Prayer!  Fasting!  Almsgiving!  Reconciliation!

LENTEN PRAYERS AND REFLECTIONS FOR CHILDREN
2018
...Lent is the perfect season to consider the crossroads of life: losses, transitions, choices, uncertainties and disappointments, those times when faith and life intersect...

Rev. David Kehert

These devotions for Lent help us to become more aware that our crucified and risen Lord navigated the difficult crossroads of this world for the sake of our salvation in assisting us to navigate the crossroads of our lives.
It’s Valentine’s Day! Hurray! I can’t wait to give out my Valentine cards and see the many cards I hope will be given to me! But WAIT!! Did you know that it is also Ash Wednesday? The first Day of Lent? Lent is a special time during which we prepare for the most important event in our Church year. Do you know what day this is? No, not Christmas! It is EASTER, when we celebrate Jesus’ resurrection from the dead. Hurry, we need to get ready!

**Reflection & Prayer**
Today, Psalm 51 asks God to wash away all of the things that encourage us to behave wrongly. Today, you received ashes on your forehead as a reminder that we need to be sorry for the times when we have offended God and others. It is a sign of our sorrow and a reminder to listen to Jesus in the Gospel. It is the beginning of the 40 day period of Lent, during which we will prepare ourselves spiritually for Jesus resurrection. Because it is Valentine’s Day, spend some time during Lent researching the life of St. Valentine to see how his life reflected Lenten values.

*Lord, on this special day of Ash Wednesday,*
*may my small sacrifices be a way to allow me to see you more clearly.*
*Help me to honour this day with the ashes on my forehead.*
*They help me remember where I have come from and where I am going.*
*I pray that this Lenten season will make me so much more aware of how much I need your healing in my life.*
How do we get ready for Jesus’ resurrection on Easter? Have you ever done something wrong, and when you are found out by your parents, teachers, or perhaps even your friends, you are quick to say: “I didn’t do that?” It is unfortunately quite common for us to become defensive and go into denial when it has been discovered that we have done something wrong. The first step toward getting ready for Easter is admitting that we are sinners, and are therefore not always perfect. We do make mistakes!

**Reflection & Prayer**

The Book of Daniel is full of many interesting stories. In today’s reading, Daniel urged his people to pray and confess their sins to the Lord. He wanted everyone to admit that they had sinned and done wrong. He reassured them that God was merciful and that he would forgive them. We can be reassured by this message that our admission that we sometimes sin and do the wrong thing is the first step in our Lenten preparation.

*Lord, let everything I do this day and in this season of Lent come from you and be inspired by you.*

*Heal me, Lord, and help me to acknowledge my failures.*

*Let me reach out of the darkness of sin and into the safety of your guidance and mercy.*
“What’s the matter? Don’t you trust me?” Often when we make mistakes or are confronted with things that we have done wrong, part of the initial denial we show is reflected by saying something about trust. However, think about it! Are you trustworthy? Can you be trusted? Can you honestly say that everything you do reflects how trustworthy you are? Admitting guilt can only be genuine with the ability to be trusted.

Reflection & Prayer

The Psalm in today’s liturgical readings is very well known: In you, LORD my God, I put my trust. I trust in you; do not let me be put to shame, nor let my enemies triumph over me. Without being able to be trusted, we are open to actions for which we can be ashamed. Who are our enemies who could triumph? They are the many temptations that can lead us to doing what is wrong. In Lent, we need to renew our trust in God, for we know that He trusts us!

Lord, I know how much you love me.
It is hard for me to feel it sometimes, but I know your love is always with me. Help me to use your trust as a way to persevere in my Lenten intentions.
I am weak, but I know with your help, I can use these small sacrifices in my life to draw closer to you.
If you feel that you aren’t be trusted, you might feel that you are not good enough. “I’m no good at that.” “I could never do that.” “I’m not any good at Math, so what’s the use?” “I make too many mistakes to be able to satisfy anyone!” Often, it is difficult to be aware of our weaknesses or inabilities, and this can affect our confidence to do things. Have you ever lacked confidence because you don’t think you are good at anything?

Reflection & Prayer
Part of the process of admitting our past failures is the resolution to avoid temptations and former habits that can lead us astray. We need to face up to our weaknesses and acknowledge that God trusts and loves us, even though we are not perfect. Matthew tells us that Jesus said: “For I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners.” We can gain confidence by realizing that even though we have weaknesses, God trusts us and chooses us. We need to admit our failures in order to have a good Lent.

Loving God,
I am not asking to overcome my weakness, but to use it in some way to glorify you. Let me be aware of the many ways you reach out to help me today and let me increase my confidence through your trust.
Has anyone asked you what you have given up for Lent? Have you asked your friends the same question? Have you talked about this in school or within your family? Normally, during Lent, people prepare themselves spiritually for Jesus’ resurrection on Easter. Giving something up is a sacrifice, and is one way of preparing. There are other ways as well, which will be discussed later. When you make Lenten resolutions, these are like promises you make between yourself and God. What have you given up?

**Reflection & Prayer**

The story of Noah and the Flood is very familiar to us all. After this event, God made a promise or covenant with Noah. He set a rainbow in the in the clouds as a symbol and a reminder of this covenant. Today is only the first Sunday of Lent. How will you remember to fulfill your resolutions throughout the rest of this long period?

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*Lord God, you who established a lasting covenant with me, help me to be faithful to my promises to you.*

*Help me to find my way back to you.*

*Help me to work hard this Lent and to serve others as your son Jesus did.*
What have you given up for Lent? Popular items that children have traditionally given up are: chocolate, candy, fast food, pop, television, swearing. Recently, the list has been expanded to include social networking, video games, Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, etc.

Maybe you can be more creative and include other things that you enjoy.

**Reflection & Prayer**

Lent is a time for sacrifice. A sacrifice should contain an element of hardship. What you give up should be difficult or uncomfortable for you to do. Don’t be tempted to say you will give up homework or school! In today’s letter to the Ephesians, St Paul makes mention of “the cravings of our flesh.” We give up what we would normally take pleasure in doing without affecting our responsibilities or health. Giving up something is a type of fasting, an essential element of Lent.

*Loving God, give me the confidence to make the right decisions as I make my sacrificial resolutions this Lent.*

*I know you want me back as much as I want to return to you.*

*Make my journey to you this Lent one of grace, forgiveness and gentle love.*
Still thinking of things to give up for Lent? One of the things that you can give up is your time that you can give to others. You can give extra time to help your parents and/or siblings. You can do extra things to help your grandparents or other relatives. You can visit elderly people in a care home or visit someone you know who is sick. A great way to give time to those in need is through the Holy Childhood Association (HCA).

**Reflection & Prayer**

Today is World Day for Social Justice. One of the most effective ways for you to help others in need is through your Holy Childhood Association. If you are already a member, make sure that you are involved. If you are not, do some research and suggest to your teachers or catechists that they enrol your school, class or Parish group.

Remember, Jesus said: “so whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them…”

*Dear Lord, guide me to make sacrifices this Lent in the spirit of self-denial and with greater attention to the needs of less fortunate children in Canada and throughout the world.*

*Help me to believe that you will lead me because of the sacrifice Jesus made for me and His glorious resurrection.*
“Why should I bother giving up anything for Lent? What’s the use? My friends don’t do it. The stores are selling everything that I want. It’s not easy to just stop doing what I always do.”

Have you ever asked yourself these questions? I’ll bet that you do every year Lent rolls around. How do you respond?

**Reflection & Prayer**

Jesus made the ultimate sacrifice when he died for us on Calvary. That same sacrifice was celebrated at the Last Supper and is repeated whenever the Eucharist is celebrated. A sacrifice is performing an act that is difficult in order to send a message to God and our fellow humans. Sacrifice is an excellent way to prepare ourselves spiritually for Jesus’ death and resurrection. That is why you give things up. In yesterday’s reading, St Peter says: “Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have.” Prepare your answer for the next person who asks you why you give things up.

*Lord Jesus, help me to become less selfish and more aware of your ways. Give me the courage and wisdom to understand my Lenten commitments and the confidence to demonstrate them to the world. Fan the flame of my desire to draw ever closer to you.*
What Else Can I Do? Let Me Think…
Thursday after the 1st Sunday of Lent (Feb 22) - Psalm 22: 23-31

So, I see that you have given up some of those “things” that seem to be on the list every year: no chocolate, no candy, not so much TV, fewer desserts … stuff like that. Can’t you be a little more creative? A little less “boring?” What about giving up:

- Your bed (occasionally) – experience how many children sleep on the ground
- Your phone, at least for part of the day
- My allowance (give it to the poor or HCA)
- Elevators and escalators, when you encounter them.

Can you think of some other cool things?

Reflection & Prayer
Giving up is supposed to be a sacrifice. It is supposed to be difficult. It needs to make you think twice. Giving up ordinary things can be difficult, but it will be more memorable and create more impact if you think of something different as well as difficult. Ask Jesus for some inspiration. Psalm 22 says that all the earth turns to the Lord, so why not you?

Lord, I’m not always energetic in doing your will.
I’d often much rather take the easy road..
Please be with me on this Lenten journey
and help me to be creative and enthusiastic that your own spirit can guide me in the right direction.
I want to “fix” my laziness.
I know that with your help, anything can be done.
So how is your Lent going? “Yeah, OK.” “Going fine.” “Oh yeah, it’s OK.” These are some of the common answers to this question. After one week, it already sounds kind of routine, almost boring. Time to do something different! Most parishes conduct Stations of the Cross on Friday evenings. Why not go and experience this very specific Lenten devotion?

**Reflection & Prayer**
The Stations of the Cross are prayerful reconstructions of the road Jesus took to Calvary on Good Friday. Most of you have experienced them in the past. They are especially relevant during Lent. All Catholic churches have artistic representations of the Stations mounted somewhere on the interior walls. Do you know where they are in your Church? Did you know that the HCA has missionary Stations of the Cross? Download them from the HCA site, and use them in your home, school or parish.

*Lord Jesus, help me to see your love in the passion, death and resurrection of your son.*
*Help me to observe Lent in a way that allows me to celebrate that love.*
*Prepare me for these weeks of Lent as I recall your ultimate sacrifice for me.*
YOU ARE THE MESSIAH!

Saturday after the 1st week of Lent (Feb 24) – Mark 8: 27-30

The first week of Lent is pretty much over. You have been pretty busy this week reflecting on the things that you have given up for Lent. You have also been preparing yourself on how to react with your friends. However, I’m sure you still ask yourself at times what it’s all about and is it worthwhile? In preparing for Jesus resurrection, do you ever ask yourself who He actually is?

Reflection & Prayer
The disciples were also expected to give up a lot when Jesus asked them to follow Him. They also must have constantly asked themselves the same questions about which you think. When Jesus directly asked Peter who people said He was Peter replied that He was “the Messiah.” As Catholics, this means that we believe that Jesus is our Saviour. We are preparing ourselves for the coming of our Saviour!

Lord, please help me to turn my heart toward you, and to seek your kingdom with all of my heart. Grant me this with the ever-present guidance of your spirit, because you are my Saviour and I long for you.
Has it been a long week? Have all of your efforts to keep up with your Lenten resolutions been successful? Do you think that you can keep it up for another 5 weeks? Remember that in promising to give up certain things, you have made a covenant with God. Deals like this need to be taken seriously, just like any type of promise made in daily life.

**Reflection & Prayer**

The word covenant comes up again in today’s liturgical readings. God made a covenant with Abraham. His promise was that He would make Abraham the father of many nations and that kings would come from his descendants. Abraham was the father of the Chosen People, of which we are members. Through Abraham eventually came Jesus who made us all His Chosen People. Through this covenant, we have been saved.

> Lord, take my hand and lead me out of the shadows of my fear. Bring me to your truth and help me to respond to your generous love. Let me to be successful with the covenant I have make with you. Give me the confidence to persevere and succeed.
“Make sure you say your prayers!” “Did you say your prayers this morning when you got up?” “Don’t forget to say your grace before you eat!” Have these questions ever been asked of you by your parents or teachers? Chances are, you have heard them before, and may have even felt a little bit guilty on hearing them. Learning your prayers may be among your earliest memories of learning about God and Jesus.

**Reflection & Prayer**

Psalm 105 says to give praise to the Lord, to proclaim His name, to sing praise to Him: in other words, to pray. You were all probably taught that praying was talking to God. In addition to giving things up, talking to God is one of the essential elements of Lenten preparation. In addition to making resolutions about what to give up for Lent, you should think about the opportunities you might have in your life to pray. It is probably easier than you think.

Lord Jesus, too often I convince myself that I am just too busy to take the time to talk to you.

Help me to realise that there actually are times during even the busiest day to spend a few moments speaking with you.

I pray that you help me to pray more often.
LENT 2018

LET US PRAY ...

Tuesday after the 2nd Sunday of Lent (Feb 27) – Psalm 105: 1-11

“Yes, I said my prayers this morning. But, I’m not sure what I really said”. Have you ever wondered what the prayers really meant? Have you asked yourself if the words made any real sense? Have you ever discovered that you were actually saying some of the words incorrectly, because the prayer had become such a habit?

Reflection & Prayer
There are many prayers that we say and have memorized. Some of the most popular ones are: the Our Father, the Hail Mary, the Glory be, Grace before meals, the I Believe. There are others that your family may say. There may be a special prayer that your school or class says. There are prayers that are said at Mass each Sunday. All of these prayers should be included in your Lenten prayer routine. Try to concentrate on the words, but even if you don’t, reciting them has value as meditation.

God in heaven and in my life,
guide me and protect me.
Lead me with your love away from harm
and teach me to pray faithfully.
May your Spirit inspire me to persevere in my prayer life
during this season of Lent.
Thank you for your care for me.
“I thought that only Catholics said Catholic prayers. I found out that my non-Catholic friend says the Our Father at their church just like us. I’m confused.” Many people are confused when they hear things like this, and not just young people like you. Does this make your Lenten prayer life less special?

**Reflection & Prayer**

The fact is that the Our Father came to us directly from Jesus, after they asked Him to teach them how to pray. This makes the Our Father the most perfect prayer we can say. Many people have different religious beliefs than Catholics. Some Christians have different beliefs, but if they believe in Jesus, then this prayer is theirs as well as ours. The fact that the Our Father came from Jesus makes it the best way to pray during Lent.

*Our Father, who art in heaven,*
*hallowed by Thy name.*

*Thy kingdom come,*
*Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.*

*Give us this day our daily bread,*
*and forgive us our trespasses; as we forgive those who trespass against us;* and lead us not into temptation,
*but deliver us from evil.*

*Amen.*
“But what about the Hail Mary? My friend said that they would never say that prayer, even though they do pray the Our Father. This all doesn’t make a lot of sense to me”.

**Reflection & Prayer**

When you pray the Our Father, you speak directly to God. However, when you say the Hail Mary, you are asking Mary to intercede for us with God. She is an intermediary between us and God. We recognise this role for Mary because we honour her special role as the mother of Jesus. She accepted this difficult role without reservation. The Hail Mary says the words of St Elizabeth, Mary’s cousin, when she visited her before Jesus’ birth. Elizabeth recognised that Mary had a special privilege being the Mother of God. That’s why it is important to pray to Mary for help during Lent.

_Hail Mary, full of grace,
the Lord is with Thee._

_Blessed are you among women,
and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus._

_Holy Mary, mother of God,
pray for us sinners, now,
and at the hour of our death._

_Amen_
Have you ever felt that what you are doing is difficult because it is not popular with everyone else? Have you ever felt this about praying? Have you ever been embarrassed to pray in public because of what your friends or others might think?

**Reflection & Prayer**

Today is the World Day of Prayer. This is a global ecumenical movement led by Christians to encourage everyone to join in prayer and action for peace and justice. You have heard about many other “world days” that are recognized – some of them worthwhile and serious, others less so. This particular day is very relevant to Lent because of our desire to pray fervently as Easter draws near.

*Lord Jesus, please accept my small acts of sorrow today.*
*As I journey through Lent,*
*let me remember the feast you have prepared for me and let me be filled with thanks to you.*
*Inspire me to pray more fervently throughout this time of penance as I await your resurrection.*
“OK, now I know a little more about the Our Father and Hail Mary. I’ll think about the words more carefully when I say them next time. But what about the Gory be? Is it just a Catholic prayer? Why do I hear it so often? Isn’t it just repeating the Sign of the Cross, which I say anyway?”

**Reflection & Prayer**

The Glory Be is a doxology, which is traditionally a short hymn of praise to God, often said at the end of other prayers, psalms or hymns. The prayer we often say is a minor doxology. The major one is the Gloria, or Glory to God in the Highest, said on Sundays. It would be a good idea during Lent to end your prayer time with this doxology, because it addresses the Holy Trinity, the greatest Mystery we have, but the real test of your faith.

*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.*
Sunday again! Sometimes the time goes fast. Last Sunday, Clare felt like Lent was going to last forever. Today, she can’t believe that the week was already gone! Must mean that keeping those Lenten promises wasn’t that hard after all. She can keep a promise!

**Reflection & Prayer**

The last two Sundays have recalled covenants that were made between God and his people. Today, we recall one of the best known covenants of all: the 10 commandments. As you know, the commandments were given to Moses by God on Mt Sinai in the desert. These laws were God’s covenant with his people after He freed them from slavery in Egypt. They are also His covenant with us. Jesus refined it for us through His teachings, and we now await His resurrection when His covenant will be fulfilled.

*Loving Father,*  
*so many times I turn away from you*  
and always you welcome me back.  
*Your mercy and love gives me confidence.*  
*Thank you for the invitation to share,*  
*fast and pray so that you can form a new heart within me.*  
*Your powerful compassion for my weaknesses leads me*  
*to ask for mercy*  
*and await with great hope the Easter joy you share with us.*
“My friends were asking me today about how some Catholics say their prayers using a chain, like a necklace. Know what that’s about?”

“Are you kidding? They are talking about the rosary! Don’t you know what it is?”

“Now that you mention the name, I have heard it before. I think my parents might have used it long ago. But I don’t remember it myself.”

Reflection & Prayer

The rosary is Mary’s special prayer. According to a Dominican tradition, the rosary was given to Saint Dominic in an apparition by the Blessed Virgin Mary in the year 1214. In 1917, when she appeared at Fatima, Mary asked that we pray the rosary every day. It uses the prayers we discussed last week: Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory Be. Download the Missionary Rosary from the HCA website and say the rosary as part of your Lenten prayer resolution.

O my Jesus,

forgive us our sins,
save us from the fires of hell.
Lead all souls to heaven,
especially those most in need of thy mercy.

Amen
So you say all of your prayers every day. You have a right to feel good about your Lenten preparation if you do. However, do you really know what all of those words mean? When you think about them, do they make a lot of sense? You know, there is one other prayer that you hear every Sunday that might make more sense to you. Do you know what it is? Yes! It is the Creed, or Credo.

**Reflection & Prayer**

There are two Creeds. The Apostles Creed has been attributed to St Ambrose in about 390 AD. It is said that he may have taken ideas from each of the original Apostles, but true origins are vague. The Nicene Creed was written after the Council of Nicaea in 325 AD, as an effort to summarize the true teachings of the Church after a period of heresy. Usually, the Apostles Creed is said on Sundays and is the first prayer in the Rosary. The Nicene Creed is said on special Feast Days. Both Creeds are similar, and express our beliefs about the Father, Son, Holy Spirit and the Catholic Church. Either is an excellent prayer to include in your Lenten prayers.

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_I believe in God,_

_the Father Almighty,_

_creator of heaven and earth …

_And in Jesus Christ, His only begotten Son …

_I believe in the Holy Spirit,_

_the Holy Catholic Church …_
THE GREATEST STORY BOOK IN THE WORLD!

Wednesday after the 3rd Sunday of Lent (March 7) - Ezra 6:1-16; Mark 11:15-19

It’s only still the third week of Lent, and some children get a bit bored with what they are doing. Still giving up everything you promised? Still saying your prayers every day? There are actually more ways to pray than simply reciting your favourite prayers from memory. Can you think of any?

Reflection & Prayer

A different way of praying is to read the Bible. You could do this in several ways. For some of you, the gospels may be the easiest and most interesting reading. Pick a gospel, start from the beginning, and read a chapter or two each day until you finish. Try this for all four gospels. There are lots of interesting stories in the Old Testament. Find a book of OT stories and read one or two each day. For those of you who like to read, Bible stories in either Testament can be an excellent form of prayer during Lent, or any time. The two Bible references listed for today tell two different stories, both related to temples. Interesting!

I am grateful for your support in my life,
now and in the eternal life you are preparing for me.
I beg for your help and Spirit in my life today.
“But I am not such a great reader.” “I already read lots of books, and don’t really want to read Bible stories”. Are you a person who has said this to yourself? Well, if you aren’t really interested in Bible reading, another way that you can pray is through music. Most young people are into music of some sort, and that probably includes you!

**Reflection & Prayer**
St Cecelia is the patron saint of music. Some say that she started the saying: “He who sings prays twice”. It was probably St Augustine who really said it, but the point is that music is a special way of praying. Maybe it is because it requires people to use their God given talents to sing or perform. Maybe it is because music can easily inspire emotion. Many of today’s popular hymns are based on the Psalms. You could pray by singing/performing your favourite songs used in Church. You could download many Christian songs or play them on You Tube. This can be a great way to pray during Lent!

*Sing to the Lord a new song;*
*Sing to the Lord all the earth;*
*Sing to the Lord, bless His name;*
*Proclaim good tidings of His salvation day to day …*
“It’s Friday again and I actually feel that the time is going quite quickly now. I thought that Lent would be a long boring process, but now that I have begun to think more seriously about praying the time seems to be flying. I still can’t wait for Easter, but I think I am waiting a little more patiently now. Because it is Friday, I think I’ll go to the Stations of the Cross in our Parish this evening.

**Reflection & Prayer**

What are the Stations of the Cross in your Parish like? Every Catholic Church has them, and they are usually on the interior walls going around the perimeter of your church building. Some churches have paintings, either in an older style or modern. Some have small sculptures that are attached to the walls. Some have a combination of the above. Some are very elaborate and artistically quite beautiful. Others are plain. Usually, the stations are numbered with Roman Numerals. Some churches don’t have pictures at all, but just large Roman Numerals at each location. Do you know what they are like in your church?

*God of Mercy, I feel my heart overflowing with your tenderness.*  
*I sense your loving touch deep within my soul.*  
*I ask for your help in my weakness that I might be faithful to your word and I am so grateful that your mercy for my failings is as strong as your unbounded love for me.*
I really liked reading Bible Stories as a way of praying. I’m not great at making up words, and don’t really like just repeating words over and over. Wonder if there is any other way I can pray without having to say anything?

**Reflection & Prayer**

Martin Luther King said that “The fewer the words, the better the prayer.” We often do things to make prayer a burden. Yes, we are sacrificing our time when we pray to God, but it doesn’t always have to seem like a burden, or to be difficult to the point that we don’t want to do it. Everything we do each day can be a prayer. All we have to do is direct our thoughts to God whatever we are doing, and it can be prayer. Offer everything in our day to God, quickly and silently ask God for guidance and help. This way, your whole day can be a prayer!

_God of Mercy and Understanding,_

_I know that with making my day a prayer I can open my heart more fully to the mysteries of the suffering and death of your son. Help me to be humble in this journey and remember that any mercy and compassion I feel is a gift from you._

_I await the joy of Easter with my prayers._
By the fourth Sunday in Lent, many children begin to despair that Easter will never arrive, and become tempted to forget about their resolutions. After all, six weeks is a long time. You might be asking yourself if it is all worth it – just let the Easter bunny come! I need to know if this is all worth it.

**Reflection & Prayer**

Is it all worth it? All you have to do is look at the figure of Jesus crucified in your church and in the Stations of the Cross you prayed on Friday. St John tells us that the Son of Man must be lifted up. The figure of the crucified Christ means that everything we do to prepare for his resurrection is worthwhile. In the desert, God had the figure of the raised poisonous snake set up as a reminder of His covenant with them. Jesus crucified is our reminder from God of His covenant with us.

*Loving Creator, I feel the pace quicken, the time draw near.*

*I am filled with joy as I move toward Easter and the promised reconciliation with you.*

*Teach me to follow the example of your Son, to be worthy of being called one of his people: a Christian.*

*Help me to live each day as he did turning hatred to love and conflict to peace.*

*I await the new life with eagerness, faith and a deep gratitude.*
“How many times do I have to say I’m sorry? I mean, what else can I do?” I was wrong, I realize it, and I won’t let it happen again. What can I do to make it up?”

Reflection & Prayer

One of the central themes of Lent, in addition to sacrifice and prayer, is RECONCILIATION. We need to admit that we are not perfect, that we have done wrong, that in fact we are sinners. We need to admit this to each other, to people we have wronged and to God. When we do something wrong, we harm or break our relationship with another person and with God. The process of reconciliation is trying to restore that relationship to the healthy state it was previously. We need to admit (confess) that we were wrong, apologize, resolve not to do it again and be prepared to make reparation in some way. St Paul tells us that Christ is faithful to us, so reconciliation with Him is certain.

God who created me,
You offer me new life through your Son and through the gift of reconciliation.
Help me to grow this Lent in an awareness of my failings and give me the strength to be sorry for what I do wrong.
Give me the courage to ask for help.
“I know she said that she was sorry, but I’ll never forgive her for that! How can I? She hurt me so much, there’s nothing she could do that would make me change my mind”. Many of us find ourselves in similar positions to this during our lifetimes. Being able to forgive is one of the hardest things for us to do at times.

**Reflection & Prayer**

Reconciliation is a two way street. One person has to confess, but the other has to be willing to forgive. Jesus told Peter that one must forgive not seven times, but seventy-seven times. In other words, always. Jesus gave us the most significant example of forgiveness when he forgave those who put Him to death on the Cross. How hard is something like that? Forgiveness is thus a central element in our Lenten journey.

Help me to see how your saving grace and your loving touch in my life can fill me with joyful praise of the salvation you have sent to me.

Help me to forgive others, just as you forgave mankind on the Cross.
It is so hard to forgive “seventy-seven times”! What a challenge! “Can I do that?”

**Reflection & Prayer**

Jesus spoke many times about forgiveness: both how God forgives and how we need to forgive. Some of His best teachings came in the form of parables. You all probably know the story in Luke about the Prodigal Son, one of the most dramatic parables concerning forgiveness that Jesus told. The forgiveness aspect in the story is quite obvious. However, there is a bigger challenge for us as the story concludes. Most young people are very concerned about fairness. In this parable, was the older son who remained faithful treated fairly? Was there too much generosity shown to the unfaithful son who repented? Did the father favour the younger son over the older? The answers to these questions are not easy, but what is important is the unconditional nature of forgiveness and reconciliation. Other ethical issues need to be discussed in light of this.

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**Loving and merciful God,**

*I am so aware of my sins and weaknesses. However, as painfully aware of my faults as I am,*

*let me also remember your tender love,*

*your gentle and limitless forgiveness. I come before you filled with pain and guilt but look into your eyes* and *see the forgiving love I so long for in my life.*

*Help me to forgive the same way.*

*Teach me to love as you love.*
“So, I am working very hard at being a forgiving person. But when I do things that are wrong, I find it hard to go and ask for forgiveness from others.”

Believe it or not, it can be easier to forgive others than to ask for forgiveness yourself. Why? Because it means that you have to admit to having done something wrong. Do you find it easy to do this? Most of us don’t!

**Reflection & Prayer**

Jesus told the story about the two men who went to the temple to pray. The Pharisee was very proud, self-centred and looked down on others. The tax collector was humble and not afraid to admit his faults. “God, have mercy on me, a sinner.” Jesus said that the Tax Collector was the one who received reconciliation with God. Why? Because he was willing to admit his failures. This Lent, we need to be willing to admit ours.

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*Merciful Father,*

*I know that the tiny sacrifices I make this Lent can never serve as a real penance in my life.*

*Help me to admit my faults and show true sorrow.*

*Let me be reconciled to you in this sacred journey toward Easter.*
“Asking for forgiveness from a friend or family member is one thing. But how do I ask God for forgiveness? Can I just make up a prayer asking Him to forgive me?”

**Reflection & Prayer**
Yes, you can do this for the less serious sins you have committed. However, the sacrament of Reconciliation (Confession) is the best way for you to admit your sins to God and seek forgiveness. This sacrament was established by Jesus Himself. You receive special graces when you go to Confession, graces which can help you to avoid mistakes in the future. The Church encourages you to go to the sacrament of Reconciliation at least once during the season of Lent, but the more often you take advantage of this sacrament, the more you are exposed to God’s mercy and forgiveness. If you have made your First Reconciliation, go to Confession this Lent and continue to go throughout the year.

_Loving God of forgiveness,_
_I come before you humbled and sad in the face of my own repeated failings._
_I hold out my hands as a petitioner would, asking for mercy._
_Thank you for the love you pour out on me so lavishly._
_Help me to follow more closely in the path you have set for me, the path of your Son._
“We are doing St. Patrick stuff at school this week. I don’t even know who St. Patrick is, or why we in Canada are making such a fuss about him. Apparently, he had something to do with Ireland, but there are no Irish at my school!”

Maybe you have felt this way or have heard other children say this as well. So why remember St. Patrick? What does he have to do with Lent?

**Reflection & Prayer**

St. Patrick was a missionary in Ireland around the year 432 AD. He became famous for establishing Christianity in Ireland. As St. Luke describes, he became a “fisher of men”. One of the doctrines he taught was of the Holy Trinity, using the shamrock to explain as best he could what the Trinity meant. You should pray to St. Patrick this Lent because as a member of the HCA, you are a young missionary like him.

*Dear St. Patrick, in your humility you called yourself a sinner, but you became a most successful missionary and prompted countless pagans to follow Jesus. Many of their descendents in turn spread the Good News in numerous foreign lands. Through your powerful intercession with God, help me to be an effective missionary within the Holy Childhood Association. Amen.*
I WILL MAKE A NEW COVENANT WITH THE HOUSE OF ISRAEL.

5th Sunday of Lent (March 18) - Jeremiah 31: 31-34

Is it getting harder to remain faithful to your Lenten resolutions? It’s been a long time now, and not always easy to remain focused. Most young people find it difficult to remain on task for lengthy periods of time. How are you going?

**Reflection & Prayer**
Throughout Lent, it may be necessary to look at your promises and resolutions to see if they are working. It may be necessary to make some modifications. Even God made changes to the covenant he made with His people: “I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah. I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.” Sometimes changes are good if they suit the circumstances.

*My loving Lord,*
*it’s so hard sometimes to be faithful to my Lenten promises.*
*Help me to be inspired by Jesus’ love and guided by his example.*
*I want to accept that I can’t do it alone.*
*I need you, dear God, to give me support in this journey.*
*Show me how to unlock my heart*  
*so that I am more confident.*
*Let me be less fearful of the doubt that will be transformed by you into Easter joy.*
JOSEPH, DO NOT BE AFRAID TO TAKE MARY YOUR WIFE
Monday after the 5th Sunday of Lent (March 19) - Matt 1:16, 18-21

“My teachers have told me that Joseph was the foster father of Jesus. I don’t get it! Was Jesus adopted? Wasn’t he Mary’s husband?” Have you ever heard the term “foster father” of Jesus and asked yourself these questions? Pretty confusing, you might say!

Reflection & Prayer
Today is the Feast Day of St Joseph, husband of Mary. As Catholics, we accept that Mary remained a virgin and that Joseph was not Jesus’ natural father. Mary conceived Jesus through the Holy Spirit! However, Joseph was Mary’s husband, and was therefore Jesus’ father on earth. He performed all of the roles that fathers do in raising their children. He is a model father, and worthy of our prayers during this season of Lent.

Glorious Saint Joseph,
 foster-father and protector of Jesus and husband of Mary,
to you I raise my heart and my hands to implore your powerful intercession during this Lent.
Please obtain for me from the kind Heart of Jesus the help and the graces necessary for a successful period leading to your resurrection.
“You know, it’s getting harder and harder to stay focused on all of this Lent stuff. Sometimes, I just forget what I have been doing and what I am supposed to do next”.
This is a common observation from young people who stated off Lent with such good intentions. Maybe you need to change your focus a bit? Maybe you have been too negative?

**Reflection & Prayer**
We talk a lot about giving up during Lent. We usually think of this in a negative way, by depriving ourselves of something, whether it be something to eat, to do, or our time. Maybe you can “give up” in a positive way. Instead of not doing something, do something positive. Help around the house, be kinder to your friends, help a neighbor mow the lawn or shovel snow, visit someone who is sick, visit the elderly. By doing things, you can turn your Lenten sacrifices in a positive direction. You might even find that you do something you like!

*Thank you for the many blessings in my life and for the ways I feel your presence. Help me to be positive in my Lenten resolutions and to make a valuable contribution to my neighbours and family.*
Have you come across any campaigns this Lent aimed at giving something to the poor? Maybe a Food Drive run by your municipality, St Vincent de Paul or some other group? Extra collections at Mass (including the World Mission Sunday collection on October 22)? Bake sales for the missions? These are ways of giving!

**Reflection & Prayer**

Almsgiving is another fundamental element of Lent. Almsgiving is simply giving something to the needy. It could be giving money or food, but it could also be giving services to those who need it. Catholics are encouraged to give throughout the year, but in Lent there is a special effort to increase what we give. The Church has the Share Life Campaign during Lent, which we are all asked to support. The best way for you to give alms is through your Holy Childhood Association! Organize a Lenten campaign in your school or parish!

Loving Creator,

I know in your great love for me, you see the deep sorrow in my heart.

Hear my prayers which are offered with such trust in you.

Help me to be generous to those in need during this time of fasting and sacrifice.
“Today is the first day of spring!” How many people have you heard say that today?

**Reflection & Prayer**

The coming of spring always means that Easter is approaching. It means that Lent has been in progress for some time now. It is a good opportunity for you to review your Lenten resolutions and ask some questions. Have I been faithful to them? Have I observed them cheerfully? Have I looked for opportunities to enhance them? Has my behaviour reflected Lenten values? Today, St. Paul instructs us: *“Make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind. Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves.”* Acting like this would make for a good Lent.

**Lord, all I want is to be faithful to you in my life,**

**but so often I fail.**

**Free me from my many sins**

**and guide me to the life I will share with you.**

**I wait for your promise to be fulfilled with great hope in my heart and your praise on my lips.**
“What is fasting? I have heard this term when listening to the priest at Church during Lent. But, nobody has told me what it means!” What about you? Do you know what fasting means? Do you know how to do it?

**Reflection & Prayer**
Strictly speaking, to fast is to do without food or drink. In a wider context, to fast means to deprive yourself of something desirable. So, when you give something up, you are fasting in a way. However the word in Lent refers to giving up food and drink.

When Jesus spent 40 days in the desert, he fasted. In the Church today, fasting usually means having only one real meal, two small ones, and no snacks or junk at any time. We are encouraged to fast during Lent, especially on Fridays. It is a way of showing that we are putting materialism aside as a sacrifice. Catholics also practice abstinence, which means that meat is not eaten on Ash Wednesday and on Good Friday.

*Most forgiving Lord,*
*again and again you welcome me back into your loving arms.  
Grant me freedom from the heavy burdens of sin  
that weigh me down and keep me so far from you.  
Help my resolution to turn away from materialism  
and abstain from unnecessary pleasures  
during this season of Lent.*
Reflection & Prayer

Today we recall a very special feast day in our Church: the Annunciation. The actual day is March 25, but because that is a Sunday in Lent, we recall it today. On this day, we remember when the Angel Gabriel appeared to Mary and asked her to become the Mother of God. We know that despite all of the difficulties that would mean for Mary, she said “yes”, without hesitation. Her determination and resolution should be inspiration for us to persist and be faithful with our Lenten resolutions.

My soul magnifies the Lord And my spirit rejoices in God my Savior; 
Because He has regarded the lowliness of His handmaid; 
For behold, henceforth all generations shall call me blessed; 
Because He who is mighty has done great things for me, and holy is His name; 
And His mercy is from generation to generation 
on those who fear Him.
He has shown might with His arm, He has scattered the proud in the conceit 
of their heart.
He has put down the mighty from their thrones, and has exalted the lowly.
He has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich He has sent away empty.
He has given help to Israel, his servant, mindful of His mercy 
Even as he spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and to his posterity forever.
John was enthusiastic when the family was getting ready to go to Mass. “Why are you so excited about going to Church today?” asked his sister. “Because”, he said, “today is Palm Sunday and there will be a special procession at Church. We will all get palms to bring home!”

**Reflection & Prayer**

Today is actually the 6th Sunday of Lent! Has it seemed like a long time to you? Did you ever wonder if Lent would ever end? Well, you should get enthused today, because Palm Sunday means that Easter is only a week away! Today, we celebrate Jesus’ arrival in Jerusalem, ultimately to suffer and die for us. That is why the day is also called Passion Sunday. It is a day to renew our resolutions for the week to come.

*Please, Lord, guide my mind with your truth.*

*Strengthen my life by the example of Jesus.*

*Help me to be with Jesus in this Holy Week as he demonstrates again his total love for me.*

*He died so that I would no longer be separated from you.*

*Help me to feel how close you are and to live this final week of Lent in your love.*
“One week to go! I can’t wait for Easter and all the great things that we will eat! Wonder if I can make it ‘til then?”
Most children will be saying something like this. It has been 5 long weeks of Lent so far, and at times it has seemed endless. However, time will go fast, especially during this very special week!

**Reflection & Prayer**
Yesterday, Palm Sunday, was the beginning of the most dramatic and important week in our Catholic Church – HOLY WEEK. You probably saw some form of procession at your Church, reenacting the entry of Jesus into Jerusalem. Hopefully, you received blessed palms to keep in your house for the next 12 months. Today’s readings tell us how Jesus got right to work in His last week by clearing the Temple and setting things straight about how the people should respect that sacred place. Follow the daily readings this week to feel the drama increase.

*God of love, my prayer is simple:*
*your son, Jesus, suffered and died for me.*
*I know only that I cannot have real strength unless I rely on you.*
*I cannot feel protected from my many weaknesses until I turn to you for forgiveness and your unalterable love.*
*Help me to share this strength, protection and love with others.*
“Boy, Tuesday already. This week is going to go fast, especially because we have an extra long weekend to look forward to. I am trying to keep my Lenten resolutions going, and I think I’m doing OK. But, I’m really getting excited!

**Reflection & Prayer**
The Apostles must have been getting excited as well.
There had been that extraordinary arrival in Jerusalem on Sunday, that controversial demonstration in the Temple yesterday, and that dramatic speech given by Jesus today about His destiny and the incredible response from above! Jesus was predicting what would happen to Him! Surely something out of the ordinary was coming. Something exceptional is coming for you as well. Are you ready?

God of such unwavering love,  
how do I “celebrate” the passion and death of Jesus?  
I often want to look the other way and not watch,  
not stay with Jesus in his suffering.  
Give me the strength to see his love with honesty and compassion  
and to feel deeply your own forgiveness and mercy for me.  
Help me to understand how to “celebrate” this week.  
I want be able to bring my weaknesses  
and imperfections with me as I journey with Jesus this week,  
so aware of his love.
ONE OF YOU WILL BETRAY ME!

Wednesday of Holy Week (March 28) - John 13: 21-32

“We are doing all kinds of Easter things at school these days. Makes the days fun. We also went to the gym for a drama about the Stations of the Cross. Some classes took on roles and acted out each of the 14 Stations. It was done very well, and was very moving.”

Reflection & Prayer

Hopefully, the excitement of what happens at school today doesn’t distract you from one of the final preparation days of Lent. Don’t betray your resolutions and intentions! Today’s Gospel reading tells of how Jesus predicted His betrayal by Judas Iscariot. Holy Week is half over, and the most significant events are soon to occur.

My saviour,
do you invite me to share in the glory of the resurrection?
Please stay with me as I struggle to see
how accepting the crosses of my life
will free me from the power of the one
who wants only to destroy my love and trust in you.
Help me to be humble and accepting like your son, Jesus.
I want to turn to you with the same trust he had in your love.
Save me, Lord.
Only you can save me.
In your family, when do you have special meals to celebrate important occasions? For birthdays? Christmas? Thanksgiving? First Communions or Confirmations? Anniversaries? Most households have occasions that are special to them, and some type of dinner or lunch is a means of celebration.

**Reflection & Prayer**

Today is Holy Thursday and is one of the most important anniversaries in our Catholic Church. Today is the anniversary of the celebration of the First Eucharist! The first Mass! At the Last Supper, Jesus changed the bread and wine into his body and blood and instructed us to continue to do this in His memory. Because the Eucharist is the most important sacrament for you make a special effort to attend this Mass this evening.

*Loving Provider,
you gather me in this upper room with your son, to be fed by your love.*

*At that supper, Jesus told us to “love one another” and I know that is the heart of his gift, his sacrifice for me. I ask that I might find the source of my own heart, the meaning for my own life, in that Eucharist. Guide me to the fullness of your love and life.*
“Why is it called Good Friday? Not much good happened, that I can see!” It’s a holiday from school, and the weather is starting to get good for playing outside. For many of you, it might feel “good” to go out and play! But wait …

**Reflection & Prayer**

When you stop and think about it, most of you know what the “good” in Good Friday really means. Today we celebrate Jesus’ passion and death. What’s good about that? The fact that Jesus died for us, and that through His death, he made it possible for us to share in His life forever. On the cross, he forgave His persecutors, which means that He has forgiven us as well. That is really GOOD!

Try to fulfill your Lent by attending the Good Friday liturgy or Stations of the Cross in your parish.

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_My Lord, your son has suffered so much, shed so much blood._

_I was born with so many faults and my nature is so full of weakness, and yet your son Jesus has died on the cross for me._

_I know your grace has the power to cleanse me of my many sins and to make me more like your Son._

_Thank you for your goodness and love for me._

_I ask you, Father, to watch over me - always._
“I can’t wait until tomorrow! The Easter bunny comes! Chocolate! Candy! Cake! Lots of yummies!”

It is normal to feel excited about Easter, especially when for months now you have seen the many commercial things for sale in the stores and malls. But what about your Lent?

**Reflection & Prayer**

Today, we reflect on Jesus in the tomb. We keep vigil for His Resurrection. This vigil opens with the blessing of the new fire, the lighting of candle and Paschal candle. Mass is celebrated on eve of Easter Sunday, the day of the Resurrection.

**ARE YOU READY?**

*Thus says the Lord:*

*In their affliction, they shall look for me:*

*“Come, let us return to the Lord,*

*for it is he who has rent,*

*but he will heal us;*

*he has struck us, but he will bind our wounds.*

*He will revive us after two days;*

*on the third day he will raise us up to live in his presence.*
The children woke up excited. They woke up very early. Did the Easter bunny come? Was I left lots of chocolate and goodies? These reactions are normal, and part of our culture as Canadians. However, let’s remember the most important aspect of today...

**Reflection:**
Today we celebrate Jesus’ resurrection from the dead. It is the most important day in the year for Catholics. By rising from the dead, Jesus has shown us what He has in store for us. We will also rise to share in his eternal life and glory! Be sure to make this celebration your priority today: attend the Easter Vigil on Saturday night if you can, and go to Mass on Sunday morning. This will be the culmination of all of your hard work and resolutions throughout Lent.
Congratulations! You made it!

Lord God, you loved this world so much, that you gave your one and only Son, that we might be called your children too.

Lord, help us to live in the gladness and grace of Easter Sunday every day.

Let us have hearts of thankfulness for your sacrifice.
Let us have eyes that look upon your grace and rejoice in our salvation.

Help us to tell your good news to the world.

Amen.
During this season of Lent when Jesus takes up his cross for our freedom / salvation, He also invites us to take up our crosses and follow him. Carrying our crosses is not sacrificing our sales for sin, rather, it is about self-denial and sacrifice; it is about presenting our bodies as a living sacrifice. Let this Lenten booklet help you to do just that.