

Journey through Lent

Directions: Go over the information about Lent with a parent. Then discuss together the reflection questions.

Ash Wednesday is the beginning of Lent. Ashes are put on our foreheads in the shape of a cross. The priest says, “Remember, you are dust and to dust you shall return.” This makes us think of when God made Adam from the dust of the ground. And it helps us remember that we need to make up for our sins.

Lent is a forty-day time period before **Holy Week** and **Easter**. This time period recalls the forty days Jesus spent in the wilderness before His public ministry. There, Jesus fasted, prayed, and was tempted. He did these things to prepare Himself for the work of salvation. During Lent, we are asked to imitate Jesus and prepare our hearts for the gift of salvation. We are asked to repent from our sins, do good works, and renew our commitment to our Faith in Christ.

Lent is also the time in which people who have been preparing to receive the Sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation, and Holy Communion begin their final preparations. They will be welcomed into the Church at the Easter Vigil on Holy Saturday.

There are a number of ways that the Church offers us to enter more deeply into Lent. In the Gospel reading for Ash Wednesday, Jesus teaches His disciples about almsgiving, prayer, and fasting.



St. Lawrence Distributing Alms,
by Bl. Fra Angelico.

Almsgiving

Almsgiving means to care for the needs of others, especially those who are in the most need, such as the poor, the sick, the suffering, and the outcast. Jesus taught us the Corporal Works of Mercy: feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, shelter the homeless, clothe the naked, visit the imprisoned, visit the sick, and bury the dead. He also taught that whenever we do these things for others, we are also doing them for Him.

Prayer

Prayer means to be in relationship with God. Prayer is talking with God, asking good things of Him for ourselves and for others, being in His presence, and listening to Him talk to us. We can pray in our own words, or with formal prayers. Lent is a time for us to focus on our relationship with God so that we can grow closer to Him.

Fasting

Fasting is to give something up or say no to something as a sacrifice. Fasting helps to strengthen our will so that we are better able to say no to temptations and avoid sin. Many Catholics give up something during the entire season of Lent such as candy, soda, or watching TV. Catholics between the ages of 18 and 59 (if they are healthy and able) are required to fast from food on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday.

When fasting, Catholics can eat one full meal and two small meals that together are not equal to a full meal. They should also avoid snacking between meals. In a similar way, Catholics 14 years-old and older are required to not eat meat (**abstain**) on Ash Wednesday, Good Friday, and every Friday during Lent.

Some other Lenten practices include not saying the word Alleluia during Mass. Alleluia means “praise the Lord” and is sung before the Gospel reading during Mass. We do not use this word during Lent so that we can use it during Easter to joyfully acclaim Christ’s Resurrection.

The liturgical color of Lent is purple, or violet. Purple is a color that represents penance. It reminds us of our focus on fasting and repentance from sin.

The Church asks the faithful to receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation during Lent, and to forgive those who have hurt us.

Reflection Questions

1. What is one way that you can help the poor or needy during Lent?
2. What is one way that you grow closer to God during Lent?
3. What is one thing that you can give up as a sacrifice during Lent?

Jesus' Divinity and Humanity

Directions: Read the information with a parent about Jesus' humanity and divinity and why He died for us.

In this week's Gospel, Jesus is revealed in all of His glory as God. His divinity shines through, literally, as a blinding light. And yet, Jesus is still Jesus. His humanity doesn't go away. His divinity, the glory of God, whom He is fully, is made known in and through His humanity. This is part of the mystery of the Incarnation, the Son of God assuming a human nature and becoming man in the Person of Jesus Christ. How is it that Jesus is both 100% fully God and 100% fully human?

Rather than being a mystery for us to solve, the mystery of the Incarnation is a great truth that only God can make known to us. The dual nature of Christ is a profoundly beautiful reality that invites us to contemplate how great God's love is for us – that the all-powerful God of the universe would humble

Himself and become one of His creatures, a human being, in order to show us His love, be our model of holiness, and save us from sin.

During Lent, we are reminded of both the humanity and divinity of Jesus. Soon, we will memorialize Jesus' Passion and Death on the Cross. In His humanity, Jesus suffered greatly, and poured out His life for us on the Cross. But He did not stop being God in those moments of suffering. That means that our God deeply and personally knows what it is like to be one of us, even in our greatest moments of suffering. And then, on Easter Sunday, Jesus rose from the dead. Our God defeated death and conquered sin!

Let us reflect on these great truths of our Faith all throughout this Lenten season.

Sacred Art Reflection

Directions: Using the questions provided, reflect with a parent on the humanity and divinity of Jesus using the two paintings on the next page by Carl Bloch.

1. Take a moment to observe the first painting, *The Sermon on the Mount*. What first stands out to you about this painting?
2. In the Gospels, the Sermon on the Mount is the greatest example of Jesus teaching His disciples. How does this painting show us Jesus teaching?
3. How would you describe the people in the crowd and how they are relating to Jesus?
4. In what way does this painting emphasize Jesus' humanity? What evidence of his divinity is present in the painting?

Sermon on the Mount



Transfiguration



5. Take a moment to observe the second painting, *Transfiguration*. What do you first notice about this painting?
6. In what ways does this painting emphasize Jesus' divinity? What evidence of His humanity is present in the painting?
7. How is this painting similar to *The Sermon on the Mount* painting? How are they different?
8. Why do you think it is important that Jesus was Transfigured?

God and Man

Directions: In the frame below, draw your own picture of Jesus that shows that He is both fully God and fully human.

