**Goal:** To have students reflect on the meaning of the season of Lent. To make something that will remind them to keep their Lenten promises.

**Materials:** Cut-out of hearts of three different sizes on color paper or construction paper. You can use a lent color or the colors of the mission rosary for the hearts. String, scissors, hole puncher, crayons or markers to decorate the hearts.

**Instructions:** The mobil you will be making is of three different size hearts. Your mobil will start with the smallest heart and end with the largest heart. The hearts can be of any color and will be connected with a string that will go through a hole made at the top and bottom of each heart. The words can be put on the hearts before or have the students write them. The mobil can be placed in the classroom to remind students to put into practice their missionary hearts.

This month’s saints, Saint Jacinta and Francisco Marto, are an example of putting our trust in God. They were just 9 and 7 years old when the events of the apparitions of Our Lady of Cova de Iria, near Fatima, happened. There was a lot of pressure put on them to deny the apparitions and never speak of what the Mother of God was asking of them. However, they trusted in God fully and never gave into the pressure, always trusting that through their prayers and penance they would help save sinners. Everyone, including their parents, did not believe them and told them that they should not be saying things that were not true. Still, they trusted in God and His mother, Mary, that if they did as they were asked everything would work out. Can you imagine what that would have been like, doing the right thing even though everyone else was telling you not to. It can be very hard but if our trust is in God, He will give us the strength and determination we need to do the right thing. Through their prayers and sacrifices, both Jacinta and Francisco grew closer to God. Their actions and words reflected their faith making all whom they encounter see the love that God has for us.

This Lent we will be putting our missionary hearts into action. Why do you think that God gave us a missionary heart? We are a missionary church and as baptized Catholics we are missionary disciples. Called to love, serve, share, help and care for each other. During Lent we are asked to make sacrifices and penance. Lent is not just a time to do penance, it is also a time to help us grow closer to God. Growing closer to God sometimes means stepping away from things that might distract us from listening to what is God calling us to do. For example, this Lent you might give up watching TV one or two days a week or perhaps you might give up eating candy. These little sacrifices give us the opportunity to grow closer to God. The time you would have spent watching TV you could spend time with your sibling or talking to someone in your family or even perhaps reading a scripture. Giving up candy can give you the opportunity to gather the money you would have spent and give it to the missions. Depriving ourselves of something can also help us to appreciate how lucky we are to be able to have it. It allows us to see the blessings we have in our lives which at times we take for granted.

This year we start Lent on Valentines Day. What a wonderful opportunity to put into practice our missionary heart. Make mobil hearts with your students to help them have a visual of what they are called to do this Lent. The hearts represent their own missionary heart, that God gave them to love, to serve, to share, to help, and to care. Putting into practice the love and mercy that God has for all his children this lent. As missionary disciples we are asked to answer our baptismal call to go and spread the Gospel. Our actions will show the world we are and what the Gospel we are preaching is about.

As you are coloring your hearts think of what sacrifice you can do this Lent to help you grow in your faith. For example, if you are giving up chocolate will you share the money you saved? If you are giving up soft drinks you can share that money saved.
Instructions: Make a copy of the hearts in different colors for your students to cut out. Hole punch the outline of the hole where the string keeping the mobil together will go through. You can also cut hearts of your own size and have the students write on them these bible passages.

“I will take away their hearts of stone and give them hearts of flesh”
Ezekiel 11:19

“You shall know they are Christians by their love”
John 13:13

“Where there is charity and loving friendship there is God”
1 John 4:16

Or a bible passage for Lent.
Missionary Hearts
Spreading the love of God
3rd-5th Grade

Goal: To help the students spread the love that should be in our hearts as we start the season of Lent. Have them share these Valentines with bible verses on them. To their family or friends as a sign of the love that we not only have as brothers and sisters in Christ but also as children of God.

Material: On cardstock make copies of the Valentines for your students to decorate and cut out. Or encourage them to make their own using construction paper, markers, glitter, crayons or any other arts and crafts material you may have available.

Instructions: Have the students think of bible verses or ask them to choose one of the bible verses from the list on the bottom of the page

This Lenten season let us remind all of the students who are part of the Missionary Childhood Association that through their contributions they bring mercy, charity and the love of Christ to those who are in most need of it. Lives of children are saved through the contributions made to the Missionary Childhood Association. Through prayer we grow closer to God and also help strengthen our faith to help us walk on our Lenten journey of penance and sacrifices. Through almsgiving or sacrificial giving we are making a sacrifice to share with others the blessings that we have in our lives.

With Saints Jacinta and Francisco Marto we learn that solidarity, friendship and love are what carry us through our hard times. When the two of them, together with their friend Lucia de los Santos, were visited by the Virgin Mary the three of them showed solidarity by helping each other and prayed for all who did not believe them. They also made sacrifices like fasting and abstaining from having sweets. Although they had a difficult time convincing the adults that it was the Mother of God who came to visit them, they never faltered or denied what the Mother of God was asking of them. They prayed like she asked them to and offered sacrifices for the good of others. Following their example to pray and offer sacrifice this Lent, we are also going to pray and offer sacrifices to help children in others parts of the world to live with dignity as children of God.

This year the start of Lent, Ash Wednesday, is on February 14. Usually we dedicate this day to celebrate love and friendship. This is a wonderful opportunity to put into practice our missionary hearts full of love and friendship for all our brothers and sisters in mission countries. Pope Francis told us that “God’s mercy transforms human hearts, it enables us, through the experience of faithful love, to become merciful in turn.” With the example of Saints Jacinta and Francisco, we are reminded that God's mercy is for all of His children. All we have to do is be faithful in our love for Him and our love for our brothers and sisters and let that love show us what mercy can be.

Let us make Valentines day cards that we can share with our family members and also share the message of Lent. With the start of Lent we also have to be reminded that it is a time that will take us to the glory of Easter. As you share your cards think of how you will be starting this Lent and what sacrifices you will be making.

Bible verses students can use for their valentine cards.

- And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love. 1 Corinthians 13:13
- This is who we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters. If anyone has material possessions and sees a brother or sister in need but has no pity on them, how can the love of God be in that person? Dear children, let us not love with words or speech but with actions and in truth. 1 John 3: 16-18
- Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. Ephesians 4: 2-13
- Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins. 1 Peter 4:8
- Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. 1 John 4:7
- Dear friends, since God loves us, we also ought to love one another. 1 John 4:11
- And he has given us this command: Anyone who loves God must also love their brother and sister. 1 John 4:21
- Love is patient, love is kind. 1 Corinthians 13: 4
- A friend loves at all times. Proverbs 17:17
Student Activity
Valentines Day Cards

Jesus gave me a Missionary heart!
I shall take away their hearts of stone and give them hearts of flesh.

Jesus gave me a Missionary heart!
You shall know they are Christians by their love.

Jesus gave me a Missionary heart!
Where there is charity and loving friendship, there is God.
**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 let’s 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
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 missioner, 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 thatched houses of stick, mud and thatch. One was for Sampson and the other for Floredea and Francis. When the new houses where 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.