

## **Symbols in Our Home for Lent**

We need to choose to let our homes be a place full of the holy things that help raise our minds and hearts to God. Our world is full of so many images that lure our minds and hearts elsewhere. Here are some symbols that will carry the ongoing meaning we give them, for us and for our families and loved ones.

**A Crucifix:** We probably all have a crucifix in our home. If not, Lent might be a wonderful time to buy one and place it in a central place. Even a child's drawing of Jesus' death for us can be a powerful, stirring reminder of God's love.

**Water:** A simple bowl of water, in a central place, can be transformed into an ongoing reminder of our journey to the font of baptism for the renewal of commitment and life in Christ. Perhaps we can pray over it. "Lord, may this water remind us of our baptism and be a blessing for our home, where our dying and rising in you is lived each day. Bless us, as we sign ourselves with it each day."

**Sand:** Perhaps a bowl of sand can help us remember our journey. God led the people in their journey in the desert. Jesus himself reenacted that journey to face his own temptations. The desert can be a place of retreat, where there is a freedom from distractions. It can be a good place to be led and to face our temptations.

**A Candle:** Imagine having a candle in a central place in our home. Imagine praying over it together as we begin Lent. "Lord thank you for the gift of your Light in the midst of all darkness. Let this candle be a symbol of our faith in your presence among us." And imagine if we light this candle whenever we feel tempted away from the Light of Jesus, when we are experiencing tensions in our home, whenever we need special graces. Imagine how powerful experiencing the lighting of the New Fire will be at the Easter Vigil.

Perhaps we have Baptismal candles that were given to us or our children at Baptism. It might be very meaningful to bring them out and lay them near our central candle. We can remember the words that were spoken when we received this candle: "Receive the Light of Christ. ... Keep this flame burning brightly."

Perhaps we have the white baptismal garments that have been used in our family for baptism. These could be taken out. We can remember the words, "See in the white garments you wear, the outward sign of your Christian dignity. Bring this garment unstained to the joys of everlasting life." We can let it remind us of our white garment, when we see the newly baptized come out of the font of baptism, and be given their new white garments. It is a symbol of the priesthood in Jesus that we all share.

**A Bible:** The Word is so important for us during Lent. Perhaps the prominent presence of a Bible in our home can represent for us our desire for God's Word in our lives. Imagine the experience that could be ours if - when we feel a new inspiration or a softening of our heart, or just a sense of God's love - we pick up that Bible and simply, reverently kiss it.

**A Symbol for Almsgiving:** Many of us grew up with a simple box for contributions to the poor around the world on our kitchen table. Operation Rice Bowl, a Lenten practice from Catholic Relief Services, has offered a simple tool to make this way of making almsgiving at home very concrete and focused on solidarity with those who have so much less than we do. The key is to give a focus to our sacrifices as a family - eating or living more simply during Lent - in a way which directly connects those sacrifices with the needs of others.