

FAMILIES FORMING DISCIPLES

PREPARING FOR LENT

**TOPIC: PREPARING FOR LENT – MAKING A PLAN; PRAYER, FASTING, AND ALMSGIVING
JESUS IN THE DESERT – UNITING OUR SUFFERINGS WITH CHRIST**

SACRED SCRIPTURE

**MT 4:1-11;
LK 4:1-14;
HEB 2:18,
4:15-16**

REFERENCES:

CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH
nos. 540, 1434, 2029

CREED	LITURGY	LIFE	PRAYER
nos. 538-40; 571-72; 606-09	nos. 1434-39	nos. 1969; 2015; 2029; 2447	nos. 2725- 45; 2757

Goal(s):

- Families will reflect on how Jesus spiritually prepared/trained to begin His mission during His time in the desert.
- Families will reflect on the power of uniting our sacrifices with Jesus' sacrifice.
- Families will make their *Family Lenten Plans* to prepare spiritually/train themselves for the mission God has given to them through their practice of praying, fasting, and almsgiving.

Materials:

- Bibles, crucifix (for Week 1)
- Rocks & Sharpie markers (for Week 3)

OPENING PRAYER

Come, Spirit of Piety, and bless all children, young people and their parents so that they can withstand the temptations that lead them away from a holy and happy life. May they have good examples in their homes, schools, and society, and become true witnesses to the love of God in the world.

Hail Mary...

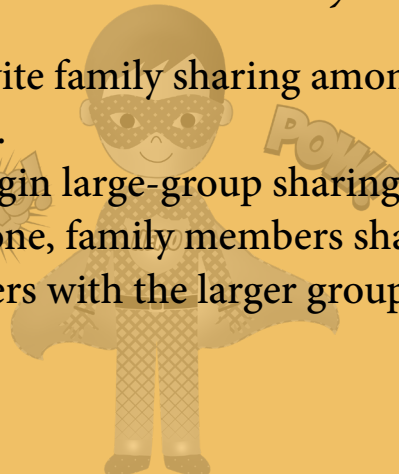
(adapted from Catholics For Family Peace)



ICE BREAKER

If you could choose one superpower, what would it be and why?

1. First, invite family sharing among themselves.
2. Then, begin large-group sharing
3. One by one, family members share their answers with the larger group.



TEACH

1. Hook/Question

When you think of the term “Lent,” what two words come to mind?

(Let families discuss among themselves, and then invite sharing with the larger group.)

2. Introduce Topic

• Lent is a time when we prepare our hearts to remember the redemptive suffering and Death of our Lord, Jesus Christ, and we prepare to celebrate His Resurrection. Today we will begin to reflect on our Lenten practices and decide what our *Family Lenten Plans* will be.

3. FAMILY SHARING

Family Sharing questions:
(**First have families discuss questions together. Then invite large group sharing.**)

- a. (For Parents) When you were growing up, how did your family prepare for Easter during Lent?
- b. (For whole family) What are your favorite things to do during Lent?

4. CONTENT

So, what exactly is Lent?



Show video: *Lent Explained* by TheoMatters (2:39)

Ask: The video mentioned that, during Lent, there are three pillars or practices that the Church asks us to focus on that will bring us closer to God. What are these three Lenten practices? Answer: prayer, fasting and almsgiving.

Explain: It is typical during the season of Lent for people to fast from or give up something like chocolate, dessert, meat, etc. In addition, we should make commitments to pray more and to help others in need through almsgiving and other works of mercy. We do these things to grow closer to Christ—to be more like Him. The past few years have taught us that sometimes we may find ourselves fasting in ways that we never expected. For example, at times we may have “fasted” from being with our extended family members, churches, friends, schools, teams, work places, etc. Due to job loss and financial stress, some families have also not been able to meet their basic needs for food and medicine, and many have suffered the loss of loved ones. Perhaps we are grieving for them still. None of these sacrifices are what we would have chosen for ourselves or for our loved ones. Often along with the traditional ways of praying, giving alms and fasting, Lent can involve offering up difficult sacrifices we have already been making, allowing the Lord to transform us and to use the supernatural grace that comes from uniting our sufferings to Christ for the good of others and of ourselves.

Show: *The Meaning of Suffering (Lent)*,
Fr. Mike Ascension Presents (6 min)



Explain: Last month we talked about our baptisms and Jesus’ baptism. After being baptized by His cousin, St. John the Baptist, the first thing Jesus did was to let the Holy Spirit lead Him into the desert where He prayed and fasted for forty days. It was not an easy thing to do, but Jesus knew He needed to go through this challenging time, because it would strengthen and prepare Him to begin His public ministry. The periods in our lives when we grow the most are often times of suffering, sacrifice, and hardship. Jesus was showing us that we can use the difficulties that life may bring us to grow stronger in our faith and closer to God.

[Read: Mk 1:12-13](#)

*The Spirit drove Jesus out into the desert,
and he remained in the desert for forty days,
tempted by Satan.
He was among wild beasts,
and the angels ministered to him.*

5. FAMILY SHARING

(First have families discuss questions together. Then invite large group sharing.)

Explain: The periods in our lives when we grow the most are often times of suffering, sacrifice, and hardship. Jesus was showing us that we can use the difficulties that life may bring us to grow stronger in our faith and closer to God.

Ask: Have there been any times in the life of your family that were difficult for you? What were they?

Did you grow closer to one another through that situation?

Did you think God gave you the grace to help your family to get through it?

Did you grow from the experience?

Did you grow closer to God?

Explain: Jesus knows very well the challenges we have faced during this past year. He knows these things not only because He is God but also because He experienced the same losses when He walked on earth. As the Crucified and Risen Lord, Jesus has carried the weight of our sorrows for us. He is always in our midst, inviting us to unite our sufferings to Him, the One who has conquered sin, suffering, and death. When we do this, Jesus is with us, and He transforms our sacrifices into something beautiful for ourselves and for others. God our Father does not want us to bear our burdens alone; rather, He sent His Son and the Holy Spirit to redeem, transform and share in every part of our lives, the sorrows and the joys, because He loves us.

By God's grace, when we invite Jesus more deeply into our hearts and give Him our sacrifices that we have made in the past or will be making during the upcoming Lenten season, we are uniting them to Jesus' ultimate sacrifice on the Cross. We become even more one with Christ. We emerge as stronger Christians led by the Holy Spirit, just as Jesus came out of the desert strengthened and ready to spread the word of God!

[Read Mk 1:13-14](#)

...Jesus came to Galilee proclaiming the gospel of God:

"This is the time of fulfillment.

The kingdom of God is at hand.

Repent, and believe in the gospel."

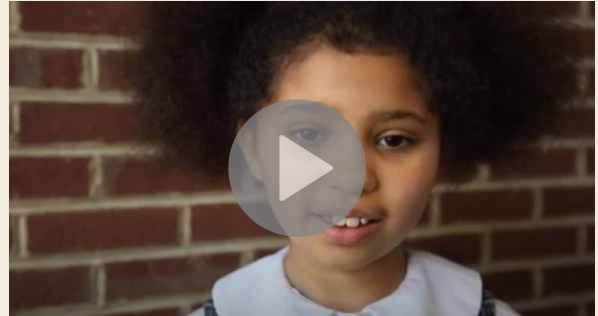
Explain: We too are preparing for our mission to proclaim the Gospel with our lives!

So, now what will you and your family do for Lent?

Show video:

Kids answer: What are you giving up for Lent?

The Virginian-Pilot (1 min.)



6. MISSION

Step 1: Introduce Mission Activity

Mission Activities are to be done at home during Week 2 and to be shared at the gathering of families on Week 3

Step 2: Explain Activity

- i. Watch one or more of the videos on Lent together
- ii. Read the USCCB explanations about the Spiritual and Corporal Works of Mercy, as well as the Lenten Family resources (images and links provided in week 2's handout).
- iii. Decide together which works your family will do to practice the Lenten pillars of praying, fasting, and almsgiving and make a Family Lenten Plan.
- iv. As part of your Family Lenten Plan, schedule a time to go to confession together. The Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation is a great opportunity to rely on the Lord's mercy and grace and be renewed by the Lord's forgiveness. (Provide information about how the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation will be made available at your parish during Lent.)
- v. Reach out to a grandparent(s) or senior adult(s) in your family/community and ask them about their favorite memories of Lent when they were growing up.
- vi. Place a cross or crucifix on your family's home altar to remind you of the Lenten Season. Then pray together as a family.
- vii. Be prepared to share about your Family Lenten Plan, crucifix, and your Senior Sharing at the next gathering.

Step 3: Use the Lenten Family resources and Spiritual and Corporal Works of Mercy to model how to practice the Lenten Pillars of Prayer, Fasting, and Almsgiving. Remind families not to feel as if they have to do all of the works, because that's not practical. Some works they may already do, like praying for others. That's great! Encourage them to keep doing those works and pick one or two more that will fit naturally into their family life to do for Lent.

Step 4: Model for the families by sharing your own Family Lenten Plan that corresponds to the three Lenten Pillars of Prayer, Fasting, and Almsgiving. Show what your family will do to practice each of these.

Step 5: Next, **tell** the families about your Senior Sharing experience, explaining who the senior adult that you interviewed is, and what he/she shared about their favorite memories of Lent when they were growing up.

Step 6: Finally, **show** the families the crucifix that you have placed on your own home altar and tell them a little about where it came from or why it is special to you and your family. Encourage the families to begin practicing the Lenten pillars by praying together for others and for one another.

7. CLOSING

Review & Close in Prayer

SUPPORTING QUOTES FROM CHURCH DOCUMENTS

Pope Francis, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* (2013), no. 6:

There are Christians whose lives seem like Lent without Easter. I realize of course that joy is not expressed the same way at all times in life, especially at moments of great difficulty. Joy adapts and changes, but it always endures, even as a flicker of light born of our personal certainty that, when everything is said and done, we are infinitely loved. I understand the grief of people who have to endure great suffering, yet slowly but surely we all have to let the joy of faith slowly revive as a quiet yet firm trust, even amid the greatest distress: “My soul is bereft of peace; I have forgotten what happiness is... But this I call to mind, and therefore I have hope: the steadfast love of the Lord never ceases, his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning. Great is your faithfulness... It is good that one should wait quietly for the salvation of the Lord” (Lam 3:17, 21-23, 26).

Pope St. John Paul II, Apostolic Letter *Salvifici Doloris* (1984), nos. 15-16, 19:

... Even though the victory over sin and death achieved by Christ in his Cross and Resurrection does not abolish temporal suffering from human life, nor free from suffering the whole historical dimension of human existence, it nevertheless *throws a new light* upon this dimension and upon every suffering: the light of salvation. This is the light of the Gospel, that is, of the Good News.

... Christ drew close above all to the world of human suffering through the fact of having *taken this suffering upon his very self*.

In the Cross of Christ not only is the Redemption accomplished through suffering, but *also human suffering itself has been redeemed...*

... The Redeemer suffered in place of man and for man. Every man *has his own share in the Redemption*. Each one is also *called to share in that suffering* through which the Redemption was accomplished. He is called to share in that suffering through which all human suffering has also been redeemed. In bringing about the Redemption through suffering, Christ *has also raised human suffering to the level of the Redemption*. Thus each man, in his suffering, can also become a sharer in the redemptive suffering of Christ.