



Fasting Cup Activity Center

Family Handout

As a family, think of things that have separated you from God and the times when you have turned your attention elsewhere. Talk together about what you can replace in your lives with time spent considering your faith and how to live it.

- ✦ Decide with your family members 10 things from which you can fast on certain days during Lent. Suggestions might be television, computer games, or desserts.
- ✦ Write your family's ideas and activities on 10 paper strips.
- ✦ Decorate a cup with religious stickers.
- ✦ Put the 10 strips (unfolded) into the cup you have decorated and take the cup home to be part of your Lenten Prayer Center.
- ✦ Each day, take one strip out of the cup and follow the fasting idea written on it. At the end of the day, put the strip back in the cup.

Why Do We Fast?

Fasting, defined as partial or full abstinence from food and drink, has been part of nearly every religious tradition. For Christians, fasting is the setting aside of earthly concerns so that we can focus on faith. It is a recognition that we ultimately depend on God and not on material goods to sustain and enrich our lives. It is our response to Jesus' question, "Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing?" (Matthew 6:25)

It is a common mistake to think of fasting as a mere sacrifice or a "giving up" of a thing. It is really more a matter of letting go, of putting away, and of resting from the struggle to get and spend. As Jesus reminds us in the Gospels:

Learn from the way the wild flowers grow. They do not work or spin. But I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was clothed like one of them. If God so clothes the grass of the field, which grows today and is thrown into the oven tomorrow, will he not much more provide for you, O you of little faith? So do not worry and say, 'What are we to eat?' or 'What are we to drink?' or 'What are we to wear?' All these things the pagans seek. Your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. But seek first the kingdom [of God] and his righteousness, and all these things will be given you besides. (Matthew 6:28–33)

St. Ignatius of Loyola encouraged his company of Jesuits to "cultivate indifference." Adults may find *The Ignatian Workout: Daily Spiritual Exercises for a Healthy Faith* (Loyola Press) a useful tool in learning the discipline of fasting.


