40 WAYS TO PREPARE FOR Easter

1 Return. It's Ash Wednesday. Remember you are dust and to dust you shall return. As you receive your ashes, reflect on the the great love Jesus has shown us through his death on the cross. Return to that love.

2 Pray. Commit to spending more time in prayer during this Lenten season. Add brief moments of prayer to your day by praying a breath prayer such as (inhale) "Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God," (exhale) "Have mercy on me, a sinner."

3 Fast. In addition to fasting on the prescribed days of Ash Wednesday and Good Friday and abstaining from meat on all Fridays in Lent, commit to fasting or abstaining on other days. Donate the money you would've spent on those meals to an organization working to eliminate hunger and food insecurity.

4 Give. Select an organization that is committed to works of mercy — feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, instructing the ignorant, and so on. Learn how you can give both your time and money to support the work of the organization and do so.

5 Grow. Start seedlings for spring planting. Use the plants as a reminder to grow in your relationship with God during this Lenten season.

6 Repent. Conduct a daily examination of conscience and resolve to turn away from sin and repent for sins of the past.

7 Refrain. When considering what to "give up" for Lent this year, consider refraining from behaviors such as mindlessly scrolling social media, binge watching shows, or other activities that distract you from God and those around you. Use the time for prayer, journaling, or checking in with a friend or loved one.

8 Confess. Restore your relationship with God by receiving the healing and forgiveness offered through the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Check with your parish to find confession times.

9 Reduce. Go through your home and identify clothing, books, toys, and other items no longer needed or used. Donate the items that are in good shape and may be used by others.

10 Rest. Make an effort to get to bed earlier each night. Or mark off an afternoon or evening on your calendar for intentional time to rest. Even Jesus took naps.

11 Visit. Arrange a time to visit someone who is homebound or those who are in a nursing home, prison, or other residential facility. Pray for all who may feel lonely, isolated, ignored, or forgotten.

12 Remember. Visit the cemetery to clean up the gravesite of a loved one or otherwise remember and honor those who have died. Pray for their souls and for all who love them.

13 Listen. Add a Catholic podcast or Christian music to your weekly playlist. Don't forget "Let me be Frank," the podcast from Bishop Caggiano.

14 Move. Exercise and fresh air are good for the body and the soul. Go for a walk, run, or hike. Look for signs of new growth or renewal. Thank God for the gift of creation. Consider praying the Rosary as you go.

15 Learn. Make an effort to learn about the injustices that exist, especially those that affect people in your community. Listen to those who have experienced discrimination, racism, prejudice, poverty, and violence. Ask the Holy Spirit to inspire and guide you to find ways to make the world more just for all God's children.

16 Clean. Choose an area in your home to clean. As you clear out the clutter and scrub the surfaces, recognize how cleaning our physical space can help us to eliminate the clutter in our hearts and minds.

17 Cook. Commit at least one night a week to dinner at home. Plan a menu, buy the ingredients, and enjoy the laughter and conversation that comes with cooking and dining together. As you ask God to bless the food, thank him for the gift of family!

18 Read. Take a few minutes to read the Gospel for Sunday. Reflect on the words of scripture. Ask God to open your heart and mind to better hear his word during Mass this weekend.

19 Advocate. Contact local, state, or national leaders, encouraging them to work toward the common good. Research Catholic Social Teaching or read Pope Francis' encyclical, *Fratelli Tutti* to learn more about the Church's teaching on the common good.

20 Drink. Water, that is! Choose one week to drink only water. Or abstain from coffee, soda, alcohol, or another favorite drink during that time. Donate the money you would've spent on other beverages to an organization that helps people access clean water.

21 Recommit. If you have neglected your Lenten sacrifice or commitment, challenge yourself to begin again.

22 Linger. Refrain from rushing. Stay a few minutes longer at the end of Mass to pray. Sit at the dinner table to enjoy the company and conversation. Try to be more intentional and relish the gifts that God has given you.

23 Attend. Try to attend one additional Mass each week. Arrive a few minutes early to prepare your mind, heart, and spirit to intentionally receive Jesus in the Eucharist.

24 Carry. Journey with Jesus on his way to Calvary by praying the Stations of the Cross. Remember what Christ suffered for love of us.

25 Forgive. Make an intentional effort to mend any strained relationships by asking for and offering forgiveness. Ask God to help you forgive, as he forgives us.

26 Recognize. God is always present. Train yourself to be more aware of the divine presence in your daily life by praying the Examen. Download the Reimagining the Examen app to use as a guide.

27 Write. Hand-written letters are becoming a lost art. Write a note to your spouse, child, parent, or best friend, sharing your love and appreciation for him or her. Share some of your hopes and prayers, too.

28 Relieve. Allow caregivers to take time for themselves. Offer to babysit or provide respite care to those who care for others.

29 Feed. Donate money or food to your local food bank or volunteer to serve a meal at a soup kitchen or homeless shelter.

30 Adore. Find an opportunity for Adoration at a local church and spend an hour with our Lord in the Eucharist. Be still and listen for his still, small voice in the silence.

31 Thank. At dinner, invite each family member to share 1-3 things for which they are grateful. Offer a prayer of thanksgiving to God.

32 Share. Tell a family member, friend, or perhaps coworker the role God and your faith plays in your life.

33 Recycle. Remember that the Earth is our shared home, a gift from God entrusted to our care. Make an effort to reuse and recycle, as well as to reduce pollution and consumption of goods.

34 Rise. Get out of bed fifteen minutes earlier than usual. Use the extra time to pray or read the Gospel of the day. Perhaps you'll just sit with God in the silence, enjoying the sunrise and your first sip of coffee. Thank God for the gift of a new day.

35 Smile. Show others kindness by smiling, doing a favor, or offering encouragement and support.

36 Plan. Holy Thursday, Good Friday, and Easter Vigil are beautiful celebrations of Christ's great love of us. Plan how you will participate and prepare yourself to enter into his suffering, death, and resurrection!

37 Welcome. Invite someone to join you for Mass during Holy Week or for Easter.

38 Memorize. Select a Bible verse and commit it to memory. Recite it when you need to be reminded of God's promises.

39 Connect. Participate in a parish mission, reflection, or retreat. Use the opportunity to connect with other members of the Body of Christ. See the diocesan website for options.

40 Silence. On Good Friday or Holy Saturday, designate time to be silent and reflect on Jesus' death. Remember that, through his death and resurrection, we have been redeemed. Although we will die, our lives will not end, but be transformed.

Celebrate.

Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! Alleluia! Alleluia!

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