

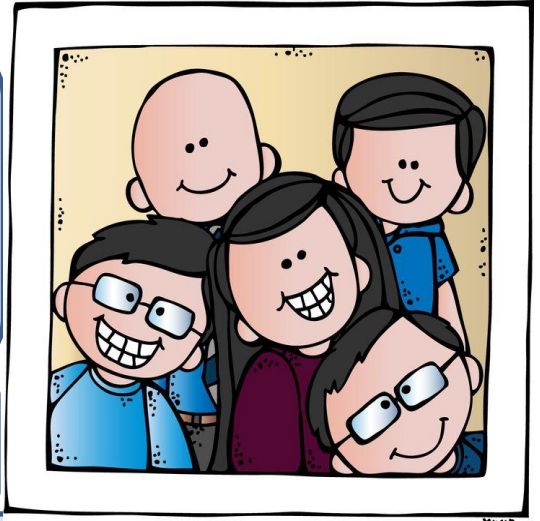
St. James Faith on the Go

Feb. 21, 2021 Your Lent Journey

Materials Needed: Bible), Faith journal, writing or coloring tools, building blocks (opt.) Lenten Plan page (opt.), Lenten Journey coloring page (opt.), Examination of Conscience (opt.)

Note: This lesson is designed to be used for all ages. Please tailor it to the age and need of your children.

Opening Prayer: Dear Father, as we begin this journey through Lent, guide us each step of the way as we become better disciples.



Warm Up: Think about a time you got new clothes, maybe new shoe, a dress or pants.

They are so clean and new looking... until something happens and they get dirty. Don't you love new white shoes? But after playing outside in them they were never as clean as they were the first time I wore them. (Share personal stories.)

Clothes can be washed and stains can come out but they never seem to have that brand new look.

When we were created God gave us a body and a soul. Our soul is like our spirit, inside of us. Sometimes we call it our heart. Think of it as a bright white, super clean set of clothes. But, God created us human, not perfect. We struggle with sin and our spirit garments are not so clean anymore. In our earthly life we try to be good but there are many temptations to lie, to take things that belong to others, to say mean things, to exclude others from our games and parties. These actions are stains on our souls. But, there is good news! When we confess our sins to God, from home or in the sacrament of reconciliation, our souls are washed clean, not just sort of clean but white as snow! God has the best detergent for washing our sins away. It is called Mercy! It is forgiveness mixed with love!

The season of Lent is a 40-day period of time meant for examining our words and actions. We look at our heavenly clothes and see where we have stains. This is not easy. We don't like to look at our faults. But if we take a good honest look at what we do, we will find ways we can be better disciples, more loving friends and neighbors. Changing to be better disciples is called repentance. In our lesson we will learn some ways we can turn to God and let Him wash our souls clean. There are some hints in our Gospel reading.

Gospel: Choose your reading based on when you do your lesson.

Feb. 14: Mark 1:40-45 Jesus Heals a Leper

In this simple story, the leper invites Jesus to heal Him. This action shows that the leper has faith in Jesus.

Like the leper we cannot become clean by ourselves. Jesus wants to help us just as He wanted to heal the leper. . Do you believe Jesus can change you?

In what ways can you become transformed with Jesus' help? Lent is the perfect time!

Feb. 21: Mark 1:12-15 Jesus in the Desert

Jesus spends 40 days in the desert fasting and praying. He knows it is time for His public ministry to begin and needs strength and courage. He seeks this from His Father.

We need our heavenly Father's help to change and become better.

When have you needed strength and courage?

As you make your Lenten plan ask God for His help determining how you can become a better disciple.

Pray for His help as you make your Lenten journey.

Ash Wednesday: Lent begins on Feb. 17, Ash Wednesday and lasts until Good Friday, just before Easter. When the priest or deacon puts ashes on our foreheads it is a sign that our souls are unclean. We are admitting that we are not perfect and need God's help to be better. The priest says, "Turn away from sin and be faithful to the Gospel." But how do we do that?

Examination of Conscience

First, we must examine our conscience, which means to look at our habits and find ones that turn us away from God or do not follow Jesus' teachings. We can look at the ten commandments and we can look at Jesus' most important commandments: Love God and love others.

What can you do to love God better? Do you spend time with Him each day? Do you thank Him for all your blessings? Do you attend mass every weekend?

What can you do to love others better? Do you obey your parents? Are you always kind and helpful to your siblings? Are there people who you are not kind to? Do you speak badly of anyone? Do you reject anyone? Are there people that you can help or need to feel God's love?

Do you take responsibility for your chores, schoolwork, clothing and toys?

Do you always tell the truth?

What gifts/talents did God give you and how can you use them to share His love with others?

Attached is an Examination of Conscience which may help you choose what habit you would like to work on.

Make a Lenten Plan

Once you have thought of ways you can repent make a plan.

Our Lent plan will raise us up closer to God.

Picture a platform that you want to raise off the ground. You need to give it legs or pillars to hold it up.

Use a large book as your platform. Use Markers or blocks to be pillars to hold up the book, placing them strategically.

What is the smallest number of pillars that can hold the book steady? You need at least three pillars.

Lent is a platform to raise us closer to God.

It has three pillars: **Prayer, Fasting, and Loving Acts** (almsgiving) Jesus used all three on His journey on earth and we need all three to grow in faith. As you learn about each write a plan for Prayer, for fasting and for almsgiving in your journal or in the paper included with this lesson.

Prayer: Your plan for Lent should include how you will stay in touch with God through Lent. Remember that He is the one with the best plan for your life!

Ideas:

- Find a special prayer that you will say each night before you go to bed.
- Read from the Bible each day. You may pray before meals or attend/watch mass more faithfully.
- Pray before meals.
- Attend/watch mass each weekend.
- Pray the Stations of the Cross
- Write in your prayer journal each night, telling God about your day. Include: What you're happy about, worried about, sorry for, and who you want to pray for.
- Listen to Christian Music. There are lots of contemporary Christian songs on YouTube
- Carry a reminder that Jesus is always with you on your journey, such as a religious medal, a prayer stone, a special necklace or wristband.

Fasting: Jesus fasted in the desert for 40 days! He was completely dependent on God for all His needs. Fasting during Lent reminds us that we don't need all the things we have. We can live without most of them but we cannot live without God.

We often think of giving up TV or candy for Lent, but how much better would it be if we gave up something that pulls us away from God? Here are some ideas:

- Give up inappropriate language, harsh words, or negative behaviors.
- Give up an hour each weekend to go to mass or the Stations of the Cross.
- Give time once a week to do something nice for someone.
- Give up some time each week to play a game with a sibling or the whole family.
- Give up screen time during meals to connect with your family.
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When fasting from something it helps to do something else instead. For example, instead of eating sweets for a snack, I will eat fruit. Instead of using my phone at the table I will play a game or have a conversation with my family. Look online for conversation starters or games for the dinner table.

Loving Acts (Almsgiving): Make a plan for doing something at least once a week for someone else.

Ideas: Shovel a neighbor's walk.

Fill and empty the dishwasher.

Help with the laundry.

Do a service project at school, church or in your neighborhood.

Call a relative who lives far away.

Do something nice for someone you're not usually friendly with.

Make cards for residents at a nursing home or long-term care facility, such as Courtyard Manor.

Lent is a wonderful opportunity to share God's love with friends and family far away by sending cards or letters.

Faith Journal: In your Faith Journal write your plan for Lent. Include plan each of the three pillars of Lent. Make it fun and creative!! Send a picture of your Lenten plan to mfitzpatrick@sjnovi.net.

Optional Extras:

Lenten Journey Visual: Attached is a sheet where your child can color one block each day of Lent when they have followed their plan.

Fun Fact: Did you know that Sundays are days to celebrate Jesus' resurrection and so are not counted in the 40 days of Lent?

Closing Prayer: Dear Jesus, hold my hand and guide me every step of the journey of Lent so that I will be a better disciple when I celebrate Your Resurrection on Easter Sunday. Amen.