



## Living Lent in Mission:

A Resource for Youth and Young Adults

# 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."*

# 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.

## 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.”

## Intercessions

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

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.*

May the leaders of our world unite with each other and promote peace. *We pray to the Lord.*

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.*

May those who have died rest in Christ and may those who mourn them be consoled. *We pray to the Lord.*

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.*

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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missionary  
childhood  
association

## 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?*

# Small Group Activity

- Materials Needed:
- Pencils
- Small slips of paper
- One envelope per participant

**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.

**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.



## 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 ?

## 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

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.