

LENT, A TIME TO PRAY FAST GIVE



Matthew 6: 1-6, 16-18:

**Presentation Guide
First Week of Lent**



Doctrine (Catechist Reference)

The three traditional pillars of Lent are prayer, fasting and almsgiving. Through the three pillars of Lent we journey to develop a closer relationship to God. The 40 days of Lent should be filled with reflection, service and prayer.

During Lent we are invited to pray, fast and give alms.

Words to understand (introduce to the children before the session reading the gospel)

Alms: Things that are freely given to those who are in need

Prayer: Speaking with God, or any saints in heaven

Fasting: Not eating or drinking somethings or at some times. It can also mean going without something we like.

Hypocrite: A person who pretends to have virtues that he or she does not actually have

Synagogue: Place of prayer for the Jews

As Lent begins, on Ash Wednesday, we hear a reading at Mass that can help us prepare for Easter. There are three things that we try to do especially well and in new ways in Lent, so as to live as Jesus taught us.

Let's listen to what Jesus said.

Presentation

Light Candle

In the first part of the reading Jesus speaks about prayer...

Matthew 6: 5-6

Jesus said: "And whenever you pray, do not be like the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, so that they may be seen by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward.

But whenever you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

Pondering and 'I Wonder'

- why might Jesus want us to pray in that secret way.
- what quiet places could I find to pray in.
- who hears and sees me as I pray.

A way we can pray in Lent:

At home you could have three containers or bowls, One would be labelled 'Pray'. You can keep these containers in a special quiet prayer place in your home. You can add a button, pebble or any other little thing when you make a secret prayer to Jesus, God the Father, God the Holy Spirit, Mary or anyone in heaven.

(show examples)

In another part of the reading, Jesus speaks about fasting.

Matthew 6: 16-18

“And whenever you fast, do not look dismal, like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces so as to show others that they are fasting. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, so that your fasting may be seen not by others but by your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

Pondering and ‘I Wonder’

- what might Jesus mean when he says: whenever you fast, do not look dismal’.
- why it is important to ‘not look dismal’.
- what kinds of things can we fast from in Lent?

Ideas that may emerge: Not eating something we like, not watching a show on TV that we like, doing something we do not feel like doing, but will make life better for someone...

A way we can do this in Lent:

The second container is labelled 'Fast'. You could add a button, pebble or any other little thing when you have done something that was hard, making a gift of it to Jesus. It is a way of preparing our hearts for Holy Week and Easter: a way of joining ourselves to Jesus.

Jesus also spoke about giving to others, as we read in the same gospel passage.

Matthew 6: 2-4

"Whenever you give alms, do not sound a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, so that they may be praised by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. But when you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your alms may be done in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

Extinguish Candle

Pondering and 'I Wonder'

- what might Jesus mean when he says: 'do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing...'
- how can we give to those in need.
- who sees us if we give secretly.

A way we can do this in Lent:

The third container is labelled 'Almsgiving'. You can add a button, pebble or any other little thing when you have done something kind or thoughtful for another person, or noticed someone else doing so.

Other ideas:

- Contributing to the Lenten Collections in the Parish or at school.
- Donating items for others in need.





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