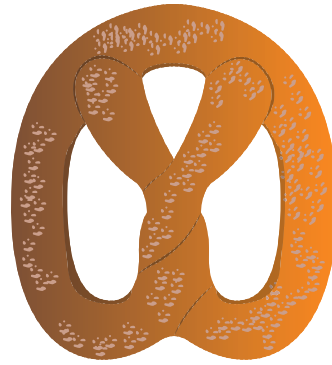


# Pretzels and Prayer



Lent starts on Ash Wednesday. Lent is the church season when we get ready to celebrate the mystery of Easter, when Jesus died but God made him alive again.

In the early years of the Christian church, people were very strict about not eating any meat, milk, cheese, eggs, or sugar during Lent: they fasted for 40 days so they could become more like Jesus, who fasted for 40 days in the desert.

According to pretzel maker, Snyder's of Hanover, a young monk in the early 600s in Italy was making a special Lenten bread of water, flour, and salt. To remind his brother monks that Lent was a time of prayer, he rolled the bread dough into strips and then shaped each strip in the form of crossed arms, just like the then popular prayer position of folding one's arms over each other on the chest. He baked it as a soft bread, just like the big soft pretzels one can find today.

That means that you can eat pretzels as a Lent activity! Before enjoying your Lenten pretzel, cross your arms into that old prayer position and tell God THANK YOU for something. How did that feel?

The position reminds me of a hug. I'm going to imagine my arms as God's arms hugging me while I talk with him.

People often give up things (certain kinds of food, Facebook, putting themselves down) during Lent, but maybe you could **add** something and use this prayer position when you talk to God during the 40 days of Lent (Sundays are Feast Days and are not included in the 40-day count).

Do you feel more loved by God when you pray while giving yourself a hug?