

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.

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

Station 2 : Jesus bears His cross

Station 3: Jesus falls the first time

Station 4: Jesus meets Mary, His mother

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

Station 6 : Veronica wipes Jesus' face

Station 7 : Jesus falls the second time

Station 8: The women of Jerusalem weep over Jesus

Station 9: Jesus falls the third time

Station 10: Jesus is stripped of his clothes

Station 11: Jesus is nailed to the cross

Station 12 : Jesus dies on the cross

Station 13: Jesus is taken down from the cross

Station 14: Jesus is placed in the sepulchre.

Lesson: Goal of the Journey : To make the ultimate sacrifice so that His blood would atone for the sin of man, so that we can make our journey back to God when we sin.

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, FASTING, ALMSGIVING

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!

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

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

- a. **Our Father in Heaven hallowed be your name**
- b. **Your Kingdom come**
- c. **Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven**
- d. **Give us this day our daily bread**
- e. **And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors**
- f. **And do not bring us to the time of trial**
- g. **But rescue us from the evil one**

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>

Matthew 4: 1-4: The Temptation of Jesus

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

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)

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.

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.

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.

QUESTIONS FOR GROUP DISCUSSION & PRESENTATION

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?

Note : 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.