

Pretzel Prayer Pals

The pretzel is a food commonly associated with the season of Lent for some 1500 years now. There are various versions of the story of how pretzels were created. A common thread in these stories is that a young monk who lived during the early 600s somewhere between France and Italy was baking unleavened bread which is a Lenten fasting food. A common posture for prayer for these early Christians was to stand with their arms crossed or folded across their chest, each hand touching the opposite shoulder. Some versions of the story say it was accidentally, other say it was on purpose, that the monk used some leftover unleavened bread dough to create a shape that we now call a pretzel.



There is another "twist" in this story. One version says that the monk used his creation as a reminder to his fellow monks to pray during Lent. This version says he named his creation "*little arms*" which in Latin is "*bracellae*," which sounds a lot like the German word "*bretzel*", from which we get the word "*pretzel*!" But another version of the story says that the monk used his creation as a treat, or reward, for children who recited their prayers. This version says he named his creation "*pretiola*," Latin for "*little reward*," which again sounds like our word "*pretzel*" and could be a source for this word's origin!

But whichever story is more accurate, the fact remains that the pretzel is a perfect Lenten "fasting" food and has a long history of being associated with prayer and the season of Lent. So...get creative in sharing your faith this Lent by being a "Pretzel Prayer Pal!" Anyone can do this – children, adults, teens, families, entire classrooms! You can either bake your own pretzels (there are numerous simple recipes on the web) or buy some already made. (Just make sure they are in the traditional pretzel shape!)

Place your pretzel in a clear plastic bag, seal the bag, and attach a card or a note letting your "prayer pal" know you are praying for them during this season of Lent. You can even create your card or note on the computer, adding some Lenten symbols, rolling it up like a scroll, and then tying it to the pretzel bag with a purple ribbon. If you want your Pretzel Prayer Pal to have an even more symbolic reminder, put forty small pretzels in your plastic bag with instructions to eat one each day during Lent as a reminder of the prayer being said for that person that day...by you!