



Active Ways to Engage Your Family in Lent

Craft kits are not included but resources of where to purchase what is needed are given. Pick an activity each week to stay involved in preparing for Easter. Enclosed are two of the suggested activities. Please go to Saint James website, under the topic Lent you will find other ideas.

Lent Candle Display – The Counterpart to Your Advent Wreath



Did you know you can count down the days of Lent just like you can the days of Advent? Just light a candle for each Sunday of Lent, of which there are SIX!!!

A beautiful home Lenten display does not have to include a lot of expensive elements. Here is an idea to set up a wonderful display for Lent and keep to a budget.



Take a trip to The Dollar Tree

- **Purple felt: \$1.00** Look in the craft section. Look for “Crafter’s Square Felt Roll”. A purple “fat quarter” from a craft store can also be used, it usually also around \$1.00. A piece of scrap fabric, pillow case, or place mat can also be used. Since purple is the liturgical color of Lent, Anything purple will do.
- **Plastic succulent: \$1.00** The Dollar Tree has a lot of options.
- **Purple lavender tea candles, 8 pack: \$1.00** There are several sizes of candles but this is your cheapest option. To make a Lenten candle display buy 6 candles.
- **Plastic rectangular tray: \$1.00** - Look in the party section near all the plastic table cloths and paper plates. There are glass versions in the dish aisle or if you have one at home you are set!
- **Bag of dry beans: \$1.00** - Pinto beans were used in the above picture but any color bean can be used. Look in the grocery section.
- **Empty vase: \$1.00** - Go to the garden section. In the picture a silver one with twine already glued to the top was used. Clear glass vases are fine and can be found in the candle aisle.
- **Certificate frame: \$1.00** - They hold exactly the size of a piece of standard paper.
- **For the printed pictures and prayers, you can print from:**
<https://shop.catholicicing.com/product/lenten-home-altar-printables/> All of these pictures can fit into the certification frame! Another option is using an Easter religious greeting card. Pictures can be switch out from the frame weekly to keep your Lenten table fresh.
- **Sticks, rocks, vines, etc. from nature – FREE** → Look for anything that has the appearance of being dead! Empty brown branches are perfect for displaying on your Lenten home altar. Be sure to find at least 2 straight sticks for assembling your cross, and some flexible vine like twigs or branches to weave your crown of thorns. Use some kind of string or twine to tie your sticks together.

All of this will come to a grand total of \$10.00. What a barging! Now go put together a super beautiful Lenten display for you home.

Building Lenten Candle Display: This is very similar to an Advent wreath, lighting one candle each Sunday, counting down the days until Lent.



Lighting the candles: Light them **every day during dinner when you say the meal prayer**. Blow them out upon finishing eating. Light the first candle on Ash Wednesday. Do *not* light another the first Sunday of lent, use the Ash Wednesday candle. Candle number 2 gets lit the second Sunday of Lent along with candle number 1. On the third Sunday of Lent, light candles number 1, 2, and 3 and so on. On Palm Sunday, all the candles will be lit. Candles can be in multiple colors, candle number 4 is pink (for Laetare Sunday → this is **the fourth Sunday in the season of Lent**. Laetare is the first word — meaning “**rejoice**” — in the Latin text. The Church expresses hope and joy in the midst of our Lenten fasts and penances.), and candle number 6 can be red (for Palm Sunday). However, using all purple candles is also fine.

For set up of the candle display put the beans in the rectangular tray and line 6 of the candles up → 1 candle for each Sunday of Lent.

Vase Of Branches → Natural brown branches are perfect for a Lenten display. This can be a fun family adventure to find the right stick from the ground or trim them from your trees. Arranged the branches in the vase, and hold them in place by tearing and crumpling brown paper sacks and stuffing it around the branches. To ensure the vase does not tip over place stones into the vase.

DIY Crown Of Thorns and Cross → Use flexible twigs or vines for the crown. The crown can be used for many years to come. Find 5 long flexible vines. Look in your yard or in a park. Make the vine into a circle and tie it with a little bit of twine to hold the initial circle shape.

Take the left-over vine and wrap it around the vine circle. Add another vine, doing the same, twisting it around and around the circle. Keep adding vines until reaching your desired thickness.

To make the cross for the Lenten table display, two straight sticks are needed. One needs to be shorter than the other. To achieve the right length and leave the edges ragged you can break them - this is the look we are going for. Arrange the sticks in the shape of a cross. Then use twine and wrap it around and around the middle of the sticks in an “x” shape. Wrap the twine until the sticks are sturdily in a cross shape, and tie the twine off in the back. Now you have an adorable cross for your Lenten home altar that didn’t cost you anything!



Activity 2



The Three Crosses

Passion Peg Dolls

This is the same principle as making a manger at Christmas. Create the main characters from the Easter story for your kids to move around and play with. To make this set, buy ten wooden peg dolls (available on [Amazon](#) or [Baker Ross](#)) & paints. Paint them in different colors to depict Jesus, two soldiers, two angels, two criminals crucified next to Jesus, and the three women who followed him to the cross.

These three crosses, and the tomb came from a toy safari set – but you don't need to have these figures.

Suggested age: 2-7



Activity 3

Celebrate Palm Sunday (Crafts and Ideas for Kids)

Celebrating Palm Sunday with your family is a great way to live the liturgical year at home with your kids! It begins the last week of Lent, and there are a lot of fun and meaningful ways to **celebrate Palm Sunday with your kids**.

Donkey Footprint Craft for Palm Sunday

Supplies Needed for Palm Sunday Donkey Craft:

- Paint (preferably washable tempera paint for working with kids)
- Paper (Can cut white poster board into quarters)

Tips for Painting a Cute Donkey:

- First of all, the footprint donkeys are cuter as profiles than straight on. This means you can see just one eye.
- Donkey's noses are white at the end, not black.
- Donkeys have big ears, more like bunnies than horses.





To paint a cute profile donkey, follow these steps:

1. When making your gray footprint, be sure to push the paper onto your foot arch so his face will be wide enough.
2. Get some white paint, and paint a big circle of his nose white.
3. Paint a football shape white for his eye. Only paint 1 eye.
4. With black paint, add one dot for a nostril, and one line for the mouth from the bottom of his nose.
5. Also, with the black, outline your white football shape and paint a black dot for his eye. More advanced painters can add one white dot in the middle of the black part of his eye for a little gleam.
6. With gray paint, add long bunny-type ears.
7. With black paint add his hair down his head and back around the toes, and a tuft between his ears.
8. When you're finished with your donkey, add handprint palms across the bottom and a red Hosanna across the top. You're finished!

If you're painting the donkey straight on rather than a profile, he might look more like this:



Source: Catholicicing.com lent



There are some other wonderful activities and crafts to do with your family at:

<https://catholicprouts.com/40-faith-building-lenten-activities/>



Sacrifice beans for Lent are very simple to put together, and can be a great teaching tool for kids during this special season. Used a wooden box to keep the beans in, and moved them over to a glass vase each time they do a good deed or made a sacrifice.

Around the jar, tie a purple ribbon with the printable label that says “Make a sacrifice for Jesus, then place a bean in the jar.”

For the free printable labels go to:

<https://www.catholicicing.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/sacrifice-bean-printable.pdf>

It is recommended to use a large bean because with a small size it will seem like a long time to make a dent in the jar! To move a bean to the glass vase, which will be replaced on Easter with jellybeans, the chores must be completed:

1. All the way
2. Right away
3. With a happy heart

Change the criteria in any way you wish, but it may be a good idea to include they will do what was asked of them without nagging, there was no bad attitude given → like making a bad face, etc., and the chore must be completed properly). Each child will get 3 beans (that will later become candy or raisins or both!) – one bean for each of the requirements.

By simply helping out around the house, you can place a bean in the jar. Use a small table that is child height and lay a piece of purple fabric over it to display the beans on to match the liturgical color of Lent.



On Easter morning, the beans get replaced with jelly beans or use knock-off Jelly Bellies. The actual count of the beans does not really matter, just make sure there is more jelly beans than sacrifices made. Also, replace the purple cloth with a colorful baby blanket, and use a yellow ribbon to hang the new tag that says: "And whatever you do, in word or in deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him." *Colossians, 3:17*



Source: Catholicicing.com lent



Make an Easter Garden



Easter Garden (Empty Tomb Garden)

Fill a tray or short basin with soil, pebbles, moss or grass seed, one large flat rock, sticks a flower-pot 'tomb' or use a potato! There are lots of variations you can find on line. One great idea is to add brightly colored flowers to the children's gardens when they're asleep on Easter Saturday. They will wake up to visible signs of joy and hope on Easter morning!

Suggested age: 4 to 11



10 Good Friday Traditions- Ideas for Observing This Day in Your Home

Good Friday is a very important day for Catholics. It's the day Jesus died on the cross for us and saved us from our sin. Not only is it an important day, it's a day of fasting, prayer, and mourning.

Here are some simple ways to observe Good Friday in your home with your kids:

- Fast. This is required by the Catholic church if you're health and 18 years or older, but I also encourage my kids to skip snacks and any other frivolous eating throughout the day.
- Keep fun activities to a minimum. I know that the world wants to throw Easter parties and have egg hunts on Good Friday, but it's just not the time for fun and celebration.
- Eat hot cross buns for breakfast. Legend says there was a priest in 1361 A.D. that gave out hot cross buns to the poor on Good Friday morning, and the tradition was born.
- Wear black. It's the color of mourning.
- Read the passion story from the Bible. We like to read the passion story from scripture with this symbolic lunch for Good Friday.
<https://www.catholicicing.com/story-of-the-passion-lunch-symbolic-lunch-for-good-friday/>
- Do extra good deeds for family members or neighbors. Hold a door open for someone they do not know.
- Make a small sacrifice.
- For a craft idea for the Devine Mercy Novena at
<https://www.catholicicing.com/craft-a-divine-mercy-novena-counter-for-kids/>
- Go to Stations of the Cross or Veneration of the Cross at your local Catholic church.
- Watch the Story of the Passion on a movie. There are several stories such as Palm Sunday and the Passion for kids from Catholic Media on YouTube.
- **The most sacred hours during Good Friday are from noon to 3:00**, because this is when Jesus was on the cross. They're sometimes known as the 3 hours of agony. During this time, hold a silence in your home, and encourage your children to do the same (to the best of their ability). Turn off the phones, TV, and other devices. Pray the sorrowful mysteries of the rosary, read from scripture, have your children quietly draw or color religious pictures, encourage them to meditate on the passion through their passion peg dolls, or read religious books.
- If you want to take the moment of silence from 12-3 a step further, you can place a crucifix out on the table, or have them draw one and begin the silence in your home. At 12 PM begin a period of silence until 3:00. If you feel you cannot keep that period in silence, have a period of no computer games and all phones must be silenced and put away.



How to Talk About Lent to Your Toddler

Remember to keep the message simple:

- Start by explaining that Lent is a special time that we think about and learn about what Jesus did for us by dying on the cross.
- Jesus knew that He had to go to the cross to die for our sins. It was a sad time, but Jesus did it because He loved us so much.
- At the end of Lent, we have the Resurrection, when we can be joyful because we know that Jesus came alive again!
- Do activities and go to an Ash Wednesday service.
- Explain there is a special day called Ash Wednesday when Lent starts. Sometimes people get a cross marked on their foreheads (point to forehead) to remember that we need Jesus' love and help.
- Read stories from the Beginner's Bible (Jesus is Arrested and Crucified and Jesus is Risen) or the Jesus' Storybook Bible to gently explain the crucifixion and resurrection.
- YouTube has a number of animated short stories and movies on different events that occur during Lent.
- Almsgiving is a traditional practice during Lent for Catholics. Besides loving one another, Jesus has stressed the importance of taking care of the poor. This is an easy task by having them put your church envelopes in the basket at mass.
- Reinforce the importance of kind acts of service with them. Have them give hugs to their siblings to help them have a good day. Send a card to a loved one with a picture of Jesus. Send a video message to a far-away loved one or elderly or sick relative. Have them help with a home chore. Shop with your toddler for a gift for a children's hospital, homeless shelter, or other charity.
- Read Easter stories books or tales of acts of kindness.

For craft and other ideas for toddlers go to:

<https://thepurposefulmom.com/10-simple-toddler-lent-activities.html>



Make Easter Story Cookies

Making Easter Story Cookies (Aka, resurrection cookies) is a fun way to celebrate the true meaning of Easter with your kids! It is a beloved tradition on Holy Saturday in many homes. Each ingredient for the cookies has a symbolism to the resurrection story, and the process of making the cookies all represents the resurrection and has coordinating Scripture that you read with each ingredient and action.

When you wake up on Easter Sunday morning, you'll be greeted by hollow, risen cookies **He is risen! The tomb is empty!**.

Symbolism Behind Easter Story Cookie Ingredients

Each of the ingredients represents something from the passion story. I want to go over these super quick before we get started.

- **Pecans**- these get "beaten" during the process of making the cookies, like Jesus was beaten before he was crucified. This is how the pecans become crushed for the recipe.
- **Vinegar**- the kids smell and taste this as what Jesus was offered to drink on the cross when he gets thirsty, and then it is added to the cookies.
- **Eggs**- eggs represent new life! Just as Jesus lives and emerges from the tomb, chicks hatch and emerge from the egg. Both are left empty in the end.
- **Salt**– kids taste this as they are reminded of the saltiness of the tears that the weeping women and children of Jerusalem cried for Jesus.
- **Sugar**- represents the sweetness of the resurrection and our salvation through the rising of Jesus.
- **Oven**– this symbolizes the tomb that Jesus' body was placed in, and the kids actually have to leave the cookies sealed inside overnight.



Servings: 24

Yield: 1 1/2 to 2 1/2 dozen

Suggested age: 2 to 11

Ingredients

- 1 cup pecan halves
- 1 teaspoon distilled white vinegar
- 3 egg whites
- 1 pinch salt
- 1 cup white sugar

Preheat oven to 300 degrees F (150 degrees C).

1. Place pecans in a resealable plastic baggie. Crush the pecans into small bits. (The children could take turns hitting the nuts in the bag with a wooden spoon. Or each have some in separate bags.) Read John 19:1-3
2. Put 1 teaspoon vinegar into a medium bowl. (Let all the children smell it. Explain to them that when Jesus was thirsty on the cross, this is what they offered him to drink. Add your vinegar to the bowl.) Read John 19:28-30
3. Add egg whites to the vinegar. (Explain to your children that eggs represent life. Then tell them that Jesus gave his life for each and every one of us.) Read John 10:10-11
4. Sprinkle salt into the egg whites. (Put a tiny bit of salt on each of your children's hands, and let them taste it. Tell them that this salt represents the salty tears of Jesus' followers that loved him very much. Have them add it to the bowl.) Read Luke 23:27
5. Add 1 cup sugar. (Let the children hold their hands out again, and this time, give them each a taste of the sugar. Tell them that this is the sweet part of the story because Jesus died for our sins because he loves us!) Read John 3:16
6. Beat with mixer on high speed for 12 to 15 minutes until stiff peaks are formed. The mixture is now pure white. (Explain to your children that this symbolizes Jesus' purity because Jesus never sinned.) Read John 3:1-3.
7. Fold in broken nuts. Drop by teaspoons onto parchment paper lined baking sheet. (Tell your children that these lumpy mounds represent the tomb where Jesus' body was laid.) Read Matthew 27:57-60.
8. Place cookies in the oven close the door and turn the oven off. (Give each child a piece of tape to "seal" the oven.) Read Matthew 27:65



9. Explain how the disciples were in despair to leave Jesus' body in the tomb. Explain to your children that you must leave your cookies in the sealed oven overnight, even if it makes them feel sad. Read John 16:20 and 22, then go to bed.

Open the oven on Easter morning! Your cookies are hollow, just like Jesus' tomb was on Easter morning! Take out the cookies. Read Matthew 28:1-9.

Readings

John 19:1-3 "Then Pilate took Jesus and scourged him. They came up to him saying, 'Hail, King of the Jews!' and struck him with their hands."

John 19:28-30 "After this Jesus... said, 'I thirst.' A bowl of vinegar stood there; so they put a sponge full of the vinegar on hyssop and held it to his mouth. When Jesus had received the vinegar, he said, "it is finished"; and he bowed his head and gave up his spirit."

John 10:10-11 "The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly. I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep."

Luke 23:27 And there followed him a great multitude of the people, and of women who bewailed and lamented him."

John 3:16 "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life."

Matthew 27:57-60 "He went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. Then Pilate ordered it to be given to him. And Joseph took the body, and wrapped it in a clean linen shroud, and laid it in his own new tomb, which he had hewn in the rock; and he rolled a great stone to the door of the tomb, and departed."

Matthew 27:65 "Pilate said to them, 'You have a guard of soldiers; go, make it as secure as you can.' So they went and made the sepulchre secure by sealing the stone and setting a guard."

John 16:20 and 22 "Truly, truly, I say to you, you will weep and lament, but the world will rejoice; you will be sorrowful, but your sorrow will turn into joy. So you have sorrow now, but I will see you again and your hearts will rejoice, and no one will take your joy from you."

Matthew 28:1-9

"He is not here; for he has risen, as he said. Come, see the place where he lay."

And now you can eat the cookies!

Per Serving: 65 calories; protein 0.9g; carbohydrates 9g; fat 3.2g; sodium 6.9mg.

<https://www.catholicicing.com/how-to-make-easter-story-cookies-with-a-printable-recipe/>



Lent and Easter Movies

One positive outcome during this period of COVID, is having the gift of family time. Because our calendars are not packed with events that sent us all in different directions at the same time, there were more family dinners, game nights and full conversations with one another. Without these events of communication, it can be very easy to drift apart from one another

Growing up I can remember my parents asking each one of us after watching a movie together what lesson did, we learn. Of course, such answers as “don’t stand up when Jimmy Cagney is shooting a gun” or “don’t go into the basement if there are ghost in the house” would be mentioned. However, most conversations would center around such topics as doing the right thing, having faith in yourself, and being kind. It was an opportunity to share thoughts and ideas that maybe would have never been expressed or heard.

Sometimes it is these very simple moments that parents can gently smile and reassure themselves that your children do listen and learn from you, religious school classes and watch how people around them treat people kindly and with respect.

Lent season is a perfect period to embrace those seconds in time with a movie night. What a difference it makes when mobile phones and computers are not a focus. Instead, our attention is on just being together and enjoying together.

While researching movies for families to watch together throughout Lent I came upon an *edition of the National Catholic Register*. The movie critic was Steven Greydanus, a permanent deacon in the Archdiocese of Newark, with a list of Lent movie choices. Some of his picks are focused on movies with notable religious and moral themes, but he also included a list of “just-for-fun picks”.

On our list for you and your family is a combination from Steven’s recommendations, others from The Catholic Digest, Loyola Press and other sources.

Share on Saint James website which movies you enjoyed and would recommend!

**Pick one night a week to gather together for a Lent Family Movie Night and
ENJOY!**



Movies By Themes

Stories of Salvation Lent is a time to reacquaint ourselves with salvation history. One focus is on the impending passion, death, and resurrection of Jesus — but Lenten Sunday readings also focus on: Moses and Abraham, founders of the faith. *Abraham* (1994, from The Bible Collection)

The Ten Commandments (1956) This is a long film, at 187 minutes, but worthwhile. If you haven't watched this movie, starring Charlton Heston, do. Even our kids enjoy it. Be sure to read the Bible story of Moses before or after, though — because the movie is better at entertaining than informing.

The Bible (2013) This one's a TV miniseries from *Touched by an Angel* star Roma Downey and her husband Mark Burnett, which has been on Amazon Prime. It doesn't focus solely on the life or death of Jesus, but the last five episodes are about His birth, ministry and death. *The Bible* is rated TV-14 and contains some things like sexual references and violence. If you just want the part about Christ, it was edited into a movie called ***Son of God*** available on Amazon Prime and other platforms. (Older kids & adults)

Moses (1995) This is the more informative movie. It stars Gandhi (Ben Kingsley) as Moses, Richard Nixon (Frank Langella) as Merneptah, Saruman the White (Christopher Lee) as Ramses, and Hercule Poirot (David Suchet) as Aaron.

Joseph: King of Dreams (2000) A family animated movie about the story of Joseph (Ben Affleck) going down into Egypt as a slave and into prison before rising to save his family as well as Egypt has Christological and Passion resonances that work for Lent, too. (*Amazon Prime. Kids & up.*)

Ben-Hur (1959) This is a great movie for Good Friday, for two reasons: First, because it ends with Jesus's sacrifice on the cross; second, because it is long. It is a good way to spend the time after Veneration of the Cross on a fasting day.

The Miracle Maker (2000) This is an under-appreciated gem to watch during Holy Week. A collaboration of Welsh and Russian animators, with an astonishing script by Murray Watts that brings the story of Jesus to life in a way that's simple enough for children but sophisticated enough for Bible scholars and theology students. The all-star cast includes Ian Holm, Miranda Richardson, and Ralph Fiennes as Jesus. It can be watched for free on YouTube from the Church History Channel. (Family viewing) (Animated)

Testament: The Bible in Animation, a series of 25- to 30-minute adaptations of Old Testament stories from the same collaborators, is still on Prime. Both are fine (Family viewing)



Jesus of Nazareth (1977) Like the Gospels themselves, Franco Zeffirelli's epic, ambitious small-screen Jesus' movie, starring Robert Powell as Jesus and Olivia Hussey as the Virgin Mary, is often experienced in bits and pieces, and is commonly better known in its parts than in the whole of its sprawling six-plus hours. Our family watches most of the first two hours every year in the last week of Advent; the last two weeks of Lent are a perfect time to wade through the last two or three hours. (*Amazon Prime*) (Older kids & up)

The Passion of the Christ (2004) This is not an easy one to watch. But the realism of the brutality that Christ suffered for us can make it a spiritually valuable movie to see. Depending on how mature your children are, it might be best to watching it with them when they're in their early teen years. But definitely preview it first before deciding whether it's appropriate for your family. (*It is currently on Amazon Prime. It also airs Palm Sunday, April 5, at 7 p.m. ET/PT; and on Good Friday, April 10, at 9 p.m. and 11 p.m. ET/PT, on cablenet UPTv.*)

The Gospel According to St. Matthew (1964) Cast with unknowns and filmed in southern Italy in stunning black and white, Pier Paolo Pasolini's neorealist-influenced adaptation of the First Gospel is unique in its approach: word for word as regards the dialogue, but with narration replaced by visual storytelling. Dedicated to Pope St. John XXIII, whose 1962 visit to Assisi to meet with artists inspired the film, it's richly deserving of its place among the 15 films in the "Religion" category of the 1995 Vatican film list. (*Amazon Prime. Italian with subtitles. Not for kids, but nothing problematic.*)

The Visual Bible: The Gospel of John (2003) This is a three-hour, PG-13 retelling of John's Gospel, which is streaming on Amazon Prime right now. It contains some realistic depictions of New Testament violence. (Older kids & adults)

Other "Bible movies" recommended:

Exodus (2014)

Jesus of Nazareth (1977)

"The Bible" TV miniseries (2013)

The Gospel of John (2003)

The Young Messiah (2016)

Stories About Conversion & Repentance Lent is a time to go to confession, make amends, and start afresh. A few movies where that happens (except for the confession part):

Tree of Life (2011) This is a difficult movie, but very rewarding if you take some time to understand what the filmmaker is trying to do. Maybe watch Bishop Robert Barron on YouTube before or after the film.

Rocky II (1979) This is the best Rocky movie! It features Rocky's bounce back from celebrity-ism. I love seeing Rocky at his wife's hospital bedside with an absurdly large crucifix, Rocky getting a blessing by a priest before his fight, and the best boxing-match-as-spiritual-metaphor — whoever can get up off the ground at the end, wins.



On the Waterfront (1954) This story of crime, mafia, and conversion is a powerful presentation of Catholic social justice. And as a bonus it is rated an all-time greatest movie with an all-time greatest performance by Marlon Brando.

Molokai (1999) St. Damien De Veuster, the 19th-century “Apostle to the Lepers” on the Hawaiian leper colony of Molokai, is dramatized. Features an impressive cast, including Sam Neill, Peter O’Toole, Kris Kristofferson, Derek Jacobi, Leo McKern and David Wenham (Faramir in *The Lord of the Rings*) as St. Damien. On *Amazon Prime*. (Tweens & up)

Other conversion and repentance movies recommended:

Molokai (1964)

Groundhog Day (1993)

The Island (2006)

Arrival (2016)

Well Digger’s Daughter (2011)**

Intouchables (2012)

*Languages: Swedish, Persian with subtitles

He Even Has Your Eyes (2017)

A Man Called Ove (2015)*

Purgatory (1999)

Good Will Hunting (1997)

Quiz Show (1994)

**Languages: French with subtitles

For kids (and adults)

Cars (2006)

Toy Story 2 (1999)

Movies About Prayer

A focuses of Lent, but it’s hard to find movies that focus on prayer.

The Miracle of Our Lady of Fatima (1952) It is not 100 percent accurate to the Fatima story, but it is faithful to the spirit while trying hard (and succeeding) at entertainment. (Family viewing)

Henry Poole Is Here (2008) With little time left due to a terminal disease, Henry Poole (Luke Wilson) buys a cookie-cutter house in a Los Angeles suburb and waits peacefully to die. However, he starts hearing a voice from next door that seems to be mimicking him perfectly. Upon investigating, Henry discovers that it’s his neighbor’s mute daughter with a tape recorder. Meanwhile, his other neighbor, Esperanza (Adriana Barraza), believes a stain on Henry’s patio is the face of Jesus and begins showing it off to people. The priest in this is played by George Lopez, he has a balanced reaction to a possible miracle.

Into Great Silence (2005) My ultimate into-the-desert Lenten film is Philip Gröning’s transcendent documentary pilgrimage to the Grand Chartreuse monastery in the French Alps, the motherhouse of the Carthusian Order. So many spiritually aware films are about God’s silence or seeming absence; this one is about the presence of a God who is found by those who seek him with their whole hearts. You may never have a better opportunity to set aside two and a half hours to spend (in one sitting, ideally) in prayerful silence with the monks. (*Amazon Prime with a seven-day free*)



The Perfect Game (2009) Another great portrayal of a priest by a Mexican comedian ... in this case Cheech Marin. This is a B sports movie, only tangentially about prayer, but it's great fun.

The Way (2010) An American father travels to France to retrieve the body of his estranged son, who died while attempting the pilgrimage to Spain's Santiago de Compostela. He resolves to take the journey himself, in an effort to understand both himself and his son.

The Rite (2011) All honest exorcist movies show the power of faith and the Church's prayer.

The Exorcist (1973) Probably the most well-known of the exorcist movies. It is extreme in its use of profanity (by a little girl who is possessed). This could be frightening for young viewers.

Little Boy (2015) When auto mechanic James Busbee (Michael Rapaport) is sent to fight the Japanese during World War II, he leaves behind his wife (Emily Watson) and two sons, London and Pepper. Pepper feels his father's absence most keenly, and can't wait for him to return home. An encounter with a magician (Ben Chaplin) and advice from a priest (Tom Wilkinson) convince Pepper that the power to bring his dad back safely may be within himself and his actions.

The Miracle of Marcelino (1955) Young orphan Marcelino (Pablito Calvo) lives in a monastery, where he remains guileless, if mischievous. One day after sneaking into the attic, which has always been to forbidden him, he finds a life-size crucifix. Frightened at first, he then believes the figure on the cross is alive and suffering, and brings it food. The figure speaks and thanks the child. When Marcelino brings food again later, the voice tells him that he can have anything he wishes -- and Marcelino asks to see his mother. **Spanish with subtitles.**

There Be Dragons (2011) An investigative journalist (Dougray Scott) unearths secrets about his father's (Wes Bentley) ties to the controversial founder (Charlie Cox) of Opus Dei.

Facing the Giants (2006) Grant Taylor, a Christian high-school football coach (Alex Kendrick), gets some very bad news. Besides his and his wife's (Shannen Fields) infertility problems, he faces the attempt of local parents to force the school to replace him. His team, the Shiloh Eagles, has never had a winning season in the six years that he has coached the boys. Following a visitor's message, Grant tries to inspire his team to use faith to conquer fear and opposing teams. (Family)

The Song of Bernadette (1943) Based on the popular novel by Franz Werfel, this drama focuses on Bernadette Soubirous (Jennifer Jones), a young French woman who experiences vivid visions of the Virgin Mary. While many dismiss her claims, certain people, including the priest Dominique Peyramale (Charles Bickford), slowly begin to believe her. Eventually, Bernadette is deemed a saint, and becomes a nun at a convent, where she must deal with jealousy from others who resent her revered status. (Family viewing)



A MAN CALLED PETER (1955) This excellent movie demonstrates a contemporary champion of the Christian faith, Scotsman Peter Marshall, who became an insightful clergyman, powerful orator and, eventually, U. S. Senate chaplain. Richard Todd gives a powerful performance as Dr. Marshall. The CinemaScope cinematography is beautifully done and stands out in all its technicolor glory. This movie contains several wonderful sermons and thoughtful prayers that inspired many people to go into ministry over the years. It's well worth seeing multiple times just to hear those sermons and prayers again and again, to be renewed in your spirit and in your walk with God. (On DVD)

Roses in December (1982) During a time when the fight for social justice and the “preferential option for the poor” is often derided as *passé*, this movie reminds us why so many Christians are gripped with a passion to serve the poor, as well as the lasting value of liberation theology. The bare-bones documentary is a moving testament to the witness of three sisters and a lay volunteer who were killed as a result of their work with the poor in El Salvador in December of 1980. “Roses” focuses primarily on Jean Donovan, the Maryknoll lay missionary, chronicling her journey from an affluent childhood in Connecticut to her work with the poor in Latin America. The film’s simplicity is an artful counterpoint to the simple lifestyle of its subjects and the simple beauty of their sacrifice. (Documentary)

Other movies about prayer:

HACKSAW RIDGE (2016)

DESPICABLE ME (2009)

JOAN OF ARC (1948)

The Saint of 9/11 (2006) (Documentary)

Movies About Fasting or Sacrifice

A Man for All Seasons (1966) Thomas More must give up everything — his job, his family, his freedom — to follow his conscience. Even younger children enjoy this movie.

The Ninth Day (2004) Father Henri Kremer (Ulrich Matthes) is a Roman Catholic dissenter from Luxembourg imprisoned at Dachau concentration camp. When Kremer is granted a nine-day furlough by Nazi officer Gebhardt (August Diehl), he becomes entangled in an ethical dilemma. Gebhardt instructs him to convince Luxembourg's bishop to cease all anti-Nazi rhetoric and accept a collaborationist stance. If this happens, Kremer will be released. As the ninth day approaches, Kremer struggles to overcome his moral paralysis. (On Amazon Prime) (Mature viewing)

Romero (1989) Raul Julia plays St. Óscar Romero in John Duigan’s fine biopic, the first feature film from the Paulist Fathers’ moviemaking division. The film focuses on how Romero is gradually transformed by responsibility and circumstance from a timid, bookish caretaker into an impassioned crusader for justice. (On Amazon Prime) (Teens & up.)

I Am Patrick – The Patron Saint of Ireland (2020) A movie about the patron saint of Ireland, St. Patrick himself, has been made available to Netflix users, just a few days out from the national holiday in his honor. Starring John Ryhs-Davies (Gimli from Lord of the Rings) and narrated by Moe Dunford (Game of Thrones, Vikings), the film will tell the story of how Patrick opposed slavers, Irish kings, and possibly druids, but that his greatest fight was with the hostility he faced from his fellow



Christians. After a close friend exposed a dark secret of Patrick's, it is believed he was ordered to leave his mission and return to Britain. He had to choose – obey God or obey man? "I AM PATRICK peels back centuries of legend and myth to tell the true story of Saint Patrick. Through historical re-enactments, expert interviews and Patrick's own writings, experience the journey from man to saint." (Available on DVD/Netflix) (Family viewing)

Sophie Scholl: The Final Days (2005) The last six days in the life of 21-year-old anti-Nazi activist Sophia Magdalena Scholl, executed in 1943 with her brother Hans and Catholic fellow conspirator Christoph Probst, is dramatized in Marc Rothemund's tense cat-and-mouse procedural. (Amazon Prime) German with subtitles. (Teens & up.)

Longford (2006) Jim Broadbent plays Frank Pakenham, the seventh Earl of Longford, eccentric leader of the House of Lords in the 1960s and a convert to Catholicism. This fact-based drama focuses on Lord Longford's moral crusade for penal reform and his work visiting prisoners, especially the notorious "Moors murderess" Myra Hendley (Samantha Morton). (Amazon Prime) (Mature viewing)

Les Misérables (1998) This great story was best told in this nonmusical film starring Geoffrey Rush, Liam Neeson, and Uma Thurman. The musical version from 2012 is very good as well.

The Secret of Kells (2010) In the remote Irish woods, Cellach (Brendan Gleeson) prepares a fortress for an impending attack by a Viking war party. Unbeknown to Cellach, his young nephew Brendan (Evan McGuire) -- who has no taste for battle -- works secretly as an apprentice in the scriptorium of the local monastery, learning the ancient art of calligraphy. The Vikings arrives at the monastery and recruits Brendan to complete a series of dangerous, magical tasks. As with most hero's journeys, that the adventure tends to supplant the destination. (Kids & Families)

The Breadwinner is a beautifully animated drama set in Afghanistan. Based on a young adult novel by Deborah Ellis, it centers on an 11-year-old girl who's forced to pretend she's a boy after her father is imprisoned. The movie heartbreakingly captures the violent, anti-women, anti-intellectual, and even anti-literacy stance of the Taliban regime. Women are harassed and beaten for not covering themselves properly, being in public without a husband/father, and drawing attention to themselves. Taliban soldiers and followers intimidate and threaten characters and keep one imprisoned. A few mild insults pepper the dialogue, but it's the realistic violence that's most likely to upset younger viewers. There's also a story-within-the-story in which skeleton ghosts, attacking jaguars, and an evil elephant king figure prominently, but it's not as frightening as the mistreatment of people (particularly girls and women) under Taliban rule. And, ultimately, themes of perseverance, curiosity, and courage prevail. (Family viewing)

The Pursuit of Happyness (2006) Life is a struggle for single father Chris Gardner (Will Smith). Evicted from their apartment, he and his young son (Jaden Smith) find themselves alone with no place to go. Even though Chris eventually lands a job as an intern at a prestigious brokerage firm, the position pays no money. The pair must live in shelters and endure many hardships, but Chris



refuses to give in to despair as he struggles to create a better life for himself and his son. (Family viewing)

Gran Torino (2008) This movie has a *lot* of profanity, but it is an impressive story of conversion and sacrifice in the life of its main character, played by Clint Eastwood.

The Village (2004) An Amish-style community lives cut off from the outside world by the woods, in which they believe dangerous creatures exist. They have an uneasy truce with the creatures - if they stay out of the woods, they are left unharmed. When one of the young villagers becomes ill, the boy who loves her ignores the elders of the village to make a bid to the next town to fetch medicine.

Angels With Dirty Faces (1938) Rocky Sullivan (James Cagney) and Jerry Connolly (Pat O'Brien) were brought up in one of New York's toughest neighborhoods, Hell's Kitchen. While his buddy Rocky gets caught up in racketeering in reform school, Jerry decides to become a priest. Years later, Rocky is released from prison and returns to Hell's Kitchen, where Jerry works with at-risk children. Rocky wants a temporary safe haven with his old friend before resuming his life of crime, but Jerry hesitates, testing their relationship. (Family viewing)

Of Gods and Men (2010) An order of Trappist monks whose members include Christian (Lambert Wilson) and Luc (Michael Lonsdale) live among the Muslim population in a quiet corner of Algeria. As the country is plunged into civil war in the mid-1990s, the men of God must decide whether to stay among the impoverished residents who have been their neighbors, or flee the encroaching fundamentalist terrorists. The situation that unfolds, based on actual events, has tragic consequences.

The Mission (1986) Jesuit priest Father Gabriel (Jeremy Irons) enters the Guarani lands in South America with the purpose of converting the natives to Christianity. He soon builds a mission, where he is joined by Rodrigo Mendoza (Robert De Niro), a reformed slave trader seeking redemption. When a treaty transfers the land from Spain to Portugal, the Portuguese government wants to capture the natives for slave labor. Mendoza and Gabriel resolve to defend the mission, but disagree on how to accomplish the task. (Teens & up)

Beyond the Gates (2005) In 1994 Rwanda, simmering tensions between Hutus and Tutsis boil over into full-scale genocide. Two men, a priest named Father Christopher (John Hurt) and British schoolteacher Joe Connor (Hugh Dancy), get caught up in the conflict and stay behind to help those who seek shelter.

Other movies about sacrifice:

Slum Dog Millionaire (2008)

Saving Private Ryan (1998)

Unbroken (2014)

Cinderella Man (2005)

For Greater Glory (2012)

Captain Phillips (2013)



For kids (and adults!)

- ***Inside Out*** (2015)
- ***Toy Story 3*** (2010)
- ***Finding Nemo*** (2003)
- ***Narnia: The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*** (2005)



Movies About Generosity (Lenten Alms-giving) Finally, we have almsgiving, or generosity. Lent is a time to get used to giving more to others. Be inspired by those who did just that.

The Road (2009) The novel that this movie is based on is very, very harsh and very, very good. The movie does as well as it can to live up to the story of how generosity triumphs when people have nothing at all. America is a grim, gray shadow of itself after a catastrophe. A man and his young son wander through this post-apocalyptic world, trying to keep the dream of civilization alive. They journey toward the sea, surviving as best they can on what they can scavenge, and try to avoid roving gangs of savage humans who will turn them into slaves, or worse. (Teens to adults)

The Boy With Green Hair (1948) Peter (Dean Stockwell), an orphaned boy, is adopted by Gramp Frye (Pat O'Brien) after his parents are killed in Europe while doing war relief work. The boy feels safe with his new caretaker, but when he is taunted for being an orphan, he gets demoralized. The next day Peter wakes up with green hair. Embarrassed and further ridiculed, Peter seeks solace in a nearby forest. To his surprise, he finds other orphans in the woods, who encourage him to spread news of the injustices of war.

The Trouble With Angels (1966) Takes place in a Catholic Girls Boarding High School. It tells the story of how one troublemaker learns to give everything to God. The episodic story line follows the young women through their sophomore, junior and senior high-school years as they pull pranks on the sisters and repeatedly get into trouble. Both girls almost get expelled for smoking in the basement. Although Mary spends much of her time at St. Francis resenting the authority of the Mother Superior and puzzling over why any woman would choose the life of a nun, as time goes on she is touched by examples of the sisters' dedication, devotion, kindness, love, and generosity, and begins to see that their life is one of fulfillment, not deprivation. Mary receives "the call" senior year and, after graduation, remains at the school to begin her novitiate in the order. (Great family movie)

Life is Beautiful (1997) This is a beautiful, gut-wrenching movie about the holocaust and a father's all-out effort to spare his son from emotional trauma.

The Blind Side (2009) There are some important differences between real history and this "based on history" movie, but its portrayal of a good Samaritan family at a Christian school is a refreshing affirmation of the way good often happens.

Wolfwalkers (2020) It's 1650 in Kilkenny, Ireland, we meet young Robyn Goodfellowe (voiced by Honor Kneafsey). Robyn dreams of being a fearsome wolf-hunter like her father Bill (Sean



Bean), but his paramount concern is keeping Robyn safe, as his late wife would have wished. Bill has his hands full: Lord Protector Cromwell (Simon McBurney) wants the forests outside of Kilkenny's walls to be cleared, with the resident wolves either slaughtered or banished. (For kids and adults)

The Scarlet and the Black (1983) This is a very thoughtful movie that will inspire you to stand up against evil--but not fight evil on its own terms, using Force. There is a better way with the help of the Lord. There is a genius way of still getting around being captured by the enemy, resulting in Victory! Defying a Nazi colonel (Christopher Plummer), Vatican Monsignor Hugh O'Flaherty (Gregory Peck) hides thousands of escaped POWs in occupied Rome. (Good family movie)

Up (2009) Carl Fredricksen, a 78-year-old balloon salesman, is about to fulfill a lifelong dream. Tying thousands of balloons to his house, he flies away to the South American wilderness. But curmudgeonly Carl's worst nightmare comes true when he discovers a little boy named Russell is a stowaway aboard the balloon-powered house. A Pixar animation. (Great Family Movie)

Other movies about sacrifice:

➤ ***Lilies of the Field*** (1963)

McFarland USA (2015)

➤ ***Searching for Bobby Fischer*** (1993)

Charlotte's Web (2006)

Movies on Art and Faith

The Face: Jesus in Art (2001) The riches of Christian art, above all the art of Christ, are a spiritual treasure trove, and Craig McGowan's **documentary**, funded in part by the Catholic Communication Campaign, is a treasure map. *The Face* explores both the religious and the artistic significance of the portrayal of Jesus from the earliest Christian images in the catacombs to the Sistine Chapel and beyond. (As of April, *The Face* is no longer available via Amazon, but you can still watch it in eight 15-minute installments on YouTube). (Kids and up.)

The Mill & the Cross (2011) The world of Pieter Brueghel's 1564 painting *The Way to Calvary*, is brought to surreal life in Lech Majewski's enigmatic art-house Passion play, which is at once about the creation of the painting, the Passion of Jesus, and the stylized 16th-century Flemish landscape in which Brueghel's painting placed Jesus carrying his cross. The result is a haunting meditation on the power of art, particularly sacred art, to capture the eternal in the midst of mundaneness and horror. (Amazon Prime with a 30-day free trial for Fandor). (Mature viewing.)

Especially For Kids

Brother Francis, Minno, and Catholic Central If you're looking for more, especially stuff that's **suitable and educational for littler kids**, first check out **Brother Francis**. Kids love this animated friar and ask to watch it regularly. There's a DVD on Stations of the Cross, and



also a *Let's Learn About Lent* story-time video that's available on Catholic streamer Formed.org which is currently offering a 40-day Faith at Home free offer. Another place for little kids' content is the Christian streaming service **Minno** which has lots of religious content, particularly two series called *Easter Week* and *Jesus: Messiah, Teacher, King*.

And for **something light that's good for the whole family**, check out Family Theater Productions' fun but educational web series **Catholic Central**, which has a **Lent episode** It's **aimed at teens and college-age people**, but this reviewer found it pretty good as an adult -- and my 5-year-old enjoyed it, too! You can watch on YouTube, or go to Catholic Central.com, for each episode there are activities and downloadable resources for individuals and groups.

Song of the Sea (2014) Saoirse is a child who is the last of the selkies, women in Irish and Scottish legends who transform from seals into people. This story revolves around the myth of the selkie basically, but the main character is a small human boy who misses his mother and begrudgingly protects his little sister. It can be watch for free on YouTube

Just for Fun

The Greatest Story Ever Told (1965) This four-plus-hour epic movie about the life & ministry of Christ is rated G, but it does have some elements that could be a bit much for younger viewers, such as John the Baptist's head shown on a platter, massacre of the Holy Innocents, crucifixions of some Jewish rebels, and, obviously, Jesus' crucifixion. **Note:** *The Greatest Story Ever Told* has been streaming on Amazon Prime. right now

The Prince of Egypt (1998) This one isn't about Christ or related to Lent in an obvious way (unless your small children are spiritually advanced enough to get how the Exodus is a type of Christ saving us), but it's a Bible story and can help keep minds and hearts attuned to holy things (and, *The Ten Commandments*, which also covers the story of Moses, is an Easter-season TV staple on ABC. There are some intense/frightening moments that could call for parental explanation, depending on the age and maturity of the viewers. (This was streaming on Hulu) (Kids & Adults)

All things Aardman! Amazon Prime has *Wallace & Gromit: The Complete Collection* (that's the original three stop-motion masterpieces — *A Grand Day Out*, *The Wrong Trousers*, and *A Close Shave* — along with the later *A Matter of Loaf and Death*), plus the mini-short anthology *Wallace & Gromit's Cracking Contraptions*. Five seasons of *Shaun the Sheep* are also on Prime, while Netflix has the sixth season, subtitled *Adventures of Mossy Bottom*, plus the charming *A Shaun the Sheep Movie: Farmageddon* (the sequel to *Shaun the Sheep Movie*). (Kids & up.)

The Court Jester (1956) The best Robin Hood movie *and* the best Zorro movie of all time is a musical comedy that technically doesn't feature Robin Hood or Zorro, but does have Danny Kaye at his hilarious best in a whimsically labyrinthine tale of derring-do about a usurper king, a band of



merry outlaws in the forest, a masked hero called the Black Fox, and Basil Rathbone himself as the villain. It couldn't possibly be better! (*Amazon Prime*) (Kids & up.)

The Mark of Zorro (1920) Among other silent films coming to Amazon Prime on April 1 is Douglas Fairbanks Sr.'s breakout role in possibly the first superhero movie of all time, a Catholic-friendly swashbuckler in which priests are "soldiers of Christ" and Zorro is a defender of the faith as well as of natives and women. The penultimate reel, as Zorro takes on all his enemies at once, shows off Fairbanks' athleticism and daring in a series of some of the most jaw-dropping stunt work I've ever seen. (*Amazon Prime starting April 1*. Kids & up.)

Jodhaa Akbar (2008) If you love Golden Age Hollywood musicals and costume epics but aren't familiar with Indian Bollywood cinema, Ashutosh Gowariker's sweeping romantic historical epic is a fine place to start. Brilliant colors, opulent costumes, epic battle sequences and magnificent sets, a grand love story between a 16th-century Muslim emperor and a Hindu princess is dazzling, old-fashioned spectacle — with plenty of singing and dancing. (*Netflix*. *Stylized battle violence*). (Older Kids & up)

Love & Friendship (2016) Whit Stillman has been called "the Jane Austen of indie film," and his most recent film, an adaptation of an early Austen novella, is Stillman at his Austen-est. Stillman's trademark hyper-articulate dialogue meshes perfectly with Austen's own witty language, making it impossible to tell where one ends and the other begins. (*Amazon Prime*) (Teens & up)

Much Ado About Nothing (1993) Kenneth Branagh's giddy romp through one of Shakespeare's frothiest comedies is irresistible, in no small part to Branagh's comic chops, but also to his and Emma Thompson's astonishingly expressive facility with the Bard's language — I've simply never heard anything like it. Keanu Reeves is miscast, Robert Sean Leonard and Kate Beckinsale are fine, as is Denzel Washington, and Michael Keaton is a hoot. (*Amazon Prime*) (*Brief nonsexual nudity; a fleeting sex scene [nothing explicit]*). (Teens & up)

Phines and Ferb (2007-2015) It's astonishing how consistently smart and clever this show is, but even more astonishing is how good-natured and genuinely nice it is. Drain 95% of the rudeness and cynicism from lightning-quick animated comedies such as *The Simpsons* and *Dexter's Laboratory*, add an infusion of Julie Andrews benevolence and some amazing songs, and that puts you in the ballpark. (*Disney+*) (Kids & up)

Other Fun Movies:

- ***The Rocketeer*** (1991) (*Disney+* *Has violence*) (Older kids & up)
- ***The Sound of Music*** (1965) (*Disney+*) (Kids & up.)
- ***Heaven Knows Mr. Allison*** (1957) (Family viewing)
- ***Strictly Ballroom*** (1992) (*Netflix*) (Teens & up)
- ***Going My Way*** (1944) (Kids & up.)
- ***Spider-Man: Into the Spider-Verse*** (2018) (*Netflix*). (Older kids & up.)

