



Mission Corps

Youth in Mission

Living Lent in Mission: A Resource for Youth and Young Adults

Keeping Lent in Focus for Youth and Young Adults from the Pontifical Mission Societies in the United States

Week One: 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 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. *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. Amen.

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

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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Week Two: 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
- One envelope for each person
- 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? When you find words or pictures that symbolizes your desire to fast, tear them out and hang onto them for our next activity. (Allow five minutes. Add music, if appropriate. As you re-gather the group, give each person an envelope.)



Leader: 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
- Information about the Society for the Propagation of the Faith from www.OneFamilyinMission.org (specifically the "Lent In Focus" section of the website).

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. (Review information about the Society for the Propagation of the Faith from the website at www.OneFamilyinMission.org.)



Leader: Let's talk about some ways that we can be missionaries to our brothers and sisters in the Missions. (Allow group to select one or two countries 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 countries? (Allow time for discussion. After the discussion, distribute the envelopes in which participants can enclose a donation to the Society for the Propagation of the Faith. Emphasize that every gift – regardless of size – is most gratefully accepted, and makes a world of difference to our mission family.)

Leader: 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. If you do not have money with you now, take the envelope home with you. In a few minutes, we are going to celebrate with a closing prayer, and during part of that prayer, we will pass a basket for the envelopes, or you can write your commitment on a slip of paper and place it in the basket as a promise of your support (Distribute pens/pencils as needed.)

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. As we pass this basket, I invite you to place your envelope in the basket if you have placed an offering in your envelope. If you have made a commitment of your time, talent or treasure by writing that promise on a slip of paper, you may place that in the basket. As we pass the basket, I invite you to pray quietly for the missionary country(ies) that your small group selected. Pass the basket. Play music, if available.)

Leader: 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. Amen.

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



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Week Three: Samaritan Woman at the Well

Leader: Have you ever been really, really thirsty? So thirsty that you can't focus on anything and even the beverage you hate the most sounds good? Has your heart ever been thirsty? So thirsty that you beg God for help and the most unexpected person speaks to your heart?

In the Gospel story we will hear, the Samaritan woman goes to the well during the hottest part of the day when she knew that few people would be around. She knew of her sinfulness and didn't want to be judged. When she got to the well, the most unexpected person spoke to her heart.

Who are the unexpected people in your life who have spoken to your heart?

Ice Breaker: Hangin' Out

Leader: I would like everyone to form a large circle and then sit on the floor. (Leader moves to the center of the circle, to be the first to play the game.) The game we are going to play is called "Hangin' Out." The person in the center of the circle says, "I'm hangin' out with people who..." and then finishes the phrase by adding one descriptive phrase that describes a group of people in the circle.

Here's an example: I'm hangin' out with the people who are wearing black. Everyone in the circle who is wearing black stands up and moves to another spot in the circle and sits down. The last person left standing will be then be the new leader and will say, "I'm hangin' out with people who..." and add a new description. Be creative with your descriptions. Think about things like physical characteristics (i.e., hair or eye color, clothing style, shoe size) or non-physical attributes (i.e. places people have been on vacation, birthday month, number of siblings, pet ownership). The more creative you are with your descriptions, the more fun you will have!

There are two rules for this game: The leader cannot repeat something that has already been said, and the people in the circle must move at least two spaces away from where you are currently sitting standing?

(Leader starts the group and then takes a place in the circle. This is a high-energy activity so help keep the game moving and be ready to jump in with ideas if someone in the middle is struggling to think of a category. The game can be played for any length of time, as long as participants are having fun and the energy remains high.)



Large Group Activity: The Outcast and the Stranger Skits

Materials Needed:

- **Dry erase board or easel with newsprint**
- **Markers**
- **Props for skits (optional)**

Leader: There are many stories in the Bible like the story of the Samaritan Woman at the Well – stories where Jesus is seen “hanging out” with the outcasts of society. But he went beyond just sitting quietly as a bystander. He actually had conversations with these people, reaching into their lives with love and compassion, even healing.

Let’s come up with a list of people that today’s society views as outcasts. (Leader writes response on dry erase board or newsprint. Label this LIST A.)

Why does society view them as outcasts? (Leader writes responses. Label this LIST B.)

Jesus met the Woman at the Well in a place she went to everyday. Name some of the places you go to every day or every week. (Leader writes responses. Label this LIST C.)

We are going to break up into small groups. Your group needs to choose one category / item from each of the three lists and write a skit about a person who hangs out in public with an outcast. You will need a narrator, an outcast, a person who welcomes the outcast, a few people who disregard the outcast, and two to three bystanders. Keep it real. Think about where you spend a lot of time (i.e., in a coffee shop, at school, at a sports game, in a theater, in a shopping center, etc.). With whom would you NOT want your friends to see you?

You will have 10 minutes to work on your skit and then each group will present the skit to the large group.

(After 10 minutes, re-gather the group and invite each group to perform their skit. When all skits have been performed, lead a brief discussion about how we treat people who are different who are judged to be unworthy of our time and presence.)

Large Group Activity: The Story of the Samaritan Woman at the Well

Distribute scripts of the Gospel of John story in which Jesus meets the Samaritan Woman at a Well. If possible, select people in advance so they can practice the story or even make a video of the story.

Leader: We are going to hear a story from the Gospel of John. As you listen to the story, think about which character you are in the story. Are you an outcast like the Samaritan woman? Are you the Jesus character who has the courage to be seen and speak with people who are on the fringe of society? Are you someone in the crowd who watches and asks questions?



Ask for (or assign), five volunteers to read John 4:5-42 as noted below:

Narrator: Jesus came to a town of Samaria called Sychar, near the plot of land that Jacob had given to his son Joseph.

Jacob's well was there.

Jesus, tired from his journey, sat down there at the well.

It was about noon.

A woman of Samaria came to draw water.

Jesus said to her,

Jesus: Give me a drink.

Narrator: His disciples had gone into the town to buy food.

The Samaritan woman said to him,

Samaritan Woman: How can you, a Jew, ask me, a Samaritan woman, for a drink?

Narrator: The woman said this because Jews typically did not associate with Samaritans. Jesus answered and said to her,

Jesus: If you knew the gift of God and who is saying to you, "Give me a drink," you would have asked him and he would have given you living water.

Narrator: The woman said to him,

Samaritan Woman: Sir, you do not even have a bucket and the cistern is deep; where then can you get this living water? Are you greater than our father Jacob, who gave us this cistern and drank from it himself with his children and his flocks?"

Narrator: Jesus answered and said to her,

Jesus: Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again; but whoever drinks the water I shall give will never thirst; the water I shall give will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.

Narrator: The woman said to him,

Samaritan Woman: Sir, give me this water, so that I may not be thirsty or have to keep coming here to draw water.

Narrator: Jesus said to her,

Jesus: Go call your husband and come back.

Narrator: The woman answered and said to him,

Samaritan Woman: I do not have a husband.

Narrator: Jesus answered her,

Jesus: You are right in saying, "I do not have a husband." For you have had five husbands, and the one you have now is not your husband.

Samaritan Woman: What you have said is true.



Narrator: The woman said to him,

Samaritan Woman: Sir, I can see that you are a prophet. Our ancestors worshiped on this mountain; but you people say that the place to worship is in Jerusalem.

Narrator: Jesus said to her,

Jesus: Believe me, woman, the hour is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. You people worship what you do not understand; we worship what we understand, because salvation is from the Jews.

But the hour is coming, and is now here, when true worshipers will worship the Father in Spirit and truth; and indeed the Father seeks such people to worship him.

God is Spirit, and those who worship him must worship in Spirit and truth.

Narrator: The woman said to him,

Samaritan Woman: I know that the Messiah is coming, the one called the Christ; when he comes, he will tell us everything.

Narrator: Jesus said to her,

Jesus: I am he, the one speaking with you.

Narrator: At that moment his disciples returned, and were amazed that he was talking with a woman, but still no one said,

Person #1: What are you looking for?

Person #2: Why are you talking with her?

Narrator: The woman left her water jar and went into the town and said to the people,

Samaritan Woman: Come see a man who told me everything I have done. Could he possibly be the Christ?

Narrator: They went out of the town and came to him. Meanwhile, the disciples urged him,

Disciples #1 and #2 (together): Rabbi, eat.

Narrator: But he said to them,

Jesus: I have food to eat of which you do not know.

Narrator: So the disciples said to one another,

Disciple #1: Could someone have brought him something to eat?

Narrator: Jesus said to them,

Jesus: My food is to do the will of the one who sent me and to finish his work.

Do you not say, "In four months the harvest will be here"? I tell you, look up and see the fields ripe for the harvest. The reaper is already receiving payment



and gathering crops for eternal life, so that the sower and reaper can rejoice together. For here the saying is verified that “one sows and another reaps.”

I sent you to reap what you have not worked for; others have done the work, and you are sharing the fruits of their work.

Narrator: Many of the Samaritans of that town began to believe in him because of the word of the woman who testified,

Samaritan Woman: He told me everything I have done.

Narrator: When the Samaritans came to him, they invited him to stay with them; and he stayed there two days. Many more began to believe in him because of his word, and they said to the woman,

Person #2: We no longer believe because of your word; for we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this is truly the savior of the world.

Individual Reflection

Materials Needed:

- Paper
- Pencils
- Music (optional)

Leader: At the beginning of the story, I asked you to think about which character you played in the story. Take a few minutes, think about what you heard and then write a short letter to Jesus from the perspective of the character with whom you identified. Tell him who you are in the story, how you feel and why. Remember that Jesus offered “living water” to the woman in the story – a chance for a new life in Him. In your letter, ask for the living water that you need. How do you need Jesus to help you turn away from sin so as to live out your Baptismal call to holiness – your call to bring others to know Jesus, as His missionary?

Your letter could start something like this: “Dear Jesus, I feel like an outcast because...” or “Jesus, I feel like I am always standing in the crowd watching what happens...” or “Jesus, I feel like I am you in situations where people are judged or bullied and being you isn’t easy.” When you are finished with your story, sit quietly until everyone has finished. When everyone has finished, we will move into small groups in which you can choose to share your letter or participate in a discussion about the Gospel. (Allow time for writing and sharing. If appropriate, play background music.)



Small Group Activity

Small Group Leader: Let's talk about the Gospel story in which Jesus met the Samaritan Woman at the Well. If the story were taking place today, where do you think Jesus would meet someone? (Pause) Describe the kind of person you think the Samaritan Woman would look like. (Allow time for a discussion.)

Small Group Leader: Would anyone like to share the letter you wrote to Jesus in response to the story? (Allow time for sharing. Remind participants that each person has the choice to decide whether or not to read the letter. No one is to be forced to do so.)

Small Group Leader: Before we go back to the large group, let's end our time with a prayer. (Leader can invite participants to pray spontaneously or use the prayer below.)

Loving Father, You sent Jesus, to help us learn to love You. Sometimes we feel left out; sometimes we are afraid to speak; and sometimes we lack the courage to love others the way You love us. Give us the living water that Jesus gave to the Samaritan woman so we can experience Your love and share it with others. Amen.

Prayer Service: Buckets of Brokenness and Wells of Living Water

Materials Needed

- **Two containers: one that can be used as a bucket and one to be used as a well**
- **Pencils**
- **Small blank index cards**
- **Music (Optional)**
- **Well Cards – one per participant (Inspirational words that represent the life-giving gifts that Jesus offers. Participants will draw these from the well.)**
- **Sample Well Cards:**

Confidence	Faith
Integrity	Nourishment
Joy	Support
Happiness	Love
Peace	Encouragement

Before the prayer begins:

- Place the bucket and the well in the center or front of the room. Put the Well Cards in the Well.
- Distribute pencils and blank paper to each participant

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



Loving God,

You sent Your son, Jesus, to offer life-giving water to the Samaritan woman.

We, too, thirst for water that will renew our hearts. Lift our burdens to that we can run freely to your well of grace. We pray this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Leader: Jesus said to the Samaritan woman, “Whoever drinks the water I shall give will never thirst; the water I shall give will become a spring of water welling up to eternal life.” The woman left her water jar and her burdens at the well and ran freely to tell everyone about Jesus.

We have already been Baptized in living water but sometimes we are tired, lonely and afraid. We want to leave our burdens behind and run to tell others of the life that Jesus gives.

Think about some of the things that burden you—things from which you want to be freed. Write a few of your burdens on the index card provided and then fold it in half. No one will read these so be honest with yourself and with God. (Pause while participants write. When all have finished, continue the prayer.)

Leader: I invite you to come forward one at a time with your card and drop it into this bucket. Like the Samaritan woman, you can leave the bucket of burdens behind. Then, I invite you to reach into this well and receive a sign of Jesus’ life-giving water. (Leader should go to the bucket and well first and then wait until all have come forward. If appropriate, play reflective music.)

Leader: Freed from our burdens and strengthened by the well of God’s grace, we join our voices in the prayer that Jesus taught us.

Our Father...

Leader: We are called to go out and tell everyone about the Gospel message. Look around this room. No one of us is alone. We are strength for each other. Jesus promised His followers peace. As we go forth from this place, let us offer each other as sign of Christ’s peace.



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Week Four: The Healing of the Man Born Blind

Leader: In this session, we will focus on our spiritual blindness and how it hinders us from living in the light of Christ.

We live in a very visual society. A large majority of us are visual learners. But how much do we really see? Close your eyes for a moment. What color is the shirt of the person sitting next to you? Open your eyes and see if you were correct. Close your eyes again. What is hanging on the walls of this room? Open your eyes and check.

In the story of the Man Born Blind, Jesus heals the man's physical blindness to remind us of our spiritual blindness. Think about how you might be blind to the needs of those around you. How do you need Jesus to heal you?

Ice Breaker

Leader: Find a partner and sit across from that person. (Pause) Take one minute to notice everything you can about the other person. (Pause) Now, both of you turn and face away from your partner. Change three things about your appearance. (Pause) Turn and face your partner and see if you can figure out what has changed.

Large Group Activity: In the Darkness of Our Minds—There is Light

Materials Needed:

- **Scripts of the “Man Born Blind” (John 9:1, 6-9, 13-17, 34-38) for four student volunteers.**
- **Music (optional)**

Leader: Have you ever had trouble staying awake at Mass? Or have you even been sitting in a class and your eyelids start to feel really heavy, then your head starts to nod to one side and then suddenly you jerk your head and wake up? Most of us are trying to pay attention, but sometimes our minds and our eyelids go in a different direction.

I'm not going to ask you to even try to keep your eyes open for this next part. In fact, I'm going to ask you to CLOSE your eyes. In the darkness of your mind, I invite you to see the light of the Gospel. Take a minute to get into a comfortable position where you can close your eyes AND stay awake. (Play instrumental music as the readers proclaim the Gospel.)

(John 9:1, 6-9, 13-17, 34-38)

Reader A: As Jesus passed by he saw a man blind from birth.
He spat on the ground and made clay with the saliva,
and smeared the clay on his eyes,
and said to him,

Reader B: “Go wash in the Pool of Siloam” — which means Sent.

Reader A: So he went and washed, and came back able to see.
His neighbors and those who had seen him earlier as a beggar said,

Reader C: “Isn't this the one who used to sit and beg?”



Reader A: Some said, "It is,"
but others said,

Reader C: "No, he just looks like him."

Reader A: He said,

Reader B: "I am."

Reader A: They brought the one who was once blind to the Pharisees.
Now Jesus had made clay and opened his eyes on a Sabbath.
So then the Pharisees also asked him how he was able to see.
He said to them,

Reader D: "He put clay on my eyes, and I washed, and now I can see."

Reader A: So some of the Pharisees said,

Reader C: "This man is not from God,
because he does not keep the Sabbath."

Reader A: But others said,

Reader E: "How can a sinful man do such signs?"

Reader A: And there was a division among them.
So they said to the blind man again,

Reader E: "What do you have to say about him,
since he opened your eyes?"

Reader D: "He is a prophet."

Reader A: They answered and said to him,

Reader E: "You were born totally in sin,
and are you trying to teach us?"

Reader A: Then they threw him out.
When Jesus heard that they had thrown him out,
he found him and said,

Reader B: "Do you believe in the Son of Man?"

Reader A: He answered and said,

Reader D: "Who is he, sir, that I may believe in him?"

Reader A: Jesus said to him,

Reader B: "You have seen him, and
the one speaking with you is he."



Reader A: He said,

Reader D: “I do believe, Lord,”

Reader A: and he worshiped him.

Small Group Activity: Seeing and Serving the Needs of Others

Small Group Leader: The Gospel story in which Jesus heals the man who was born blind could easily be mistaken as a story about the curing of physical blindness. It is really about spiritual healing. Let’s take a few minutes to talk about “spiritual blindness.” (Leader guides the group discussion with the questions below.)

What is spiritual blindness?

Where do you see it in those around you?

Are there places in the world today affected by spiritual blindness? Be specific.

How do you think missionaries cut through the spiritual blindness that prevents people from believing the “Good News”?

How do you help others come to know the “Good News” of Jesus and experience His love and compassion?

How are YOU spiritually blind?

How can we see more clearly?

Prayer

Materials Needed:

- **Large candle Small taper candles with wax guard for each participant**
- **Lighter**
- **Copies of the Intercessions and Closing Prayer for the readers**
- **Music (optional)**

Preparation

1. Light a large candle and place it in the front of the room or in the center of a circle of chairs.
2. Distribute the small candles with wax guards to participants.
3. Dim the lights in the room.
4. Gather appropriate music (optional).

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



Loving God, source of all light.

We are Your people who have walked in darkness.

We long to have our eyes opened to all that You have planned for us.

Give us eyes that see beyond ourselves – to see the needs of others.

Allow us to see where You are calling us to serve in Your name.

We pray this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Leader: When we were Baptized, we received a candle and were instructed to “walk always as children of the light.” Living out the promises of our Baptism requires us to look beyond ourselves so we can serve the needs of others. But often times, we are blind to those needs, or perhaps we simply choose not to look at the struggles of others. When we began our Lenten journey about four weeks ago, we focused on our Baptismal call to help those in need – to be missionaries. We can do that by praying for others, fasting from distractions and giving money or time to those in need.

Is there someone you know who may be struggling or have particular spiritual or material needs? Do you avoid these people even though you know they may need help? Is there someone for whom you want to be Christ’s light? What is preventing you from doing so?

When one particular person comes to mind to whom you will commit to bringing the light of Christ’s love, carry your unlit candle to the large candle in this room. Light your candle in honor of the person you just identified and then return to your seat. (Pause until all candles are lit.)

Leader: Mindful of the needs of others and our call to bear Christ’s, let us stand bring our prayers to the Lord.

Reader 1: For our world, that the beacon of hope from the heart of Jesus can lead all people. We pray...

Reader 2: For our Church, that we see the work that still needs to be done. We pray...

Reader 1: For those who are still blind to the message of Jesus Christ. We pray...

Reader 2: For all those who suffer in mind, body, and spirit. (Pause for names) We pray...

Reader 1: For the missionaries who are bringing the message of Christ to those in need. We pray....

Reader 2: For ourselves, to never forget that we are all called to be missionary disciples by our prayers, actions and sacrifices. We pray....

Leader: Let us pray for all the intentions we hold in our hearts. (Pause) We pray...



Closing Prayer

(Leader invites two people to come forward to read the closing prayer.)

Leader: In St. Paul's letter to the Ephesians (5:8-14), he challenges people to live in the light of Christ.

Reader 1: Brothers and sisters:
You were once darkness,
But now you are light in the Lord.

Reader 2: Live as children of the light,
For light produces every kind of goodness
And righteousness and truth.
Try to learn what is pleasing to the Lord.

Reader 1: Take no part in the fruitless works of darkness;
Rather expose them, for it is shameful even to mention
The things done by them in secret;

For everything that becomes visible is light.

Reader 2: Therefore, it says:
Awake, O sleeper,
Arise from the dead
And Christ will give you light."

Leader: The light is Christ is burning inside of you. As you extinguish your candle, walk forward as a child of Christ's light.



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Week Five: 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! (If appropriate and time allows, invite participants to share their texts.)

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.

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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Week Six: 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.

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.