time than you ought to into any one problem or concern.
4. If you are legitimately researching a real problem, such as the treatment options for a serious health challenge, gather the information rather than surfing from site to site; print it or save the data to a file; then bring organized information to your healthcare provider rather than having a lot of data that may, or may not apply, swimming in your head creating anxiety and depression.

Seek professional help if rumination continues to interfere with your well-being.

- Dr. Lori Puterbaugh, LMHC, LMFT