

Lenten “Pray”tzel Prayer

by Debbie Streicher



As we observe the season of Lent, we reflect on the traditions that have been passed down over the years and often wonder about their history and background. Two of these traditions are fasting and prayer. During Lent in the 600's, it was not a choice, it was the law for people to fast and not eat eggs, milk, and fat. Because of this law, a monk had an idea and made the first pretzels using water, flour and salt. The common way to pray at that time was to hold your arms over your chest so he decided to shape the pretzels to look like the folded arms. Pretzels became a traditional food for Lent in the Middle Ages. The Latin word for pretzel is “bracellae” meaning little arms. The Germans called them “bretzels”. Today both hard and soft pretzels still have this shape.

Telling this story to our children can be a memorable way to introduce the rituals and traditions we recognize in our homes and congregations at this time of year. You can make soft pretzels together, buy frozen ones to bake, or get a bag of hard pretzels as a visual while talking about prayer. Suggested things to talk about:

- When do you pray? (home, bedtime, morning)
- What do you pray for? (thanks, praise, ask)
- How do you pray? (hands folded, open, or across your body)

After taking time to talk about ways we pray and when we pray, think of how a pretzel snack can be used during Lent and other times of the year as a reminder to take a moment to pray.

In our congregation we have a special time during worship when we invite children forward and invite all of God's children (all ages) to join with us in prayer and actions as we talk about how to practice our faith at home. This week I told the story of the pretzel and prayer and invited everyone to fold their hands across their chest as we said a prayer together. Then each of the children were given a small bag of pretzels to take home and asked to say a prayer of thanks or praise for each pretzel they ate from the bag. They were also encouraged to pray with their hands across their chests during the rest of Lent and given a prayer to use at mealtime. After the children went back to sit down, our interim pastor, Rev. Steve Haptonstahl, told everyone that he would also be using this idea at home and would now call this common snack a "pray"tzel. What a good way to describe this to our children and grandchildren!

Suggested links for more ideas:

[Making Pretzels: A Traditional Activity for Lent](#)

[Busted Halo: The Pretzel: Brought to You by Lent](#)

[Pretzel Prayer Pals – A Lenten Outreach Activity](#)

[Family Activity for Lent: Making Pretzels](#)