

## YOUTH LENTEN RETREAT

**THEME : THE ROAD TO THE CROSS - PRAYER, FASTING & ALMSGIVING**  
**SPEAKER : ELAINE TONTOH**

### WHAT IS LENT (February 26, 2020 - April 9, 2020)

Lent is the period of 40 days marked by a season of reflection and preparation which comes before Easter . Lent is about making sacrifices, a time of spiritual cleansing, a time of repentance, a time of penance through prayer, fasting, and almsgiving.

**Lenten practice of penance is an outward sign/expression of repentance for having done wrong in order to receive the inward grace of forgiveness from a loving Father.**

Ash Wednesday begins the Lenten season. (<https://www.catholic.org/lent/ashwed.php>)

**Ash Wednesday** : The ashes symbolize

1.The dust from which God made us. As the priest applies the ashes to a person's forehead, he speaks the words: "**Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return.**" Alternatively, the priest may speak the words, "**Repent and believe in the Gospel.**"

2.Ashes also symbolize grief, in this case, grief that we have sinned and caused division from God.

**On Ash Wednesday, we acknowledge who we are (God's creation), what we are made of (dust), and what we have done (sinned). We therefore use the 40 days leading up to Easter as a period of repentance through prayer , fasting and giving alms.**

As Catholics, young catholics, replicate Jesus Christ's sacrifice and withdrawal into the desert for 40 days and recalls the events leading up to and including Jesus' crucifixion. This is why our theme for the retreat is the Road to the Cross.

### JESUS' ROAD TO THE CROSS - STATIONS OF THE CROSS

Begins from Jesus's condemnation by Pontius Pilate to his burial in the tomb.

<https://www.catholic.org/prayers/station.php>)

**Station 1:** Jesus is condemned to death

- Jesus, you stand all alone before Pilate. Nobody speaks up for you. Nobody helps defend you. You devoted your entire life to helping others, listening to the

smallest ones, caring for those who were ignored by others. They don't seem to remember that as they prepare to put you to death.

**His accusers cried out: Crucify Him Crucify Him . Do we remember the many times we crucify Jesus all over again by doing wrong ?**

**Station 2 : Jesus bears His cross**

- Jesus, as you accepted your cross, you knew you would carry it to your death on Calvary. You knew it wouldn't be easy, but you accepted it and carried it just the same.

**Station 3: Jesus falls the first time**

- Jesus, the cross you have been carrying is very heavy. You are becoming weak and almost ready to faint, and you fall down. Nobody seems to want to help you. The soldiers are interested in getting home, so they yell at you and try to get you up and moving again.

**Station 4: Jesus meets Mary, His mother**

- Jesus, you feel so alone with all those people yelling and screaming at you. You don't like the words they are saying about you, and you look for a friendly face in the crowd. You see your mother. She can't make the hurting stop, but it helps to see that she is on your side, that she is suffering with you. She does understand and care.

**Station 5 : Simon of Cyrene is made to bear Jesus' cross**

- Jesus, the soldiers are becoming impatient. This is taking longer than they wanted it to. They are afraid you won't make it to the hill where you will be crucified. As you grow weaker, they grab a man out of the crowd and make him help carry your cross. He was just watching what was happening, but all of a sudden he is helping you carry your cross.

**Station 6 : Veronica wipes Jesus' face**

- Jesus, suddenly a woman comes out of the crowd. Her name is Veronica. You can see how she cares for you as she takes a cloth and begins to wipe the blood and sweat from your face. She can't do much, but she offers what little help she can.

**Station 7 : Jesus falls the second time**

- This is the second time you have fallen on the road. As the cross grows heavier and heavier it becomes more difficult to get up. But you continue to struggle and try until you're up and walking again. You don't give up.

**Station 8:** The women of Jerusalem weep over Jesus

- Jesus, as you carry your cross you see a group of women along the road. As you pass by you see they are sad. You stop to spend a moment with them, to offer them some encouragement. Although you have been abandoned by your friends and are in pain, you stop and try to help them.

**Station 9:** Jesus falls the third time

- Jesus, your journey has been long. You fall again, beneath your cross. You know your journey is coming to an end. You struggle and struggle. You get up and keep going.

**Station 10:** Jesus is stripped of his clothes (**Disgraced/Embarrassed**)

- The soldiers notice you have something of value. They remove your cloak and throw dice for it. Your wounds are torn open once again. Some of the people in the crowd make fun of you. They tease you and challenge you to perform a miracle for them to see. They're not aware that you'll perform the greatest miracle of all!

**Station 11:** Jesus is nailed to the cross

- You are stretched out on the cross you have carried so far. The soldiers take big nails and drive them into your hands and feet. You feel abandoned by the people you loved so much. People seem to have gone mad. You have done nothing but good, yet they drive nails through your hands and feet.

**Station 12 :** Jesus dies on the cross

- As Jesus hung on the cross, he forgave the soldiers who had crucified him, and prayed for his mother and friends. Jesus wanted all of us to be able to live forever with God, so he gave all he had for us. **Jesus cries out, My God My God, why have you abandoned me.**

**Station 13:** Jesus is taken down from the cross

- Jesus, how brutally you were put to death. How gently you are taken from the cross. Your suffering and pain are ended, and you are put in the lap of your mother. The dirt and blood are wiped away. You are treated with love.

**Station 14:** Jesus is placed in the sepulchre. **(Conclusion of His Journey)**

- Jesus, your body is prepared for burial. Joseph gave you his own tomb. He laid your body there and rolled a large stone in front of it, then went home. What a sad day it has been for so many people.

**Lesson:**

- 1. Humility: Jesus wanted to do the will of His Father although He knew what it meant.**
- 2. Sacrifice : Jesus is like an innocent man who is accused of a crime He did not commit. He is not sentenced to life in prison, He is not given a chance to appeal the decision made by the jurors, he makes the ultimate sacrifice.**
- 3. Love : This sacrifice he made for an undeserving people so that His blood would atone for the sin of man, so that we can make our journey back to God when we sin.**

**HUMILITY SACRIFICE LOVE**

**Song : Were You There/ Text - Negro Spiritual, Harmony by Winfred Douglas**

Were you there when they crucified my Lord  
Were you there when they nailed him to a tree  
Were you there when they pierced him in the side  
Were you there when the sun refused to shine  
Were you there when they laid Him in the tomb

**Refrain :** O sometimes it causes me, to tremble, tremble, tremble

**OUR WAY TO THE CROSS:**

**PRAYER**

Prayer is having a conversation with God. It is when we talk to God and ask for help because it is He alone who has the power to do or change anything and even change us.

According to Pope Francis in our busy world, Prayer provides us with an opportunity to reflect upon our patterns and sins. We should pray more deeply, experience sorrow for what we've done and failed to do.

Prayer is also about developing a relationship with God, a loving Father who wants us to ask , wants us to seek, and wants us to knock. God offers a relationship that fulfills the deepest longing of the human heart .

### **Matthew 7:7-11 (Ask and Receive)**

**7** “Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. **8** For everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened.

**9** “Which of you, if your son asks for bread, will give him a stone? **10** Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake?

**11** If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him!

### ***Types of Prayer***

1. Reciting Traditional Prayers
2. Meditating
3. Praying in Silence
4. Singing
5. Using repetition or mantra
6. Talking with God spontaneously
7. Reading the scriptures

### **Mathew 26: 36, 39 (God’s will and not your will)**

**36** Then Jesus came with them to a place called Gethsemane, and he said to his disciples, “Sit here while I go over there and pray”.

**39** He advanced a little and fell prostrate in prayer , saying, “My Father , if it is possible, let this cup pass from me; yet not my will, but as you will.”

### **Mathew 6: 5-8 (Do not be a Hypocrite)**

**5** When you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, who love to stand and pray in the synagogues and on street corners so that others may see them. Amen, I say to you, they have received their reward.

**6** But when you pray, go to your room, close the door, and pray to your Father in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will repay you.

## **Luke 18 :9 - Parable of the Pharisee and the Tax Collector ( Pray with Humility)**

10 Two people went up to the temple area to pray; one was a Pharisee and the other a tax collector.

11 The Pharisee took up his position and spoke this prayer to himself, ‘O God, I thank you that I am not like the rest of humanity - greedy, dishonest, adulterous - or even like this tax collector .

12 I fast twice a week, and I pay tithes on my whole income.

13 But the tax collector stood off at a distance and would not even raise his eyes to heaven but beat his breast and prayed, O God, be merciful to me a sinner.

14 I tell you, the latter went home justified, not the former; for everyone one who exalts himself will be humbled and the one who humbles himself will be exalted.

## **Praying as Jesus Taught - The Lord's Prayer (All recite)**

A format for personal prayer - **Mathew 6 : 9-13**

### **a. Our Father in Heaven hallowed be your name**

- i. Spend this first part of your prayer praising God and thanking God. Thank God for sacrificing His only Son on the cross for the forgiveness of sins.

### **b. Your Kingdom come**

- i. Spend this part of your prayer asking God for his justice to come. Where there are wars ? In your community, where there are conflicts? Ask God for repentance in the hearts of those who cause conflicts and wars, who oppress the poor and vulnerable etc

### **c. Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven**

- i. Ask for God’s will to be done in you and others during this season of Lent. God’s will, that we repent and turn to Him.

### **d. Give us this day our daily bread**

- i. Here God wants you to bring your needs to Him. Come to the Lord and bring all your needs to Him.

### **e. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors**

- i. Lent is not just seeking forgiveness from God but also forgiving others and asking for forgiveness from people we have offended. Ask God to help you in times when forgiving others proves very difficult and also to mend broken relationships.

### **f. And do not bring us to the time of trial**

- i. Pray for help for the temptations we cannot overcome eg stealing, cheating, lying etc. Remember the seven things God hates and

cannot tolerate **Proverbs 6 : 16 - 19? Also the Temptation in the Garden**

**g. But rescue us from the evil one**

- i. The struggle between good and evil is real. God is real. The Devil is real. Heaven is real. Hell is real. Evil leads to sin. The Devil is the evil one and following his sinful ways leads us to hell. Pray during this season for deliverance from the evil ways of Satan.

**PRAYER LESSON : HUMILITY : We try to do God's will by asking for His help to stay away from sin.**

**FASTING ( & ABSTINENCE)**

**Fasting** : The law of fasting requires a Catholic from the 18th Birthday (Canon 97) to the 59th Birthday (i.e. the beginning of the 60th year, a year which will be completed on the 60th birthday) to reduce the amount of food eaten from normal. The Church defines this as one meal a day, and two smaller meals which if added together would not exceed the main meal in quantity. Such fasting is obligatory on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday. The fast is broken by eating between meals and by drinks which could be considered food (milk shakes, but not milk).

**Abstinence**: The law of abstinence requires a Catholic 14 years of age until death to abstain from eating meat on Fridays in honor of the Passion of Jesus on Good Friday. Meat is considered to be the flesh and organs of mammals and fowl. Also forbidden are soups or gravies made from them. Salt and freshwater species of fish, amphibians, reptiles and shellfish are permitted, as are animal derived products such as margarine and gelatin which do not have any meat taste.

<https://www.catholic.org/lent/abfast.php>

**Even though we may be younger than 14 years. There are others ways we can fast or abstain. (What are some of the ways?)**

**Matthew 4: 1-4: The Temptation of Jesus (Leading Example)**

- 1 Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert to be tempted by the devil
- 2 He fasted for **forty days** and forty nights, and afterwards he was hungry.
- 3 The tempter approached and said to him, “if you are the Son of God, command that these stones become loaves of bread”.

4 He said in reply, “It is written : One does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes forth from the mouth of God.

### **Joel 2:12-14**

12 Yet even now, says the Lord, return to me with your whole heart, with fasting , weeping, and mourning.

13 Rend your hearts, not your garments, and return to the Lord, your God. For He is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, abounding in steadfast love, and relenting in punishment.

14 Perhaps he will again relent and leave behind a blessing....

### **Mathew 6: 16-18: Teaching About Fasting**

16 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

17 But when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face,

18 so that you may not appear to others to be fasting, except to your Father who is hidden. And your Father who sees what is hidden will repay you

### **FASTING LESSON : SACRIFICE.**

### **ALMSGIVING**

What was the greatest alms God gave us?

Giving alms, means making the needs of others our own, especially the needy of our world. They are all around us: children and the old, the sick and the suffering, families and individuals, next-door neighbors and people in lands faraway. Whatever we give should be something of ourselves, something that costs us. We will receive blessings from God in return.

### **Deuteronomy 15 :7-8 (Give freely)**

7 If one of your kindred is in need in any community in the land which the Lord, your God, is giving you, you shall not harden your heart nor close your hand against your kin who is in need.

8 Instead you shall freely open your hand and generously lend what suffices to meet that need.

### **Sirach 4:31 (Give freely during Lent)**

31 Do not let your hand be open to receive but clenched when it is time to give.

### **Sirach 3:30-31 (Almsgiving Atones for sins)**

30 As water quenches a flaming fire so almsgiving atones for sins

31 The kindness people have done crosses their paths later on; should they stumble, they will find support.

### **Mathew 25:35 - 40 (What we do for others , we do also for God)**

35 For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, a stranger and you welcomed me,

36 naked and you clothed me , ill and you cared for me, in prison and you visited me.

37 Then the righteous will answer him and say, Lord when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink?

38 When did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and cloth you?

39 When did we see you ill or in prison, and visit you?

40 And the King will say to them in reply, Amen, I say to you, whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me.

### **How do we treat the homeless in our community? - Community Service**

#### **Mathew 6 : 1- 4 (How to give alms)**

1 But take care not to perform righteous deeds in order that people may see them ; otherwise, you will have no recompense from your heavenly Father

2 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.....

3 But when you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right is doing

4 So that your alms giving may be secret. And your Father who sees in secret will repay you.

#### **Acts 10: 30 - 31 (God Acknowledges Giving)**

30 Cornelius replied, four days ago at this hour, three o'clock in the afternoon, I was at prayer in my house when suddenly a man in dazzling robes stood before me and said,

31 Cornelius, your prayer has been heard and your almsgiving remembered before God.

## **1 John 3:17-18 ( Love through Almsgiving)**

17 If someone who has worldly means sees a brother in need and refuses him compassion, how can the love of God remain in him?

18 Children, let us love not in word or speech but in deed and truth.

## **ALMSGIVING LESSON : LOVE**

### **PRAYER, FASTING & ALMSGIVING - THE CONNECTION**

#### **Isaiah 58:6,7,9**

6 Is this not, rather, the fast that I choose: releasing those bound unjustly, untying the thongs of the yoke; setting free the oppressed, breaking off every yoke?

7 Is it not sharing your bread with the hungry, bringing the afflicted and the homeless into your house; clothing the naked when you see them, and not turning your back on your own flesh?

9 Then you shall call, and the Lord will answer, you shall cry for help, and he will say; "Here I am!"....

Pope Francis says "Fasting makes sense if it benefits someone else, if it helps us cultivate the style of the Good Samaritan, who bent down to his brother in need and took care of him."

And according to Isaiah 58, it is by doing this that our cry to God through prayer will be heard : Pray, Fast and Give- The three pillars of Lent, our way of the cross, penance.

**PRAYER : HUMILITY**

**FASTING : SACRIFICE**

**ALMSGIVING: LOVE**

## **JESUS IS PERSONIFIED IN US!**

### **QUESTIONS FOR GROUP DISCUSSION & PRESENTATIONS**

1. How can we as young catholics journey with Jesus to the cross?
2. What will you pray for or about during the Lenten season?

3. What will you fast from this Lenten season?
4. What will you give this Lenten season?
5. How can we overcome the things that prevent us from living Lent?
6. How can we get help when we are unable to journey with Jesus during Lent?

Use the **All About Lent Craft** & the **Pray Fast Give Sign Craft Kit** to help answer questions 2,3 & 4

*Resources : Breakthrough Bible for Young Catholics , NAB Revised Edition; The Catholic Youth Prayer Book, Saint Mary's Press.*