

Lent Lesson

Lesson Preparation:

Watch the Catholic Brain video on Lent and read through the lesson ahead of time. You will need to have Bibles on hand for this lesson, and will want to mark the necessary biblical texts. You will also need to print and make copies of the activity sheet.

Opening Prayer:

Scripture: “Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert. He fasted for forty days and forty nights, and afterwards he was hungry. The tempter approached and said to him, ‘If you are the Son of God, command that these stones become loaves of bread.’ 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.’” From Matthew 4:1-4

Leader: Lord, as we prepare to celebrate Lent, we pray for understanding of this holy season, what it means, and what it is for. Please help us to celebrate it well, and to grow closer to You. Amen.

Together: Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful and kindle in them the fire of your love. Send forth your Spirit and they shall be created, and You shall renew the face of the earth. O God, who by the light of the Holy Spirit, did instruct the hearts of the faithful, grant that by the same Holy Spirit, we may be truly wise and ever rejoice in His consolations, through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Opening:

Let the students know that you will be exploring the liturgical season of Lent. Begin by stimulating their background knowledge of Lent. Ask them, “What is Lent? What is it a preparation for? What do we do differently during Lent?” You may correct some answers that are plainly false, but let students know that the class will be discussing these questions in more detail later in the lesson.

Next, allow students to share what they personally have done for Lent in the past, or what they plan to do for Lent this year. Some students will not have thought of it yet, and that is okay. Others may have family traditions. Invite them to share, and highlight the value of participating in Lent as a family. Encourage all the students to think, during today's lesson, of what they can do to make Lent more powerful this year.

Watch the Lent Video on Catholic Brain

Comprehension Questions: *Note: These questions are asked after the video, just to check student comprehension. They are not discussion questions, but be sure students understand the answers to these questions before moving on*

1) What is Lent?

Lent is the 40-day season before Easter, beginning on Ash Wednesday. It is a penitential season, during which we perform special acts of penance in order to grow spiritually and prepare to celebrate the holiest feasts of the year.

2) Why is Lent 40 days long?

Because Jesus spent 40 days fasting and praying in the desert before starting His public ministry.

3) What are the three special types of penance we focus on during Lent?

Prayer, fasting, and almsgiving

4) What feast does Lent prepare us for?

Easter, preceded by the Sacred Triduum, the three days from Holy Thursday, including Good Friday, and culminating with Easter.

5) What is the week before Easter called?

Holy Week

Discussion Questions: *Note: These questions are for student discussion. The students should consider these questions and comment on them. Below are some key points that should come out during the discussion. It is in this part of the lesson that the students must understand the significance of the season, and how to participate in it well*

1) Why is penance important?

Sin wounds us, and penance is medicine. Just as sin weakens and tries to enslave us, penance strengthens us and helps free us. Prayer brings us closer to God, charity expands our heart, fasting strengthens our will – for example, if we can learn to occasionally deny ourselves goods, such as food, it will strengthen us to say “no” when we are confronted with evils, such as the temptation to sin. Penance is also a form of justice, to offer to God, since our sins offend Him.

2) Why is a penitential season important?

We should have a penitential spirit throughout the year, but a penitential season helps us recommit ourselves to spiritual growth – turning away from sin and turning toward God. It helps us prepare to celebrate the holiest feast days of the liturgical year. It is also enough time to facilitate lasting growth. We should be better people on Easter Sunday than we were on Ash Wednesday.

3) Brainstorm some things you can do to participate fully in Lent this year.

Answers will vary, but students should focus on the pillars of prayer, fasting, and almsgiving. They should share ideas, but think individually, what would help them personally grow spiritually this Lent.

Go Deeper:

During this part of the lesson, using Scripture, the class will be looking more closely at some of the unique events that occur during this season, particularly Ash Wednesday, and the special days during Holy Week – Palm Sunday, Holy Thursday, Good Friday. Finally, the class will read one of the Easter gospel entries. Read the Scripture passages together, and then discuss what important things are happening in them.

Ash Wednesday:

Jonah 3:6 – Ashes are a traditional sign of repentance. At the preaching of Jonah, the king of Nineveh sits in ashes to show his repentance.

Genesis 18:27 – The ashes are also a reminder that we are going to die someday. This is not meant to depress us, but to remind us that spiritual life is more important than physical life, and the season of Lent should help us get our priorities in proper order.

Holy Thursday:

Luke 22:19-20 – In this passage, Jesus gives His Church the Eucharist, and by instructing the Apostles to “Do this in memory of me,” He gives us priests to continue offering the Eucharist.

John 13:4-5, 12-15 – In the washing of the Apostles’ feet, Jesus gives us the ultimate example of humble service to follow.

Good Friday:

Mark 15:33-39 – Jesus dies on the cross. Notice that the veil of the sanctuary is torn from top to bottom. The veil separated the people of Israel from the holiest part of the temple. With Jesus’s death, the separation between God and Man has been torn apart. It is torn “from top to bottom,” as if God is reaching down from Heaven to remove the veil of separation.

Easter Sunday:

This section can end with the reading of Matthew 28:1-10, one of the Scripture passages about Easter, the greatest feast we are preparing to celebrate all of Lent.

Activity:

Students will fill out the “Lenten promise” sheet from Catholic Brain, attached to this lesson, and found on the Web site at:

<https://s3.amazonaws.com/dynamic.cdn.smartwcm.com/cbrain-app/files/doc-lib/2017/08/16/01/53/58/641/head/My-Lenten-Prayer.pdf>

They have spent much of this lesson thinking about ways they personally can grow spiritually during this Lent. They should be reminded that their acts of penance are also wonderful, loving offerings to God. On the form, they should write down their intentions. If there is time, they can color it, as well, and students should be encouraged to display it somewhere during Lent, as a reminder and encouragement of their spiritual goals and promise.

Closing Prayer:

Leader: Lord, we thank you for the season of Lent and for Your death and resurrection. Please receive our acts of penance as gifts and may they be medicine for our souls. Amen.

Together: Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.