

PRETZEL The pretzel was invented by a monk centuries ago as a prize for children who learned their prayers. He called them “little arms” because they looked like arms crossed over the heart – the way people prayed in those days.



Lent is a time for growing closer to God through prayer. In prayer, we: listen to God...talk to Him... and sometimes we sit quietly in his presence, letting him Love us!

Read and talk about what Jesus says about prayer (Matthew 6: 5-14) (Luke 11: 1-13).

When do you pray? Do you have a favorite place to be with God? Does prayer always need words?

St. Mary Church, Painesville OH

“Lent-in-a-Bag” is modified from the idea of Shawn Schreiner and Vicki Garvey and St. Cuthbert Episcopal Church / Gail Jackins

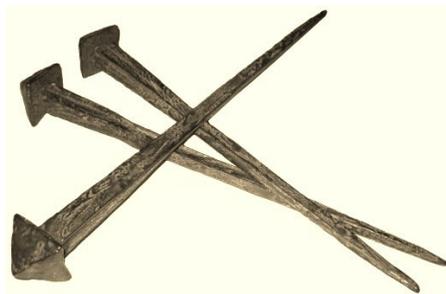
NAIL On Good Friday, Jesus was nailed to the cross– the soldiers pounded a nail through each of his hands and feet. How terrible the pain must have been, as it ripped through his flesh. He had already suffered so much... and now this. Yet he accepted this suffering because he loves us. He died for us. And He rose!

Read about Jesus’ crucifixion (Mark 15:21-41 ... shortest; Matthew 27:32-56; John 19; Luke 23: 26-55)

Hold the nail in your hand. It is much smaller than the nails used to hold Jesus on the Cross.

Sometimes we say words that are hurtful; it is as if we drove a nail into someone’s heart. We can say sorry, but the “hole” will always be there.

Quietly, reverently pass the nail around. Let each person hold it, thinking of Jesus’s love for us. Think also of a time your words hurt someone else. Ask forgiveness in your heart, and ask Jesus to help you to be kinder.



LENT is a time to focus on our relationship with God. Christ’s life, ministry, and death are remembered during this season. You may do this through prayer, reading the Bible, attending Mass more regularly, attending or praying Stations of the Cross, helping others, or making a sacrifice. It’s a time to do penance, to forgive and to seek forgiveness. It’s a time to give to those in need. It’s also a time to think about how God is with us all the time.

Some ideas for using this bag:

- Choose one night of the week and invite those around your table to pick one of the symbols as a starting point for conversation for the whole group, including children.
- Use the Bible citations. No Bible? Go to usccb.org or biblegateway.com
- You may wish to place the items in the center of the table, or on a home altar. Children may wish to add other symbols of Lent.

SAND Between his baptism and the beginning of his adult ministry, Jesus went into the wilderness for 40 days ‘to be tested’. The desert is a dangerous place and Jesus was hungry, cold, and tired. He was also tempted and tormented, but he didn’t give up. When things get tough, how do we remember God is there for us? What constitutes wilderness in your life? What have you learned there? What might you learn there?

Read the story of Jesus wandering in the desert, then open the sand and touch it. (Matthew 4, Mark 1, or Luke 4.)

ROCK While in the wilderness, Jesus was tempted by the devil to transform stone into bread. He knew he was not called to do this by God. He didn’t change the rock into food. Later, Jesus became known for doing amazing things. He fed the hungry, offered encouragement, and healed people. When you are angry or sad, it may feel like your heart has become a rock. How does that feel? How can you help someone who has a “rock” heart? How does it feel to help others? Pray for a “tender heart!”

Read the story of Zacchaeus. (Luke 19) Jesus transforms Zacchaeus. Jesus transforms us and helps us make better choices. Is there a place in your life where you could make better choices, with Jesus’ help?



CANDLE Winter can be cold and dark. Spring is a time where we think of sunshine and flowers blooming. Jesus is called the Light of the World. Jesus told his disciples to be a light in the world too and make a difference. So where do you shine? What do you think you are good at? What is your talent? How can you encourage someone to see the good in themselves?

Light the candle and read Matthew 5:14-16, and sing the song *This Little Light of Mine*. How do you let your light shine? (look on YouTube for: The Butterfly Circus / El Circo de la Mariposa—a 20 minute film)

SHELL Historically, the season of Lent was when new Christians were prepared for baptism. Jesus began his ministry after his baptism. As someone who has been (or will be baptized) how do you minister? How are you living out the promises made at your baptism? How are you following Jesus?



Read the story of Jesus’ baptism (Matthew 3, Mark 1, or Luke 3) and look at photos of baptisms of family members.

SEEDS Watching the growth of flower seeds reminds us of the miracle of hope and transformation that is coming in the promise of Easter. The seeds change; they decay as they transform into a new life – a new life that we can’t really imagine when we plant it. Where is there hope in your life? Where is there mystery? What transformation do you hope for during the season of Lent?

Read the Parable of the Mustard Seed (Matthew 13:31-32 or Luke 13:18-19) and the Parable of the Leavened Bread (Matthew 13:33 or Luke 13:20-21) and talk about change. What things can you think of that change?

Plan when you will plant your seeds!