

Family Activities

March Family Stress Support activities are an opportunity to connect themes of **emotional awareness** and **forgiveness**. **Emotional awareness** is having the ability to name and understand both our own and other peoples' emotional experiences. **Forgiveness** helps us to practice the mercy that God extends to all of us. You may also wish to incorporate the traditional Lenten practices of **prayer**, **fasting**, and **almsgiving**. See RCL Benziger's free Catholic Resources for additional suggestions.



Sunday Lenten Check-in: Before or after a meal on Sundays in March, light a candle. Say a short prayer together. Have each person share how he or she is feeling. Then ask each person to name someone to pray for this week. Next, name something you each will either give up (fasting) or acts of kindness (almsgiving) that you each will do this week.

- **Place:** The family home
- **Time Investment:** 10-15 minutes
- **How Often:** Once a week
- **Why:** Simple rituals like lighting a candle before praying and talking together build family bonds and lower stress hormones. The Lenten Check-In normalizes talking about emotions. Committing to small acts of prayer, fasting, and almsgiving helps you grow closer to God and each other.
- **Level Up:** Incorporate the Jesus Prayer into the beginning and end of your Sunday Lenten Check-in. Say together slowly, **“Lord Jesus Christ, Son of the Living God, have mercy on me.”**



Examen Walks: The Examen is a simple prayer developed by Saint Ignatius of Loyola. It helps us to reflect on the movements of our days and notice God's presence in our lives and our experiences. This is a simplified version of the Examen that you can do on a family walk. As you are walking, have a parent name the steps of the Examen. Depending on the ages of family members, you can share your thoughts or keep them to yourself.

Begin your walk. After a few minutes of walking, have one parent guide everyone through these steps. **First**, ask everyone to become aware of God's presence and take a few deep breaths.

Next, think over your past day (or week) and note what you are grateful for. **Then**, share any big emotions or thoughts that stand out. **After this**, invite everyone to share their thoughts with the Lord in silent prayer. **Last**, ask Jesus to be with all of you tomorrow.

- **Place:** Anywhere you can go on a walk!
- **Time Investment:** As little as ten minutes, as long as 25-30 minutes
- **How Often:** Weekly or more often—do what works for your family!
- **Why:** Walking is a proven stress reducer. The Examen is a time tested way to invite God into our experiences. It incorporates practices of gratitude, emotional awareness, and openness to God's action.