

The Legend of the Lenten Pretzel

(If you have pretzels, do not pass them out until after the story and questions)

A very long time ago, (in the early 600's) there was a man who worked for God .

His job was being a MONK.

A MONK does everything in his life for God. He lives in a special place with other MONKS, who pray and read the Bible many times during the day. They usually live in a building or group of buildings for this purpose. It is called a monastery.

MONKS usually make and/or grow their own food.

This MONK had been in the kitchen where other monks were baking a special bread for LENT, and he saw some leftover pieces of dough.

This monk decided to use the leftover pieces of dough for something special.

The Monk formed the dough into thin strips crossed into a looped twist to be **like the folded arms of children in prayer.**



Look at the picture. You will one of the few people who know which way is really UP!

That was how children held their hands to pray in those days.



Let's all try crossing our arms like the children in the early church.
(Like a pretzel for prayer.)

This treat was given to the children as they learned their prayers. They began calling the treat "Pretiola", which means "little reward" in Latin. (a common language of the monks)

(a different version of the story calls them bracellae, a German word that eventually became pretzel.)

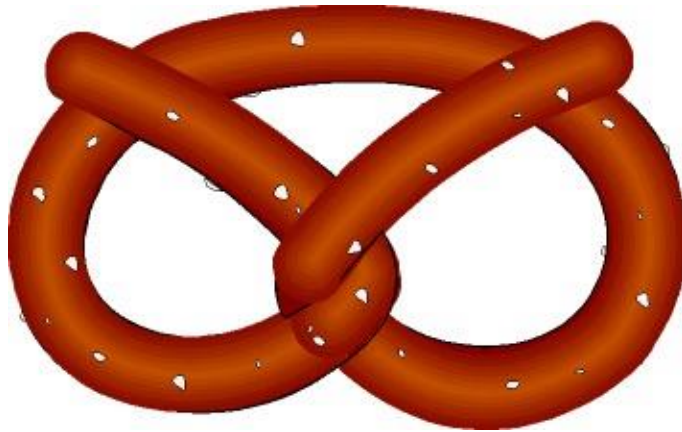
Soon it was known the world over as a pretzel.

The simple shape of the pretzel, arms folded in prayer, reminds us to pray every day.

Every time you see a pretzel, remember prayer!

What do we do with our hands and arms when we pray? We should fold our hands and bow our heads!

Would it be ok to pray with our arms folded? Yes it would, but some people who do not know what you know might think it was strange!



The pretzel really has its origins as an official food of Lent.

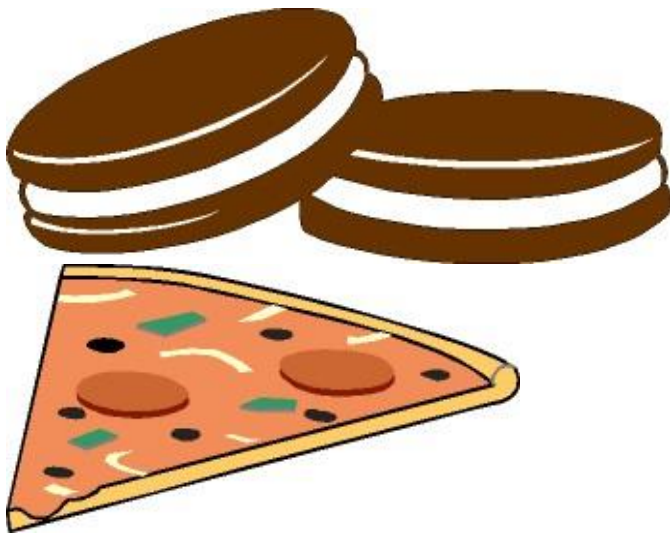
Lent is known as the 40 days* before Easter. (Actually 46. Read our 40+ story)

Lent is a time when we should be thinking of **what Jesus gave up** for us – his body and blood – his life – so we could go to heaven.

Lent is a time when we could think of **what we could give up** in honor of God or Jesus.

Long ago, in some churches, you had to decide on something to give up for the 40 days of Lent. (A personal sacrifice)

Some ideas would have been chocolate, or candy or cookies or pizza!



The monk in our story lived in a time when you could not eat meat or milk or eggs during Lent! So he and his brother monks had to figure out a special bread that did not use eggs or milk.

The monks were preparing a special Lenten bread of water, flour and salt – which is what pretzels are still made out of today. Pretzels then began to be enjoyed by all people. They became a symbol of good luck and long life. They were also a common food given to the poor and hungry. They were cheap and easy to make and satisfied hunger.

Questions:

1. Have you ever had a pretzel like this?
2. Who can tell what it tastes like?
3. If you were asked to give up a favorite food from now until Easter, what would it be? (Ask each child)
4. Would it be easy or hard not to have that food until Easter?

Pass out pretzels if you have them.

ASK: What are pretzels supposed to remind us of?

(It's on page 3)

Let's pray with our arms folded like the pretzel:

Dear God,

We thank you for your son Jesus. We thank you for caring about us and loving us. Amen.

Companion craft:

See also our paper pretzel craft.

The ancient way to pray is mimicked in the pretzel
Pass this page around the classroom



Afterthought:

It would be nice to “resurrect” the idea that pretzels are a spiritual reminder of God knowing a person’s needs and answering our prayers. (Perhaps a lot better than being known just as a snack for parties and sports)