

LENT AND THE PRETZEL

The pretzel has a deep spiritual meaning for Lent. It was the Ancient Christian Lenten Bread as far back as the fourth century.

Long ago, Christians kept a strict fast all through Lent. Even their bread gave up ingredients: no eggs, butter or fat. That pretty much left yeast, flour, water and salt—simple basic bread. When Christians prayed, they put their right hands on their left shoulders and their left hands on their right shoulders—to form crosses. In Lent, some Christians twisted their bread into “little arms” crossed in prayer, called “bracellae” in Latin and “pretzels” in English. People gave pretzels to each other during Lent to remind them to stick to their fasting, prayer, and almsgiving (the giving of charity) throughout the season. Pretzels were baked on Ash Wednesday and fed believers until Easter—then disappeared again. In many places in Europe, pretzels are served only during Lent. There is no reason why our Christian families should not return to the beautiful custom of our ancient Roman fellow Christians, especially since we still have these breads today. Tell your children the story of the pretzel and its meaning.