

February 22, 2009

Dear Parents

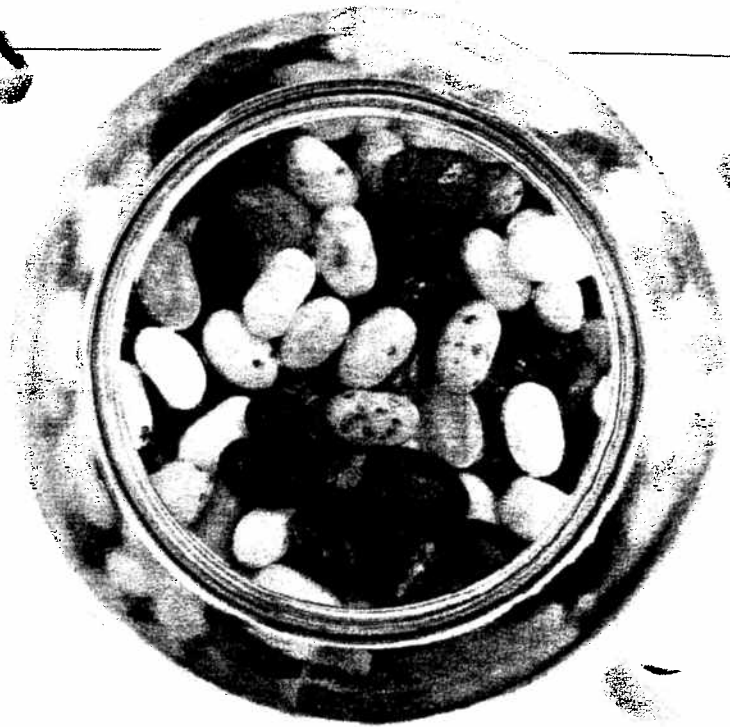
We would like to use the “Good Deed Jar” idea that is attached to help our children focus on building positive habits and performing acts of kindness during Lent.

We will post a large jar in the church hall, where the children can add their “jelly beans” to the collective jar. We would like you to consider using this idea at home as well, as described in the article. Please have your child bring in a glass jar next Sunday, March 1st. We will have the children decorate them and then bring them home for their own personal tracking system. If you are unable to bring it on March 1st, you can take care of decorating at home so it is ready to go as Lent begins.

We hope you and your children find this a worthwhile project. If you have any questions, please feel free to ask!

In Christ,

Laura Coughlin



The Good Deed Jar

Paolo Pontoniere and Mary Purpura of Hayward, CA, and our kids, Aliseo, age 19, Eli, 18, Silvano, 16, Lucia, 14, Flavia, 13, Nina, 11, Attiano, 10, Liam, 8, Roan, 5

Our tradition

Every year on Ash Wednesday, we put a jar on the kitchen counter next to a bowl of dried black-eyed peas. During Lent, any family member who performs a good deed, such as folding someone else's laundry or making their bed, moves a pea into the jar. On Easter Sunday, the Easter Bunny replaces the peas with jelly beans — adding a few more for good measure — and all of us get to enjoy the sweet rewards of being kind.

Why we started it

We wanted to link the bounty left by the Easter Bunny to the meaning of Lent. And rather than go the usual route of asking the kids to give up, say, ice cream, we decided to try to build positive habits that — we hoped — would outlive the season.



Why it works for us

The Good Deed Jar encourages us to act kindly in a genuine way — without any fanfare. The focus is on giving, rather than the reward.

How we celebrate our efforts

During Easter dinner, everyone is invited to talk about one of the nice things they did for someone else. One of our favorites was when Silvano made all of us special strings of sliding good-deed beads as a way to track how many deeds we'd each accomplished.

Things we've learned

We just learned that several years ago during Lent, Eli forgot to make dinner both times it was his turn. But his lapses went thoroughly undetected by us parents because his sisters covered for him.

What our kids say

Paolo: It's heartwarming to hear that the children actually enjoy doing things for their brothers, sisters, parents, neighbors, and friends.

Nina: We have fun doing secret things for each other.

Liam: If you do a lot of good deeds, you get a lot of good jelly beans! 😊