



**Goal:** Allow the students time to reflect on what they can do this Lent to make it more meaningful and fruitful for their faith journey.

**Material:** Copy of quotes, bible, magazines or newspapers for a collage, music, bible for bible passages. All of these materials will be used at different times throughout the presentation.

**Instructions:** Review with your students the three pillars of Lent: Prayer, Fasting, Almsgiving, using the activities and scriptures below.

Can you make the same sacrifices and pray with the same conviction that Saints Jacinta and Francisco Marto did? After the apparition of the Virgin Mary, these two young saints were asked to pray the rosary to help save souls from going to purgatory and hell. They prayed every day and would never complain, offering the pain they felt when they were sick to God. They died a year apart but until their very last breath they proclaimed the good news and the love of God. When we begin this Lent, let us do it with the love of Christ in our hearts.

Sometimes when we think of Lent we see it as a sad time where we are not supposed to have any fun. The season of Lent calls us to take a look at our habits. Are they helping us to grow in faith or grow further away from it? Fasting is not just about abstaining from having food, it is also about “giving up something” that prevents us from holiness. Giving up something in our lives or even changing the way we do things can also help us make more room for Christ in our lives. As missionary disciples we have to develop our relationship with Jesus Christ. Saints Jacinta and Francisco changed how they did things because they knew that through prayer and sacrifices they were not just helping themselves but were also helping to convert sinners and praying for the souls in purgatory.

When we make more room for Christ in our lives we can then use our gifts and talents to share the good news of the Gospel. Let us take a look at how we are living and what we might change during Lent to move closer to God through prayer, fasting and almsgiving. How is your prayer life right now? Are there objects or habits you can give up? How can you enrich the life of your spirit by giving to others?

Let us start with .... **PRAYER**

**Ice breaker:** Give a copy of these quotes to each of your students. Each student has to find who else in the room has the same quote. As they try to find their partner they may only ask one question about their quote and then move on to someone else. When everyone finds their partner ask them to discuss the meaning of the quote.

*“Prayer is an aspiration of the heart, it is a simple glance directed to heaven, it is a cry of gratitude and love in the midst of trial as well as joy; finally, it is something great, supernatural, which expands my soul and unites me to Jesus.”* —St. Thérèse of Lisieux

*“Pray as though everything depended on God. Work as though everything depended on you.”* —St. Augustine

*“Purity is the fruit of prayer.”* —Blessed Teresa of Calcutta

*“Prayer is the place of refuge for every worry, a foundation for cheerfulness, a source of constant happiness, a protection against sadness.”* —St. John Chrysostom

*“He who prays most receives most.”* —St. Alphonsus Maria de Liguori

*“There are not two kinds of answers to prayer, but three: One is ‘Yes.’ Another is ‘No.’ The third is ‘Wait.’”* —Venerable Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen

*“Model the love of the Holy Family.” “Say the Rosary together every night.”* —Venerable Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen



*“How often I failed in my duty to God, because I was not leaning on the strong pillar of prayer.”* —St. Teresa of Avila

*“The prayer most pleasing to God is that made for others and particularly for the poor souls. Pray for them, if you want your prayers to bring high interest.”* —Blessed Anne Catherine Emmerich

*“Much more is accomplished by a single word of the Our Father said, now and then, from our heart, than by the whole prayer repeated many times in haste and without attention.”* —St. Teresa of Avila

*“Without prayer nothing good is done. God’s works are done with our hands joined, and on our knees. Even when we run, we must remain spiritually kneeling before Him.”* —Blessed Luigi Orione

*“Prayer ought to be short and pure, unless it be prolonged by the inspiration of Divine grace.”* —St. Benedict

Gather your students and ask them to think what is the one thing all of the quotes had in common. ([allow time for the students to answer](#))

Prayer is something that Jesus taught us to do and encouraged of His disciples to practice. Let us read Matthew 6: 5-8.

*When you pray, do not be like 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. But when you pray, go to your inner room, close the door, and pray to your Father in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will repay you. In praying, do not babble like the pagans, who think that they will be heard because of their many words. Do not be like them. Your Father knows what you need before you ask him.*

In this reading Jesus is letting us know that prayer must be done with humility. It must be done frequently and others don't have to know how much you are praying. God knows what is in your heart. So when you pray it is not about what you say because God knows what is in your heart. It is about spending time with God in prayer.

Now lets talk about ... **FASTING**

What do you think it means to fast? Why do people fast? (Discuss these two questions with your students)

Pass around the magazines and newspapers and let them know that they will have five minutes to cut out images or words that tell or show things they want to fast from this Lent. Ask them to glue the collage of pictures to a piece of paper. Write these questions on the board for them to keep in mind as they search: What can you eliminate from your daily or weekly routine to make room for Christ? Could you eliminate texting, video games, or going out to dinner with friends? Could you fast from gossiping or bullying? What do you feel that God is calling you to fast from this Lent?

Read about the challenges of fasting in Matthew 6: 16-18.

*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. But when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, 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.*

The reading is similar to the first reading. It reminds us that when we do things to help us become better Christians we must do them without expecting others to know we are doing them. God knows and is present in every aspect of our lives. Let the students know that they will not be sharing the pictures they just cut out. Instead they will be placed inside an envelope. What you fast will be between you and God. On

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the outside of the envelope write your name and "Fasting Contract". Students can place the envelope in their prayer box or have it at home to remind them of what they are fasting this Lent.

### ALMSGIVING

With prayer we get closer to God, with fasting we make more room for God in our lives, and through almsgiving we give so that others may know God. Let us read the passage of Deuteronomy 15:7-8, 10.

*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. Instead, you shall freely open your hand and generously lend what suffices to meet that need. When you give, give generously and not with a stingy heart; for that, the Lord, your God, will bless you in all your work and undertakings.*

This reading let's us know that God wants us to help our brothers and sisters who do not have much. While giving with a generous heart, we share our blessings with those that have little. God will bless us and guide us as we continue our faith journey. Please share with your students the following missionary stories taken from the Maryknoll Magazine. <https://maryknollmagazine.org/2016/05/mercy-moments-may-june-2016/>:

*Some time ago when I was working in Arquipa, Peru, a Maryknoll sponsor sent me money to help a person find a job or create one. Emperatriz, an abandoned mother with a small boy, was accustomed to beg for money at the door. One day I asked her if she knew how to do something that could enable her to earn money and not need to beg. She told me that she could make tamales to sell at schools. She needed a corn grinder and money for ingredients. I went with her and with the donated money bought what she needed to produce 100 tamales. The next day she returned smiling and full of gratitude. She gave me one of the tamales she had made. My investment was about \$70, but the woman is no longer begging and was able to enroll her child in school. I recalled how Jesus gave bread to the 5,000. **Philip Erbland, M.M.***

*The secondary school students from Iseenye parish in the Serengeti region of Tanzania, where I served as a Maryknoll lay missionary, were home on school break. They wanted to contribute to and serve the elderly in the parish. They decided to help Sampson, a poor recluse who lived in a dilapidated plastic and mud shack up the hill from the parish, and an elderly couple, Floredea and Francis, who lived in crumbling mud and stick one room dwelling not too far from Sampson. On their own initiative, the student proceeded to build two small traditional watertight houses of stick, mud and thatch. One was for Sampson and the other for Floredea and Francis. When the new houses were completed, everyone celebrated the students' endeavor and the elderly were secure in the home that love and mercy built. **Margo Cambier, MKLM***

These two stories emphasize what almsgiving is all about. First, we see how a donation of less than \$70 provided a mother the means to support herself and her child for a lifetime. She was able to put a skill she had to use. A lot of times, giving is not about helping others because they can't provide for themselves. Maybe it is a reminder that they have a family that supports them and will give them that little push they need to be able to accomplish something.

In the second story we can see how the generosity of those who have a young heart can change the lives of others when they work together. They were able to offer a group of people in their community the opportunity to live with dignity. Share with your students the posters that we sent for Lent listing how some of their donations could help. Ask them to pick several item on the list to help others this Lent. Add the amounts together and set a goal for the classroom to give to the missions by the end of Lent.