

# A 40-Day Guide to Using the Catechism Book for Lent

## On Lent

*The Whole Counsel of God* catechism book has a wealth of resources for use during the 40 days of Lent (the period of preparation for Easter that is modeled after Christ's 40 days of prayer and fasting in the wilderness). This guide suggests resources for each day. Additional suggestions (not in the catechism book) are included in italics.

The words "guide" and "suggestions" are chosen carefully. Lent is an *invitation*, not a *requirement*. This guide provides recommendations for having a meaningful time of preparation for Easter that focuses on deepening your repentance, growing in holiness, and serving others in love.

## Every Day

- **Private Prayer:** Have Daily Morning Prayer (p. 242–245). Before morning prayer, confess sin (see "Confession of Sin" on page 238).
- **Family Prayer:** Have Daily Evening Prayer (p. 254) with your family.
- **Scripture:** Daily Scripture readings at morning and evening prayer: You may continue in your regular Bible reading plan (p. 278 and p. 282) and/or read Lent-specific passages (visit <https://lectionary.library.vanderbilt.edu/daily-readings/>).
- **Singing:** Choose a hymn to sing every day of Lent and memorize as a family (see suggestions for Lent on p. 294).
- **Reading:** Pick a heart-searching spiritual classic (p. 296) and read one or two pages every day. If your church is reading through a devotional book together for Lent, do that instead. For additional book recommendations, see "A Guide to Lent and Holy Week" (<https://holyjoys.org/lent/>).

## Day 1: Ash Wednesday

- Read:** Read the section titled "Lent" on page 307.
- Pray:** Pray the Collect for Ash Wednesday (p. 313).

- Fast:** Do not eat or drink anything except water all day. Whenever you feel a pang of hunger or thirst, remember the sufferings of Jesus, and how he was hungry in the wilderness and said on the cross, “I thirst.”
- Habit:** Choose a new spiritual habit that you want to form (and continue to keep after Lent ends). Fill out the “Goal” line of one of the Habit Trackers on page 230. Your goal can be positive (e.g., fast every Friday until 5 PM) or negative (e.g., stop speaking “sharp” or “critical” words).
- Worship:** Attend an Ash Wednesday service if your church has one.

## Day 2: Thursday

- Read and pray:** Read the Ten Commandments (p. 60–61). Confess to God any ways in which you have broken his commandments and ask for forgiveness (e.g., Jesus taught that lusting in one’s heart breaks the 7th commandment, and being discontent breaks the 10th).

## Day 3: Friday

- Pray:** In addition to regular morning and evening prayer, have Midday Prayer (p. 252) and pray the Collect that begins “Blessed Savior, at this hour...”
- Confess:** We should confess sin first and foremost to God, but the Bible also commands us to confess sin to other believers (James 5:16), especially the pastors/elders which God has appointed as your spiritual overseers (James 5:14–15). If you are trapped in any sins (e.g., pornography or regular fits of anger), reach out to your pastor and arrange a time to confess your sin, pray, and seek counsel to overcome it. For serious sins, inquire about a formal plan of restoration.
- Fast:** Do not eat or drink anything except water until 5 PM.

## Day 4: Saturday

- Read:** Read Catechism Question 54 and the Notes on the means of grace (page 156). Pay attention especially to what is said about works of mercy.
- Give:** Find a way to bless someone in need. For example: Give money to someone who is struggling financially. Make a sacrificial donation to a charity. Take a meal to someone who is sick. Write a note or letter of encouragement. Visit someone who is lonely (e.g., housebound or in a nursing home).
- Pray:** Pray through the Examen (p. 241). Think back over the entire week.

- Fast:** Stop eating at midnight and do not eat until after communion on Sunday. Prepare your heart to humbly receive your spiritual food—the Word of God and the sacrament of Christ’s body and blood.
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## First Sunday in Lent

- Lectio Divina:** Choose one of the passages from the Sunday morning service and use it for Lectio Divina (p. 287).

## Day 5: Monday

- Pray:** Pray the Collect for the First Sunday in Lent (p. 314).
- Read and pray:** Read Catechism Question 15 and the Notes (page 65). Confess to God any ways in which you’ve broken the first commandment.
- Pray:** Pray the prayer of Ambrose “Forgive Me, a Sinner” (p. 264).
- Canto Divina:** Sing “Just As I Am” (p. 142). If you don’t know the hymn, look it up online and sing it until you learn the tune. Consider singing this hymn every day this week at Morning Prayer.

## Day 6: Tuesday

- Read and pray:** Look up the key Scriptures for Catechism Question 15 (page 65). Confess to God any ways in which you’ve broken the first commandment.
- Pray:** Pray the prayer of Ambrose “A New Heart” (p. 264).

## Day 7: Wednesday

- Read and pray:** Read Catechism Question 16 and the Notes (page 66). Confess to God any ways in which you’ve broken the second commandment.
- Pray:** Read through the Questions for Self-Examination (p. 240) and pray about the area of your spiritual life where you most need to improve. If you have mistreated anyone, make it right immediately (and especially before Sunday communion).

## Day 8: Thursday

- Read and pray:** Look up the key Scriptures for Catechism Question 16 (page 66). Confess to God any ways in which you've broken the second commandment.
- Pray:** Pray the prayer from the BCP "Love of God's Commandments" (p. 264).

## Day 9: Friday

- Read and pray:** Read Catechism Question 17 and the Notes (page 68). Confess to God any ways in which you've broken the third commandment.
- Pray:** In addition to regular morning and evening prayer, have Midday Prayer (p. 252) and pray the Collect that begins "Blessed Savior, at this hour..."
- Fast:** *Do not eat or drink anything except water) until 5 PM. Whenever you feel a pang of hunger or thirst, remember the sufferings of Jesus.*

## Day 10: Saturday

- Pray:** Pray through the Examen (p. 241). Think back over the entire week.
  - Read and pray:** Look up the key Scriptures for Catechism Question 17 (page 68). Confess to God any ways in which you've broken the third commandment.
  - Give:** *Find a way to bless someone in need. For suggestions, see Day 4 entry.*
  - Fast:** *Stop eating at midnight and do not eat until after communion on Sunday. Prepare your heart to humbly receive your spiritual food—the Word of God and the sacrament of Christ's body and blood.*
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## Second Sunday in Lent

- Lectio Divina:** Choose one of the passages from the Sunday morning service and use it for Lectio Divina (p. 287).

## Day 11: Monday

- Read and pray:** Read Catechism Question 18 and the Notes (page 69). Confess to God any ways in which you've broken the fourth commandment.
- Pray:** Pray the prayer of Anselm for "Spiritual Affections" (p. 265).

- Canto Divina:** Sing “All to Jesus I Surrender” (p. 170). If you don’t know the hymn, look it up online and sing it until you learn the tune. Consider singing this hymn every day this week at Morning Prayer.

## Day 12: Tuesday

- Read and pray:** Look up the key Scriptures for Catechism Question 18 (page 69). Confess to God any ways in which you’ve broken the fourth commandment.
- Pray:** Pray the prayer of John Wesley “Christ our Righteousness” (p. 265).

## Day 13: Wednesday

- Read and pray:** Read Catechism Question 19 and the Notes (page 70). Confess to God any ways in which you’ve broken the fifth commandment.
- Pray:** Read through the Questions for Self-Examination (p. 240) and pray about the area of your spiritual life where you most need to improve. If you have mistreated anyone, make it right immediately (and especially before Sunday communion).
- Meditate:** Look at the Memory Verses by Topic (p. 292), choose an area of spiritual struggle (e.g., bitterness and resentment), and choose one verse to memorize. Memorization is a form of meditation since it forces you to think about the same Scripture over and over again and internalize each word.

## Day 14: Thursday

- Read and pray:** Look up the key Scriptures for Catechism Question 19 (page 70). Confess to God any ways in which you’ve broken the fifth commandment.
- Pray:** Pray the “Lenten Prayer” of Ephrem of Syria (p. 265).
- Memorize:** Review your memory verse from yesterday and make sure that you haven’t forgotten it.

## Day 15: Friday

- Read:** Read Catechism Question 20 and the Notes (page 70). Confess to God any ways in which you’ve broken the sixth commandment.
- Pray:** In addition to regular morning and evening prayer, have Midday Prayer (p. 252) and pray the Collect that begins “Blessed Savior, at this hour...”

- Fast:** Do not eat or drink anything except water until 5 PM. Whenever you feel a pang of hunger or thirst, remember the sufferings of Jesus.

## Day 16: Saturday

- Pray:** Pray through the Examen (p. 241). Think back over the entire week.
  - Read:** Look up the key Scriptures for Catechism Question 20 (page 71). Confess to God any ways in which you've broken the sixth commandment.
  - Give:** Find a way to bless someone in need. For suggestions, see Day 4 entry.
  - Fast:** Stop eating at midnight and do not eat until after communion on Sunday. Prepare your heart to humbly receive your spiritual food—the Word of God and the sacrament of Christ's body and blood.
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## Third Sunday in Lent

- Lectio Divina:** Choose one of the passages from the Sunday morning service and use it for Lectio Divina (p. 287).

## Day 17: Monday

- Read and pray:** Read Catechism Question 21 and the Notes (page 72–73). Confess to God any ways in which you've broken the seventh commandment.
- Pray:** Pray the prayer of Bernard of Clairvaux “Reign In Us” (p. 266).
- Canto Divina:** Sing “Take Time to Be Holy” (p. 160). If you don't know the hymn, look it up online and sing it until you learn the tune. Consider singing this hymn every day this week at Morning Prayer.

## Day 18: Tuesday

- Read and pray:** Look up the key Scriptures for Catechism Question 21 (page 72). Confess to God any ways in which you've broken the seventh commandment.
- Pray:** Pray “The Suscipe or Surrender Prayer” of Ignatius (p. 266).

## Day 19: Wednesday

- Read and pray:** Read Catechism Question 22 and the Notes (page 74). Confess to God any ways in which you've broken the eighth commandment.
- Pray:** Read through the Questions for Self-Examination (p. 240) and pray about the area of your spiritual life where you most need to improve. If you have mistreated anyone, make it right immediately (and especially before Sunday communion).

## Day 20: Thursday

- Read and pray:** Look up the key Scriptures for Catechism Question 22 (page 74). Confess to God any ways in which you've broken the eighth commandment.
- Pray:** Pray the prayer of Anselm "The Whole of Myself" (p. 266).

## Day 21: Friday

- Read and pray:** Read Catechism Question 23 and the Notes (page 75). Confess to God any ways in which you've broken the ninth commandment.
- Pray:** In addition to regular morning and evening prayer, have Midday Prayer (p. 252) and pray the Collect that begins "Blessed Savior, at this hour..."
- Fast:** *Do not eat or drink anything except water until 5 PM. Whenever you feel a pang of hunger or thirst, remember the sufferings of Jesus.*

## Day 22: Saturday

- Pray:** Pray through the Examen (p. 241). Think back over the entire week.
- Read and pray:** Look up the key Scriptures for Catechism Question 23 (page 75). Confess to God any ways in which you've broken the ninth commandment.
- Give:** *Find a way to bless someone in need. For suggestions, see Day 4 entry.*
- Fast:** *Stop eating at midnight and do not eat until after communion on Sunday. Prepare your heart to humbly receive your spiritual food—the Word of God and the sacrament of Christ's body and blood.*

## Fourth Sunday in Lent

- Lectio Divina:** Choose one of the passages from the Sunday morning service and use it for Lectio Divina (p. 287).

## Day 23: Monday

- Read and pray:** Read Catechism Question 24 and the Notes (page 76). Confess to God any ways in which you've broken the seventh commandment.
- Pray:** Pray the prayer of Augustine for "Complete Holiness" (p. 266).
- Canto Divina:** Sing "I Want a Principle Within" (p. 175). If you don't know the hymn, look it up online and sing it until you learn the tune. Consider singing this hymn every day this week at Morning Prayer.

## Day 24: Tuesday

- Read and pray:** Look up the key Scriptures for Catechism Question 24 (page 76). Confess to God any ways in which you've broken the tenth commandment.
- Pray:** Pray "The Prayer of the Holy Spirit" (p. 267).

## Day 25: Wednesday

- Read:** Read Catechism Question 25 and the Notes (page 77).
- Pray:** Read through the Questions for Self-Examination (p. 240) and pray about the area of your spiritual life where you most need to improve. If you have mistreated anyone, make it right immediately (and especially before Sunday communion).

## Day 26: Thursday

- Read:** Look up the key Scriptures for Catechism Question 25 (page 77).
- Pray:** Pray the prayer of Thomas Aquinas "For Virtue" (p. 267).

## Day 27: Friday

- Read:** Read Catechism Question 26 and the Notes (page 79).
- Visio Divina:** Look carefully at Rembrandt's painting of Moses Breaking the Tablets of the Law (p. 78) and read the Scripture verse below it. What was Rembrandt trying to communicate through his depiction of this tragic moment in the biblical story?
- Pray:** In addition to regular morning and evening prayer, have Midday Prayer (p. 252) and pray the Collect that begins "Blessed Savior, at this hour..."

- Fast:** Do not eat or drink anything except water) until 5 PM. Whenever you feel a pang of hunger or thirst, remember the sufferings of Jesus.

## Day 28: Saturday

- Pray:** Pray through the Examen (p. 241). Think back over the entire week.
  - Read:** Look up the key Scriptures for Catechism Question 26 (page 79).
  - Pray:** Confess to God any ways in which you've broken the ninth commandment.
  - Give:** Find a way to bless someone in need. *For suggestions, see Day 4 entry.*
  - Fast:** Stop eating at midnight and do not eat until after communion on Sunday. Prepare your heart to humbly receive your spiritual food—the Word of God and the sacrament of Christ's body and blood.
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## Fifth Sunday in Lent

- Lectio Divina:** Choose one of the passages from the Sunday morning service and use it for Lectio Divina (p. 287).

## Day 29: Monday

- Read:** Read Catechism Question 53 and the Notes on sanctification (page 152).
- Pray:** Pray the prayer of the BCP for "Grace to Withstand the World" (p. 267).
- Canto Divina:** Sing "Spirit of God, Descend Upon My Heart" (p. 155). If you don't know the hymn, look it up online and sing it until you learn the tune. Consider singing this hymn every day this week at Morning Prayer.

## Day 30: Tuesday

- Read:** Look up the Key Verses for Catechism Question 53 (page 152).
- Pray:** Pray the "Peace Prayer" (p. 267). In the spirit of the peace prayer, who is one person in your life that you have a strained relationship with? Reach out in a gesture of goodwill and kindness. If you need to apologize for something, do it without delay and without excuse.

## Day 31: Wednesday

- Read:** Read the excerpt from John Wesley on “Sanctification: Recovering the Image of God” (p. 154).
- Pray:** Read through the Questions for Self-Examination (p. 240) and pray about the area of your spiritual life where you most need to improve. If you have mistreated anyone, make it right immediately (and especially before Sunday communion).

## Day 32: Thursday

- Read:** Read Catechism Question 51 and the Notes on good works (page 150). What good works (especially works of mercy) can you do this week?
- Pray:** Pray John Wesley’s Covenant Prayer, “A Prayer of Total Consecration” (p. 171).

## Day 33: Friday

- Pray:** In addition to regular morning and evening prayer, have Midday Prayer (p. 252) and pray the Collect that begins “Blessed Savior, at this hour...”
- Fast:** Do not eat or drink anything except water until 5 PM. Whenever you feel a pang of hunger or thirst, remember the sufferings of Jesus.

## Day 34: Saturday

- Pray:** Pray through the Examen (p. 241). Think back over the entire week.
- Give:** *Find a way to bless someone in need. For suggestions, see Day 4 entry.*
- Fast:** *Stop eating at midnight and do not eat until after communion on Sunday. Prepare your heart to humbly receive your spiritual food—the Word of God and the sacrament of Christ’s body and blood.*

## Palm/Passion Sunday

- Lectio Divina:** Choose one of the passages from the Sunday morning service and use it for Lectio Divina (p. 287).

## Day 35: Holy Monday

- Read:** Read Catechism Question 31 on the cross and work on memorizing the answer.
- Canto Divina:** Sing “And Can It Be” (p. 100). If you don’t know the hymn, look it up online and sing it until you learn the tune. Consider singing this hymn every day this week at Morning Prayer.
- Read:** *In addition to or instead of your regular Bible reading plan, read the Lectionary readings for Holy Monday: Isaiah 42:1–9; Psalm 36:5–11; Hebrews 9:11–15; John 12:1–11.*

## Day 36: Holy Tuesday

- Read:** Read Catechism Question 31 on the cross and work on memorizing the answer.
- Read:** *In addition to or instead of your regular Bible reading plan, read the Lectionary readings for Holy Tuesday: Isaiah 49:1–7; Psalm 71:1–14; 1 Corinthians 1:18–31; John 12:20–36.*

## Day 37: Holy Wednesday

- Read:** Read Catechism Question 31 on the cross and work on memorizing the answer.
- Pray:** Read through the Questions for Self-Examination (p. 240) and pray about the area of your spiritual life where you most need to improve. If you have mistreated anyone, make it right immediately (and especially before Sunday communion).
- Read:** *In addition to or instead of your regular Bible reading plan, read the Lectionary readings for Holy Wednesday: Isaiah 50:4–9a; Psalm 70; Hebrews 12:1–3; John 13:21–32.*

## Day 38: Maundy Thursday

- Read:** Read Catechism Question 31 on the cross and work on memorizing the answer.
- Worship:** Attend a Maundy Thursday service if your church has one.
- Read:** *In addition to or instead of your regular Bible reading plan, read the Lectionary readings for Maundy Thursday: Exodus 12:1–14; Psalm 116:1–2, 12–19; 1 Corinthians 11:23–26; John 13:1–17, 31b–35.*

## Day 39: Good Friday

- Read:** Read Catechism Question 31 and the Notes (p. 97). Finish memorizing Question 31 if you haven't already.
- Read:** Look up the Key Scriptures on Question 31 (p. 97).
- Pray:** In addition to regular morning and evening prayer, have Midday Prayer (p. 252) and pray the Collect that begins "Blessed Savior, at this hour..."
- Pray:** Pray Martin Luther's prayer, "The Gift of the Son" (p. 268).
- Fast:** *Do not eat or drink anything except water all day. Whenever you feel a pang of hunger or thirst, remember the sufferings of Jesus.*
- Worship:** *Attend a Good Friday service.*
- Read:** *In addition to or instead of your regular Bible reading plan, read the Lectionary readings for Good Friday: Isaiah 52:13–53:12; Psalm 22; Hebrews 10:16–25 or Hebrews 4:14–16; 5:7–9; John 18:1–19:42 (the Passion).*

## Day 40: Holy Saturday

- Visio Divina:** Look carefully at Diego Velazquez's painting of Christ Crucified (p. 99). Meditate on what Christ suffered.
- Read:** Read Catechism Question 32 and the Notes (p. 102).
- Pray:** Renew your baptismal vows (p. 198). Confess to God any ways in which you have failed to keep them.
- Pray:** Pray the BCP's prayer "For the Conversion of Sinners" (p. 274). Pray for everyone in your life who has not yet experienced the saving grace of the cross.
- Read:** *In addition to or instead of your regular Bible reading plan, read the Lectionary readings for Holy Saturday: Job 14:1–14 or Lamentations 3:1–9, 19–24; Psalm 31:1–4, 15–16; 1 Peter 4:1–8; Matthew 27:57–66 or John 19:38–42.*
- Fast:** Stop eating at midnight and do not eat until after communion on Sunday. Prepare your heart to humbly receive your spiritual food—the Word of God and the sacrament of Christ's body and blood.