

LIVING LENT IN MISSION

A Resource for Youth and Young Adults

Keeping Lent in Focus

from MISSIO Powered by the Pontifical Mission Societies in the United States

FIRST WEEK OF LENT

THE JOURNEY BEGINS

Leader: As Lent begins, we acknowledge that at times we have sinned and turned away from God. In order to draw closer to God, we are called to examine our hearts and seek new ways to live.

On Ash Wednesday, we are signed with ashes.

When and where do you see ashes in your life? *(Allow time for responses)*

Why do you think the Church uses this symbol to represent sin and the need for conversion? What does it mean for us today? *(Allow time for responses.)*

When we receive ashes on Ash Wednesday, we are reminded to turn away from sin and live the Gospel. In Baptism, we were cleansed and reborn in Christ. Our Baptism calls us to live as followers of Christ and to be missionaries of the Gospel every day. *How will you begin to live differently during this Lenten Season?*

Blessed Teresa of Calcutta said: *“As Lent is the time for greater love, listen to Jesus’ thirst... ‘Repent and believe’ Jesus tells us. What are we to repent? Our indifference, our hardness of heart. What are we to believe? Jesus thirsts even now, in your heart and in the poor—He knows your weakness, He sees their need. He wants only your love, wants only the chance to love you, and to extend His love, through you, to the poor.”*

Ice Breaker

Lent, Trouble and Jesus

In this activity, participants will have an opportunity to begin thinking about the theme of Lent and conversion. The leader should keep this moving at a fairly quick pace. For the first two questions, allow 2 to 3

minutes during which both partners will share responses. The last two questions might require a few extra minutes.

Leader: Find a partner with the same color shoes. Introduce yourself and share one memory you have of Lent. This can be something that happened at home, church, school or another part of your life.

Pause while partners share.

Leader: Say “good-bye” to that partner and find a new partner with the same hair color. Share with your partner whether you prefer to give something up for Lent or whether you choose to focus on doing something positive for others.

Pause while partners share.

Leader: Say “good-bye” to that partner and find a partner who shares a birthday during the same season (winter, spring, summer, fall). Share with your partner a story about a time when you got in trouble with a parent, teacher, friend or boss for doing something wrong. Describe what happened? How did you feel? What did the other person say? How did the issue resolve?

Pause while partners share.

Leader: Stay with that same partner and think about what Jesus would have said to you if He had entered the scene that you just described. Would anything have changed?

Pause while partners share.

Conclude the activity by asking people to share with the large group what they have learned about Lent and conversion.

Large Group Activity

Materials Needed:

- Bible
- 2-4 large pieces of newsprint, or a roll of white paper
- Markers
- Scissors
- Magazines and newspapers
- Small pieces of paper of varying sizes and colors
- Tape or glue sticks
- Reflective music (optional)

Leader: We are going to hear a reading from the prophet Joel. Listen carefully and imagine that Joel is saying these words directly to you.

Ask a volunteer to read Joel 2:12-18.

Leader: The prophet tells us that we are to “return to the Lord” for He is “gracious and compassionate.” Think back to the activity when we were in trouble, and then Jesus entered in. Think of other situations in our world when faith helped a tragic situation, when prayer was important to move away, to transform, times of sadness, natural disaster, tragedy and devastation. What did that look like?

Allow time for people to share responses in the large group.

Leader: One of the holiest shrines in the Jewish world is the Wailing Wall or the Western Wall. The crumpled wall that still stands in Jerusalem is all that remains of the ancient temple. This wall has become a place of pilgrimage for many. People from all over the world come to pray at the wall, placing more than one million small slips of paper with prayer requests into the cracks each year.

As we begin our Lenten journey, we are going to build our own prayer wall. Around the room you will find markers, magazines, scissors and glue. I invite each of you to think of a situation in our world that needs our prayers. This can be a global issue, an issue in our community, one in your school or one in your family or personal life.

Use the magazines and newspapers to cut out a word or picture that symbolizes the situation. You can also use the markers and small slips of paper to draw a word or symbol. You will have about five minutes to create your symbol.

Once everyone has created a symbol, conclude the activity as follows:

Leader: We have a large sheet of paper to represent our wall. I invite you to come forward, three to five people at a time, and place your prayer on the wall. If you want, you can pause for a moment of silent prayer when you approach the wall.

Allow participants to place prayers, keeping a tone of reverence in the room. When all prayers have been placed, conclude the activity by forming an arc of people around the wall and reciting the Lord’s Prayer.

Small Group Activity

Materials Needed:

- *Bibles or copies of the reading from the prophet Joel*
- *One large sheet of paper*
- *2-3 markers*
- *One white index card (no lines) for each participant*
- *Pens or pencils*
- *One small bowl of ashes for each group*

- *Wet wipes*
- *Reflection Music (optional)*

Leader: Take a few minutes to re-read the Scripture from the prophet Joel. Underline words that speak to you.

Pause while participants read.

Leader: In this Scripture, Jesus says “Return to me with your whole heart.” Let’s brainstorm a list of ways that people turn away from God.

Use large sheet of paper and markers to make the list.

Why do you think we are tempted to turn away from God? *(Allow for discussion.)*

Leader: In the reading from the prophet Joel, God promises mercy and kindness to those who return wholeheartedly. I invite you to take reflect on what is causing you to turn away from God and what will help you return. On an index card, take a few minutes and write a prayer to God that expresses your desire to turn away from whatever is keeping you from experiencing God’s love and mercy. This is just for you and you won’t be asked to share the prayer unless you want to do so. Just write on one side of the card.

Distribute index cards and pencils, and give time to complete the activity. If appropriate, add reflective music.

Refocus the small group. Place the bowl of ashes in the center of the group. Invite each participant to trace a cross of ashes on the blank side of the card. When everyone has finished, encourage group members to take the prayer with them and continue to pray their prayer throughout Lent.

Additional Group Activities:

- *Burning Desires: On small slips of paper, participants write thoughts, actions and such that keep them turned away from God. In the large group, invite people to burn those slips of paper using a candle flame and then dropping them into an appropriate container (large metal bowl, garbage can, small grill). If budget allows, you may choose to use Magician’s Paper for this activity. When lit, it completely burns away; symbolically it can be powerful. It also known as “Flash Paper” you can find it at these websites:*

<http://www.dreamlandmagic.com/flash-paper.html>

http://www.amazon.com/s/?ie=UTF8&keywords=magic+flash+paper&tag=googhydr-20&index=aps&hvadid=7906991505&ref=pd_sl_5eknc7sp7a_b

- *Make WWID (What Would I Do?) Bracelets. Each participant is given a WWJD (What Would Jesus Do?) band and a Sharpie marker. On the inside of the bracelet, participants are invited to write “WWID” (What will I Do?) followed by one action they will take during Lent to return their hearts to God.*

PRAYER

Leader: Let us remember that we are in the holy presence as we begin our prayer in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Leader:

God of Mercy,

We come to You with hearts broken from sin.

We desire to return to You and make our hearts whole again.

Help us to accept Your love and mercy so we can live again in Your light.

We make this prayer through Christ our Lord.

All: Amen.

Leader: Let us listen to the Word of God.

Reader: *Hosea 6:1-2*

“Come, let us return to the Lord
For it is he who has torn, but he will heal us;
he has struck down, but he will bind our wounds.
He will revive us after two days;
on the third day he will raise us up
to live in his presence.”

Leader: What do you need to do in order to return to God? What is one action you can take this week? Let’s take a few minutes to contemplate the Word of God.

Intercessions

Leader: With confidence in God’s mercy, let us bring our prayers to God. The response is Lord, hear our prayer.

1. May our Church – the Pope, the bishops, clergy, religious and laity – work together to heal hearts throughout our world of need. *We pray to the Lord.*
2. May the leaders of our world unite with each other and promote peace. *We pray to the Lord.*
3. May our brothers and sisters in need around the world come to know the healing, hope-filled message of Jesus, especially during Lent. *We pray to the Lord.*

4. May those who have died rest in Christ and may those who mourn them be consoled. *We pray to the Lord.*
5. May each of us gathered here remain strong in our desire to mend our ways and return our hearts to God. *We pray to the Lord.*
6. For those intentions we hold in our hearts. *(Pause) We pray to the Lord.*

Leader: Loving God, fill us with Your love and guide us as we begin our Lenten journey. Help us to live out our Baptismal call and live as missionaries of the Gospel. We pray this through Christ our Lord.

All: Amen.

Leader: Let us pray in the words that Jesus taught us.

All: Our Father...

Sign of Peace/Departure

Leader: As we conclude our prayer and leave this place, let us offer one another a sign of Christ's peace.

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SECOND WEEK OF LENT

PRAYING, FASTING AND ALMSGIVING

Leader: For some people, Lent is a time to “give up something.” For others, it is a time to “do” something. Both of these approaches can lead us to focus on our mission to serve Christ – the poor, in His name. To “give up something” is a form of fasting. When we eliminate something from our lives, we make room for something else. Fasting can help us open a space for Christ to work in our lives. When we open up that space, we have room to give our time, talent and treasure to others.

Today we will look at how we are living now and how we might change during Lent to move closer to God through prayer, fasting and almsgiving.

How is your prayer life right now? Are there objects or habits you can give up? How can you enrich the life of your spirit by giving to others?

Ice Breaker

Materials needed:

- Large mailing labels with the following quotes printed on them:

“Prayer is an aspiration of the heart, it is a simple glance directed to heaven, it is a cry of gratitude and love in the midst of trial as well as joy; finally, it is something great, supernatural, which expands my soul and unites me to Jesus.”

—St. Thérèse of Lisieux

“Pray as though everything depended on God. Work as though everything depended on you.”

—St. Augustine

“Purity is the fruit of prayer.”

—Blessed Teresa of Calcutta

"Prayer is the place of refuge for every worry, a foundation for cheerfulness, a source of constant happiness, a protection against sadness."

—St. John Chrysostom

"He who prays most receives most."

—St. Alphonsus Maria de Liguori

"There are not two kinds of answers to prayer, but three: One is 'Yes.' Another is 'No.' The third is 'Wait.'"

—Venerable Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen

"Model the love of the Holy Family." "Say the Rosary together every night."

—Venerable Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen

"How often I failed in my duty to God, because I was not leaning on the strong pillar of prayer."

—St. Teresa of Avila

"The prayer most pleasing to God is that made for others and particularly for the poor souls. Pray for them, if you want your prayers to bring high interest."

—Blessed Anne Catherine Emmerich

"Much more is accomplished by a single word of the Our Father said, now and then, from our heart, than by the whole prayer repeated many times in haste and without attention."

—St. Teresa of Avila

"Without prayer nothing good is done. God's works are done with our hands joined, and on our knees. Even when we run, we must remain spiritually kneeling before Him."

—Blessed Luigi Orione

"Prayer ought to be short and pure, unless it be prolonged by the inspiration of Divine grace."

—St. Benedict

Leader: I am going to place a label on your back. Your job is to figure out who else in the room has the same quote as you do. You may ask a person only ONE question about your quote and then move on to someone else. When you have found everyone whose quote matches yours, sit down and talk about the meaning of the quote.

(Allow time for sharing and then re-gather the group.)

Leader: Did anyone notice what all of those quotes on your back had in common?

(Wait for it...Prayer.)

Jesus taught us to pray and still teaches us today. In the Gospel of Matthew, chapter 6, verses 5 to 8, Jesus said:

"...And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by others. Truly I tell you, they have received

their reward in full. But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you. And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words. Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him."

Leader: As you pray during Lent, I invite you to remember these words—to increase your prayer and decrease your publicity about your prayer. Don't worry, God gets it!

Large Group Activity

Materials needed:

- Magazines, newspapers
- Music (optional)

Leader: The next challenge is fasting. What do you think it means to fast? *(Pause for answers.)* Why do people fast? *(Pause and discuss.)*

Leader: There are magazines and newspapers around the room. You will have five minutes to find words and images that show things from which you want to fast. What can you eliminate from your daily or weekly routine to make room for Christ? Could you eliminate texting, video games, or going out to dinner with friends? Could you fast from gossiping or bullying? What do you feel that God is calling you to fast from this Lent?

Here's what Jesus had to say about the challenge of fasting in Matthew 6:16-18:

When you fast, do not look gloomy like the hypocrites. They neglect their appearance, so that they may appear to others to be fasting. Amen, I say to you, they have received their reward. But when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, so that you may not appear to be fasting, except to your Father who is hidden. And your Father who sees what is hidden will repay you.

This seems similar to what we heard earlier about prayer. Do it quietly and the change you make in your life will speak loudly to God. You might have thought that we were going to share the words and pictures you just tore out of the newspapers and magazines. Instead, we are going to place them in one of the envelopes, hidden from others. You and God know what they are. On the outside of the envelope write your name and the words "Fasting Contract." Take that envelope with you when you leave and put it somewhere in your home to remind you of your desire to fast in quiet this Lent.

Leader: We are going to move into small groups now to explore our third challenge: almsgiving.

Small Group Activity

Materials Needed:

- Pencils
- Small slips of paper
- One envelope per participant
- Internet access and ability to cast screen for the website www.missio.org. Or depending on your local policies, allow each youth to access on their phone or tablet.

Leader: Let's take a look at what Jesus said about almsgiving in Matthew 6:2-4. *(Ask a participant to read the following passage.)*

"When you give alms, do not blow a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets to win the praise of others. Amen, I say to you, they have received their reward. But when you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right is doing, so that your almsgiving may be secret. And your Father who sees in secret will repay you."

Leader: Do you notice anything different about what Jesus says about almsgiving compared to what He said about praying and fasting? *(Pause)* It's the same message: Do it quietly. God knows what you are doing.

Leader: Why do you think Jesus is telling us to do all of this quietly? How will it benefit us? *(Allow a few minutes for discussion.)*

Leader: We were baptized into the life Christ so we could follow God's ways through the example of Jesus. We are going to spend some time looking at places in our world where people do not know Christ. We are called to be missionaries to them. Go to www.missio.org, Take some time to look at the images and various projects for some of our neediest brothers and sisters around the world.

Leader: Let's talk about some ways that we can be missionaries to our brothers and sisters in the Missions. We have an opportunity to pray for the people of the Missions. We can also support them by giving alms – financial support. I encourage you to share what you are able. No one will know what you give or if you give. Remember that Jesus asks that we do this in quiet for God knows our actions.

Allow group to select one or two projects on which to focus.

How could you use what you've learned about praying, fasting and almsgiving to be a missionary to people in these projects?

Allow time for discussion. Explain that you as the leader will post messages and pictures communicating with the people in the project as well as collect their financial offerings and donate for the group as a whole. Also, encourage them to share via social media and email (again in observance of all local safe environment policies) with their friends and family to gather support. Emphasize that every gift – regardless of size – is most gratefully accepted, and makes a world of difference to our mission family.

Leader: Let's close our time and pray for the people of _____.

Lord,

Help us during this Lent as we renew our hearts and serve as Your missionaries.

Bless the people of _____.

May they be strengthened by our prayers, fasting and almsgiving.

We pray this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Prayer

Materials needed:

- Copy of Scripture reading
- Basket for almsgiving
- Music

Leader: Let us remember that we are in the holy presence as we begin our prayer in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Leader: Loving and generous God: Thank You for bringing us to this place. Thank You for all that You have given to each of us. Renew our hearts through the gifts of praying, fasting and almsgiving. May our actions strengthen our love for You. We pray this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Leader: Let us listen to the Word of God.

Reader: Mark 12:41-44

Jesus sat down opposite the treasury and observed how the crowd put money into the treasury. Many rich people put in large sums. A poor widow also came and put in two small coins worth a few cents. Calling his disciples to himself, he said to them, "Amen, I say to you, this poor widow put in more than all the other contributors to the treasury. For they have all contributed from their surplus wealth, but she, from her poverty, has contributed all she had, her whole livelihood."

Leader: Jesus asks us to give what we have — to give of our time, our talent and our treasure.

Blessed Elena Guerra said, *“The first well spring of renewing action is prayer, which connects us with the Spirit of Christ Who is ‘He who renews the face of the earth.’” Let us stand and pray in the words that Jesus taught us.*

All: *Our Father....*

Leader: Let us pray:

Good and gracious God,
Jesus assures us that You know what we do in secret and will repay us.
Please strengthen and renew our hearts this Lent
as we strive to love You more and be missionaries of Your Word.
We ask this through Christ our Lord.

All: Amen.

Leader: As we leave this place and continue our Lenten journey, let us offer each other a sign of Christ’s peace.