

## 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*

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### FIFTH WEEK OF LENT

## THE RAISING OF LAZARUS

**Leader:** Today we will reflect on dying to sin so that we can be born into new life in Christ. We will hear the Scripture story of how Jesus called Lazarus to come back to life. The story reminds us that Lent is an opportunity to let Jesus transform our dead or dying faith and raise it to new life. Our job is to listen when Christ calls our name. We think of missionaries around the world who each day also bring the message of Jesus to others, offering them new life in Christ. How is God calling you to new life?

### Ice Breaker

**Leader:** Find a partner. Determine how many texts, emails, Facebook, Instagram or Twitter posts the two of you average in a day. *(Allow time for sharing.)*

*Ask:*

How many post more than 50? Keep hands raised if you post more than 100? 200?

*Continue until you have one or two pairs with hands raised and ask them to share their totals.*

**Leader:** Find another two people who send/post about the same number as the two of you. In your group of four, share the most unusual post/text you have ever seen. *(Keep it appropriate.)* What made it unusual? *(Allow time for sharing.)* What was the most important message you have ever received/seen? *(Allow time for sharing.)*

*Ask:*

Would anyone like to share your most unusual post and why it was unusual?

*(Allow time for sharing.)* What about the most important message you have received?

**Leader:** God sends us messages all the time. Some are unusual; all are important. So many of us are tuned into our phones and other electronic devices. We feel as though we can't live without them. We are so busy listening to the messages from others that sometimes we miss hearing the voice of God. Here's a challenge: Listen closely to the messages that God is sending this week. Keep a tally of how many messages you receive from God? How many are unusual? In what way is each important? More importantly, make it your mission to share those messages with others – as missionaries!

## Large Group Activity

**Leader:** Lazarus received an important message from Jesus. What is the essential message? How do you think this changed the people who witnessed the sending and receiving of the message?

### Read: John 11:41-45

*(Note: This is just a portion of the Lazarus reading. Consider whether or not it is appropriate for your group to listen to the entire passage – John 11:1-45.)*

**Leader:** Take a few minutes and think about your life and your Lenten journey. What do you need to leave behind in the dark tomb in order to live in the light of Christ?

## Small Groups Activity

### Materials Needed:

- Index cards (one for each participant)
- Pencils or pens
- Phones / computers / iPads

**Leader:** We are going to read part of a story from the Gospel of John. Listen for the message that Jesus is sending.

### Read: John 11:41-45

**Leader:** Jesus tells Lazarus to “Come out.” What is the deeper message that Jesus is sending to Lazarus and the people who are gathered?

Imagine that Jesus wanted to send Lazarus a text. Write on the index card what that text message would be. Feel free to use current texting terms. *(Allow time for writing and then ask participants to share their texts.)*

**Leader:** During Lent, we are called to turn back to God – away from the ways or things we do that separate us from God – and to live in Christ. Take a few minutes to write a text from Jesus on the card – a text that will remind you to live your faith each day, thus being a witness to others, a missionary for Jesus!

*Have each person send the text to a friend or family member. Then in groups of 3-4 have them post a message or the same text (if appropriate) to their project on [www.missio.org](http://www.missio.org)*

## Prayer Service

**Leader:** Let us begin our prayer in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

God,

You called Lazarus out of the tomb so he could live again.

Help us leave behind the things that prevent us from living freely in Your love.

Raise our hearts to love You more.

Raise our thoughts to be like Yours.

Bring us out of the tomb and unwrap the sin that binds us.

We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

**Reader:** Romans 6:1-4

**Leader:** We are going to take a few minutes to reflect on the reading from St. Paul's Letter to the Romans. Close your eyes for a few minutes. *(Pause)* Imagine that you are alone in a small, dark room. How do you feel? What are you thinking? Are you warm or cold? Do you feel happy or sad? Spend a few minutes in that imaginary room. *(Pause)* Now imagine that Jesus is standing outside of the small room. You hear Him calling your name. What is the first thing you want to do? Do you want to answer? Do you want to leave the room or stay in the darkness? *(Pause)* Now imagine that you open the door to the room. What do you see? Is anyone waiting with Jesus? Take a moment to have a conversation with Jesus about your desire for new life? *(Pause)* Jesus now asks you to keep one word alive in your heart. What is that word? *(Pause)* When you are ready, I invite you to bring that word with you as you slowly open your eyes. *(Pause)*

Jesus has the words of everlasting life. In Baptism, we died with Him so we could be raised to new life. New life in Christ requires that we share His word with others.

## Group Prayer

**Leader:** We know that as missionaries of Your love and light, Lord, we are called to share our faith in Jesus every day. And we know that we strengthen our faith when we share our experiences of Jesus. If you are comfortable, I invite you to share the one word you received from Jesus during the reflection. *(Allow time for people to share.)*

**Leader:** We gather all of these words together and pray in the words that Jesus taught us.

**All:** Our Father...

**Leader:** Loving God, You have rolled the stone away from our tombs of death and darkness. Bring us out of the tomb ready to experience Your resurrection with renewed hope. We ask this through Your Son, Jesus Christ. Amen.

As a sign of living together in the life of Christ, let us take a moment to offer each other a sign of Christ's peace.

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## HOLY WEEK

**Leader:** What are some big celebrations that we enjoy in our country? (*Allow time for responses.*) If necessary, suggest a few examples, such as, the Fourth of July, Memorial Day, Labor Day, etc.) What are some activities or traditions that take place in the week before those events? (*Pause for responses.*)

In this session, we will look at the events our Church celebrates in anticipation of the holiest day of our year as Christians: Easter. How do you plan to end your Lenten journey and enter into the celebrations of this blessed week?

### *Ice Breaker*

### **Human Calendar**

**Leader:** We are going to form a human calendar. When I say go, you need to line up in the order of your birthdays beginning with January 1 through December 31. You must do this WITHOUT TALKING. Ready? Go. (*Allow time for people to line up and remind them to do so without talking. When they seem finished, ask the first person to say his/her birthday. Go through the line to see if they are in order.*)

**Leader:** Our Church has a calendar, and this is a big week in that calendar. The events happen in order. Each of your small groups will be given the name of one of the events. Your task is to learn about the event, and then develop a commercial that helps us understand what the event is about, how they each call us to be missionary disciples, and why we should come to Church to this week to celebrate it. Remember it is the story of the Passion, Death and Resurrection of our Lord – the events of this Holy Week – that missionaries proclaim throughout the world, offering so many who live a Good Friday existence the hope and joy of Easter Sunday.

## Small Group Activity

### Create a Holy Week Commercial

#### Materials Needed:

*Brief descriptions of the major events of Holy Week:*

- *Palm Sunday*
- *Holy Thursday*
- *Good Friday*
- *Easter Vigil*
- *Easter Sunday*

*Note: Each small group is given one event for which they will create a 30-second commercial that will help young people understand the purpose of the celebration, how they each call us to be part of the event, and then be prepared to share the experience with others. Keep in mind that although each event is seen separately – one event per commercial – it is the complete story of Holy Week that is told by missionaries, bringing the hope of Easter to so many living in our often Good Friday world. These commercials could be live skits or recorded, and then projected to the group. Allow 20 to 30 minutes for groups to work. When all groups have finished, they will present to the large group.*

## Large Group Activity

### Commercial Break

**Leader:** We will now take a journey through Holy Week. By watching the commercials, we will hopefully gain a deeper understanding of the events of the week, and how they call us to bring the message of Jesus' Passion, Death and Resurrection to a world of need – to announce that message as missionaries. Likewise we will see why it is important for us to celebrate these together, as Church. *(Allow time for all commercials. At the conclusion, transition to prayer.)*

## Prayer Service

#### Materials Needed:

- *Copies of John 8:31-32 on 8.5 x 11 paper*
- *Pencils*
- *Music*

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

God of Life,  
You sent Your Son to be with us,  
knowing that He would endure great suffering.  
Help us enter into that suffering so we that we may rise to new life in Him.  
We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.

**Leader:** Our Lenten journey is coming to an end. We have spent time changing our hearts, welcoming the outcast, thirsting for living water, searching for light, dying to sin, praying, fasting, almsgiving, and renewing our hearts. During this Holy Week, we will celebrate denial and acceptance, friendship and alienation, and death and life. In order to enter fully into this mystery and celebration, let us prepare ourselves by listening to a short passage from the Gospel of John.

**Reader:** John 8: 31-32

To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said, "If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."

**Leader:** Each of you has a copy of the Scripture passage we just heard. Take your copy and a pencil and find a place in this room where you can be alone. (Pause for participants to get settled.) I invite you to take some time to remain in God's word. Read the passage quietly and circle any words or phrases that speak to you. Think about your Lenten journey and write your thoughts on paper. Ask yourself, "What has set me free?" *(Allow five to 10 minutes for reflection. Play music if available. Re-gather the group and ask participants to stand in a circle.)*

**Leader:** As we bring our prayer to a close, think about one word that describes your Lenten journey, or your feelings about Holy Week. *(Pause for a moment.)* As our prayer moves around the circle, I invite you to share your word with this group. If for some reason you do not want to share your word, you can just say "pass." I'll start. *(Leader shares word and allows the prayer to move around the circle.)*

**Leader:** Let us gather all of these words together and very slowly pray the prayer that Jesus taught us.

**All:** Our Father...

**Leader:** Jesus knew He was going to leave His friends and wanted to assure them that His Spirit would be with them. So, as we end our prayer and enter Holy Week, let us offer each other that same assurance as we share a sign of Christ's peace.