

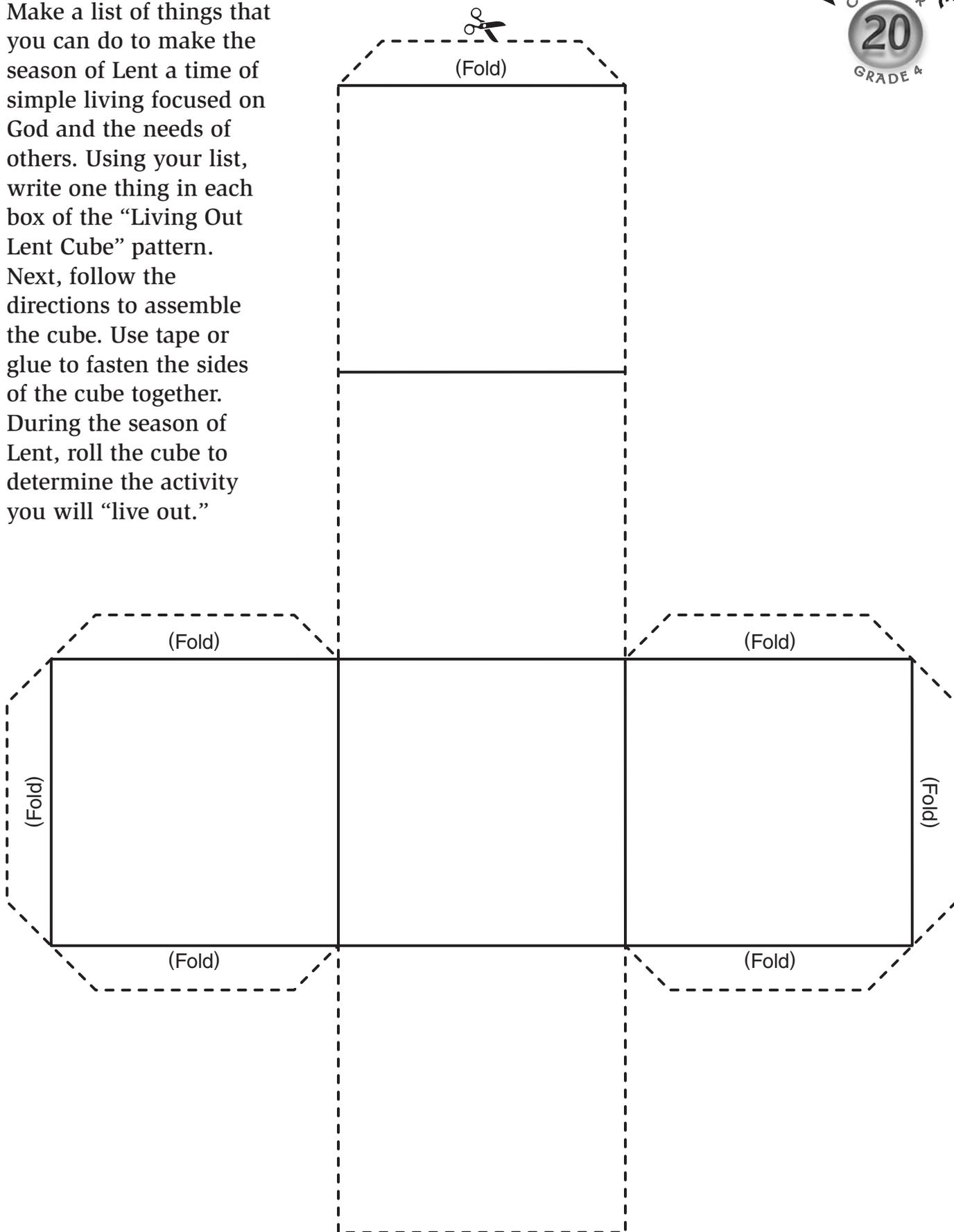
40 Lenten Activities for Catholic Families

Give up television and Internet for one day.	Genuinely compliment someone who isn't expecting it.	Donate a bag of food to a local church or charity.	Go to a weekday Mass.	Pray for good things for someone who has been unkind to you.	Visit an elderly friend or relative who doesn't get a lot of visitors.	Make homemade pretzels, a traditional Lenten food.	Make an almsgiving box and collect change throughout Lent to donate.
Plan a simple meal and talk as a family about how to help the hungry.	Pray for people in your parish's RCIA program preparing to enter the Church.	Do a craft, piece of art, or creative project that glorifies the Lord.	Send a card or note of encouragement to a priest or a member of a religious community.	Pray for an increase in religious vocations.	Ask for forgiveness from someone that you have wronged.	Not just Friday: Have an additional meatless day one week during Lent.	Pray for someone preparing for First Communion or Confirmation.
Light a candle at church and pray for someone in your life.	Volunteer some of your time to help at church, school, or home.	Clean up a mess that somebody else made (without complaining).	Memorize a prayer that you don't already know by heart.	Surprise someone by doing a task or chore that they normally do.	Donate a bag of things that are still nice, but that you just don't use.	Pray the Rosary (or even just a decade) as a family.	Thank someone who has been a good influence in your life.
Read a religious book individually or as a family.	Listen to religious music while doing a task you have been putting off.	Attend (or read at home) the Stations of the Cross.	Pray for world political and religious leaders.	Make hot cross buns.	Learn more about a saint that your family is unfamiliar with.	Do something healthy to take care of the body God gave you.	Clear your mind of other things and sit quietly with God.
Do something to help the Earth.	Go to Adoration, even if it's just for a little while.	Pray for the Pope.	Watch a religious movie together as a family.	Give up sweets and other snacks for a day.	Read one book of the Bible.	Do a foot washing with your family members.	Attend a Holy Week Mass.

Living Out Lent Cube

Make a list of things that you can do to make the season of Lent a time of simple living focused on God and the needs of others. Using your list, write one thing in each box of the “Living Out Lent Cube” pattern.

Next, follow the directions to assemble the cube. Use tape or glue to fasten the sides of the cube together. During the season of Lent, roll the cube to determine the activity you will “live out.”



Lenten Actions Cards

LOYOLAPRESS.
A JESUIT MINISTRY

Attend Mass or a prayer service today.

As a family, research and select a charity that you will support during Lent.

Fast from taking second helpings at meals.

Take over a disliked chore for a family member.

Attend Mass as often as you can. The Eucharist is our greatest communal prayer and a surefire way to encounter Jesus.

Pray with your family at mealtime. Make a point of praying for people in need.

At bedtime pray for people who are homeless and sleeping on the streets tonight.

Be more courteous in your attitude, words, and deeds.

Lenten Actions Cards

LOYOLAPRESS.
A JESUIT MINISTRY

Make a list of ten things you are grateful for in your life.

Fast from criticizing others aloud or silently in your mind. Seek to understand instead.

Pray while creating a piece of artwork. Do something creative, and do so for the glory of God.

Forego a favorite TV program for a week.

Go through your closets and donate usable clothing and household goods to a local charity.

Pay attention to someone you are tempted to brush aside.

Fast from gossip.

Pray at the sound of sirens from emergency vehicles. Pray for the people who might be in trouble.

Lenten Actions Cards

LOYOLAPRESS.
A JESUIT MINISTRY

Fast from e-mail, text messaging, or both for a day.

Speak less and listen more. Give others the gift of your undivided attention.

Pray while you go for a walk.

Fast from overscheduling your time. Leave some time to simply be.

Curtail your extra spending and donate what you save to your chosen charity.

At the end of your day, take time to thank God for all the graces you received during the day.

Pray daily the Rosary or other traditional prayers of the Church. Realize that you are joining your voice to the millions of others who have prayed these prayers through the years.

Lenten Actions Cards

LOYOLAPRESS.
A JESUIT MINISTRY

Fast from the habit, substance, practice, or mindset that most stands in the way of your growing closer to God.

While grocery shopping, purchase an additional day's supply of food and drop it off at a local food pantry.

Use your imagination in prayer. Picture yourself as someone meeting Jesus in a scene from the Gospels. Imagine your reaction and response to Jesus.

Send a greeting card or a letter to a relative, friend, or fellow parishioner who is homebound.

Fast from eating food mindlessly, that is, from not even bothering to taste it.

Clean up a common area at work, in the neighborhood, or at home. Do it as your gift for the good of all.

Invite a widowed neighbor to join your family for a meal.

Lenten Actions Cards

LOYOLAPRESS.
A JESUIT MINISTRY

Fast from worrying. Trust God instead.

Plant a tree that will benefit future generations.

Pray for the willingness to seek forgiveness from people you have hurt.

Fast from light. Sit by the light of one candle in your home.
Remember that Jesus has called you to be light for the world.

Make a prayer out of performing a loving action for others. For example, when you take out the garbage or help your child with homework, do it mindfully, and it will become your prayer.

Pick a day when you fast from using electronic appliances.

When you see or hear a news story about someone in trouble, pray for the person as a family.

Lenten Actions Cards

LOYOLAPRESS.
A JESUIT MINISTRY

Fast from hitting the snooze alarm. Get up and use the extra time for prayer.

At the grocery store, pray for the farmers and all those who help make available the food that you will bring to your table.

Prayerfully read one of the Gospel accounts of Jesus' Passion, Death, and Resurrection. For example, you could read the Gospel of Luke 22:39 to 24:12.

Volunteer for a parish program that helps those in need.

Let a favorite hymn run through your mind as a prayer. Select one with words that have great meaning for your life now.

Fast from comparing yourself to others. It causes isolation and the illusion that we are all separate rather than one in God.

Recognize your own needs and give them their due. Give others the gift of being able to help you from time to time.

Lenten Actions Cards

LOYOLAPRESS.
A JESUIT MINISTRY

Fast from complaining. Notice how often you are tempted to complain.

Be mindful of all that God has done for you.

Spend Lent with the Saints

Here are forty holy men and women to accompany you during Lent. Let their lives inspire you to courage, service, surrender, and fidelity. They will help you, as you journey with your family and faith community, to grow with them in faith, hope, and love.

Ten Who Changed Church or Society

Catherine de Hueck Doherty, Servant of God

According to Catherine de Hueck, “Christianity” is a verb. Her conviction is rooted in the failure of Christians to act during the Russian Revolution when many of her relatives were killed.

How can I demonstrate my Christianity?

Saint Joseph Calasanz

Joseph Calasanz was shocked by the desperation and ignorance of the poor he encountered in Rome. He wrote, “I have found the definitive way to serve God” and opened the first free school in Europe.

What can I do to alleviate suffering?

Saint John Bosco



Saints often have the ability to imagine new ways of accomplishing everyday tasks. For example, rather than employ the customary “fear of punishment” to teach children, John Bosco used faith, reason, and loving kindness.

Today, may your prayer be to find unfamiliar ways to respond to familiar situations.

Saint Camillus de Lellis

Camillus’ mother intentionally gave birth to her son in a stable in imitation of Jesus’ birth. Camillus spent years fighting and gambling before finally repenting and establishing a ministry of the sick.

Parenting largely involves sowing the seeds of faith and leaving the rest to God. Do I trust God?

Saint Catherine of Siena

Despite being almost illiterate, Catherine of Siena was named a Doctor of the Church for her writings. How? She dictated them.

Everyone has some physical or intellectual challenge. Before you feel defeated by your particular limitation, remember Catherine and ask, “How can I work around this?”

Saint Angela Merici

Angela Merici began what would become a worldwide community of educators by offering religious instruction to poor children in her neighborhood.

It’s easy to become overwhelmed by the innumerable needs of our families and the world. Instead, ask, “What can I do right here, right now?”

Saint Peter Claver, S.J.

Love is a verb; it must be demonstrated before it can truly be received by others. The Spanish missionary Peter Claver knew this and so ministered to people before ever mentioning the name of Jesus Christ.

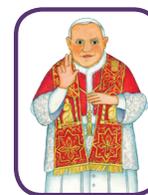
How can I show my love for others today?

Saint Teresa of Ávila

Teresa faced many adversities while reforming her religious order. She always recognized God’s active presence in her life, even when she faced difficulties. She responded to God’s faithfulness and mysterious ways through her life of service and prayer.

Where do I see God?

Saint Pope John XXIII



By all accounts, John XXIII’s greatest achievement was convening the Second Vatican Council. Yet he also performed innumerable small acts of kindness. For example, he regularly visited hospitals, prisons, and schools.

In God’s eyes, great and small acts of love are equal. Which will I offer today?

Saint John of God

There are two kinds of people in the world: those who criticize a situation and those who do something about it. St. John, appalled by the conditions in a hospital where he was a patient, founded his own hospital.

Instead of complaining, ask, “What can I do about it?”

Ten Strong Women

Blessed Virgin Mary



Young, pregnant, unmarried though engaged, Mary trusted in God and became the first disciple of her Son,

Jesus, the one who was to save his people.

Trust that God will be with you even in uncertain and frightening situations.

Saint Elizabeth

Elizabeth and Zechariah got a surprise from God in their old age: a child, who would become John the Baptist.

Where has God surprised you? Are you open to God surprising you again?

Saint Elizabeth of Hungary

After she was widowed at age 20, Elizabeth found herself and her children at odds with her noble relatives who did not care for her generosity toward the poor.

Conflict and rejection are part of life. Ask God to be with you in those times.

Saint Frances of Rome

Frances experienced several vocations. She cared for the poor and sick, nursed her disabled husband, and called together a group of women to minister to the plague-stricken of Rome.

Be willing to shift gears to serve God and neighbor.

Saint Margaret of Scotland

Margaret was a pious queen who held large feasts for the common people in the castle and would give away her coats and shoes to the poor while out riding.

What is something important you can give away to someone in need?

Saint Kateri Tekakwitha



Disfigured by the smallpox that killed her father and mother, Kateri became the first Native American to

be canonized.

Try to look beyond appearances to see the goodness in every person.

Saint Elizabeth of Portugal

Elizabeth watched her son lead an armed revolt against his own father and twice rode out onto battlefields to make peace between family factions.

Find ways to be a peacemaker in your family, your community, and the world.

Saint Jane Frances de Chantal

“I regard her as one of the holiest souls I have ever met on this earth,” Saint Vincent de Paul said of Jane Frances. Even as the child of a wealthy family, she felt a connection to the poor who begged at the door.

What can you do to help the poor in body and spirit at your door?

Saint Hedwig

After her husband’s death, Hedwig joined a community of religious sisters, but she kept control of her property so she could still provide relief to the suffering.

Consider how you can use your resources to benefit the most people.

“The first end I propose in our daily work is to do the will of God; secondly, to do it in the manner he wills it; and thirdly, to do it because it is his will.”

Elizabeth Ann Seton

Saint Elizabeth Ann Seton



Mother of five and a widow at age 28, Elizabeth opened the first American Catholic orphanage and parish school

and is the first American-born saint.

Great things often start small. What little thing can you do for God and others today?

Ten Martyrs

Blessed Miguel Agustín Pro, S.J.

Pro was imprisoned and executed in 1927 during an era of government persecution in Mexico. Falsely charged and facing a firing squad, Pro forgave his persecutors and stretched out his arms in the form of a cross.

Find a way to forgive someone who has wronged you.

Blessed Charles de Foucauld

Foucauld led a dissolute life before becoming a hermit in the Algerian desert and serving the local tribespeople. He was martyred during a rebellion.

How can you respond to God's invitation to find a better way to live and to serve?

Saint Lawrence Ruiz

Lawrence Ruiz, a Filipino member of a Dominican missionary team in Japan, was martyred in 1637 during a persecution of Japanese Christians. He was the first Filipino to be canonized.

What challenge confronts you today, and how can you respond faithfully?

Dorothy Stang, S.N.D. deN.

In 2005, 73-year-old Sister Dorothy Stang was murdered in the Brazilian Amazon where she had worked as a tireless advocate for landless peasants since the early 1970s.

Faithfulness over the long haul is not easy. Pray for perseverance in your own commitments.

Blessed Titus Brandsma, O. Carm.

Brandsma was a Dutch Carmelite priest and vigorous critic of Nazism. Arrested and sent to the Dachau concentration camp, he was a source of consolation to other prisoners. He was tortured, and murdered by lethal injection.

Pray for courage to be a faithful witness in times of trial.

The Trappist Martyrs of Tibhirine, Algeria

These Trappist monks were revered by Muslims in Algeria because of their prayerful example and their resolve to stay and serve during a time of violent unrest. In 1996, seven of the monks were martyred.

How can you be a witness for peace in a world filled with violence?

Saints Perpetua and Felicity



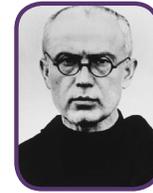
Perpetua, a 22-year-old nursing mother, was martyred in Carthage in 203 for refusing to renounce her faith.

Her co-martyr and servant, Felicity, was an expectant mother.

Mothers make tremendous sacrifices. Thank your own mother, whether living or deceased, for her sacrifices.

Image by Gaetan Poix under CC BY 3.0

Saint Maximilian Kolbe, O.F.M. Conv.



Kolbe, a Franciscan openly critical of Nazism after the German invasion of Poland, was arrested in 1941 and sent to

Auschwitz. He voluntarily died in place of another man condemned to death.

The word "compassion" means to "suffer with" another. Walk a mile in the shoes of someone who is hurting today.

Saint Isaac Jogues, S.J.

Saint Isaac Jogues of mission work: "Our single endeavor should be to give ourselves to the work and to be faithful to [God] and not to spoil his work by our shortcomings."

Take a moment to focus on some personal shortcoming you would like to change. Take a step in that direction today.

Saint Óscar Arnulfo Romero



At great personal risk, Archbishop Romero spoke out against violations of human rights and on behalf of the victims of the Salvadoran civil war.

He was martyred as he raised the consecrated host during a Mass.

Sometimes faith calls upon us to take a risk. Ask yourself if you are playing it too safe in living your faith in the world.

Ten Little-Known Holy Ones

Saint Jeanne Jugan

Jeanne Jugan (1792–1879), founder of the Little Sisters of the Poor, was nearly 50 before she was confident of God’s plan for her.

Don’t be discouraged by your own uncertainty. Make each day a valuable next step.

Saint Benedict Labré

Benedict Labré (1748–1783) longed to be a monk but after several unsuccessful attempts realized he was meant to spend his life as a pilgrim devoted to praying at holy shrines.

Psalm 94 tells us: “For God will not reject his people.” Remember that when others reject you.

Venerable Pierre Toussaint



Pierre Toussaint (1766–1853) has been described as a one-man St. Vincent de Paul Society. Surviving

slavery and discrimination, Toussaint became much sought after by rich and poor alike for his wise counsel, humility, and unrelenting charity.

Adversities can be a motivation to help others rather than an excuse to fail.

Venerable Matthew Talbot

A preteen alcoholic, Matthew Talbot (1856–1925) vowed to get sober at age 28 and then spent the rest of his life offering his time and money to help others in need.

Despair led Michael Talbot to God. Pray for the same grace in your hour of need.

Saint Josephine Bakhita, F.D.C.C.

From Sudanese slave to Italian Canossian sister to history-making saint, Josephine Bakhita (1869–1947) refused to let others keep her from the path to which she knew she was called.

Commitment such as Saint Bakhita’s takes clarity and steadfastness. Make sure you are clear-eyed when you make a promise today. Then keep your word.

Blessed Solanus Casey, O.F.M.Cap.

Solanus Casey (1870–1957) ministered to thousands of people who came to the Capuchin Franciscan monastery where he served as porter and counselor.

Where do you find wise advice? Seek it most especially when you don’t think you need it.

“Thank God ahead of time.”

Solanus Casey, O.F.M.Cap.

Venerable Félix Varela

Father Félix Varela (1788–1853) escaped from Havana after he was condemned to death for promoting the abolition of slavery in Cuba. As a parish priest in New York, Varela came to the aid of Irish immigrants facing ethnic and religious discrimination.

Who could use your aid in their battle against unjust treatment?

Saint Sharbel Makhluf



The Lebanese monk Sharbel Makhluf (1828–1898) chose to devote his life to solitary prayer and spiritual reading. He

found great inspiration in Thomas à Kempis’ *Imitation of Christ*.

Include spiritual reading in your daily prayer routine.

Image by Nheyob under CC BY-SA 4.0

Saint Alphonsus Rodriguez, S.J.

Alphonsus Rodriquez (1531–1617), revered spiritual advisor, became a Jesuit brother and the community’s doorkeeper after the deaths of his wife and children.

As he answered the door, Alphonsus would say, “I’m coming, Lord.” Try answering your door, phone, or e-mail with that same faith-filled attitude.

Saint Joseph of Cupertino, O.F.M.

Known as the “Flying Friar,” Joseph of Cupertino (1603–1663) was ordained a Franciscan and from that point on he reportedly experienced a remarkable series of ecstasies and supernatural events, including frequent levitation while he celebrated Mass.

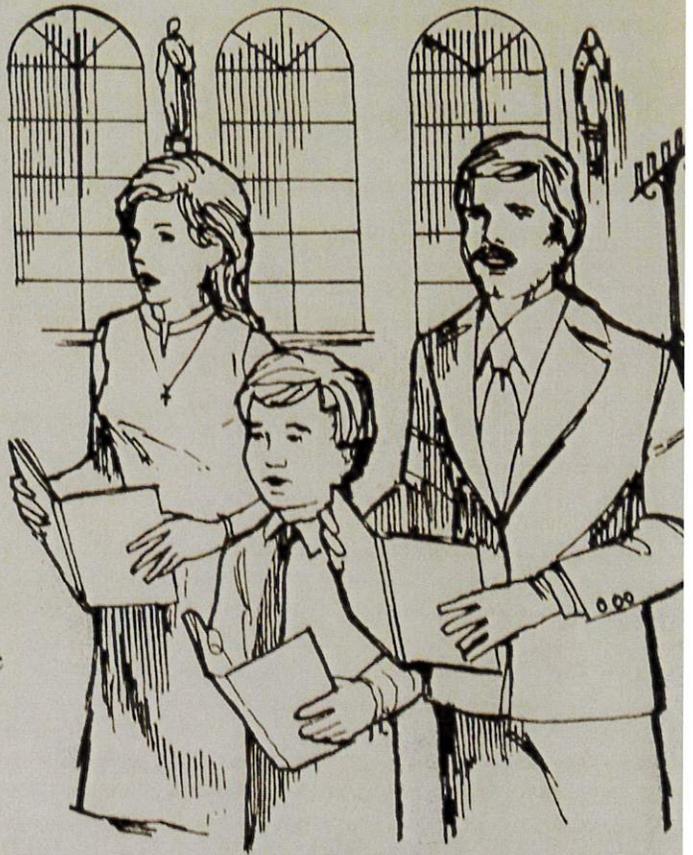
Try defying the gravity of your spiritual burdens through contemplative prayer.

What's My Worship Rating?

Give yourself this little test. Put a check in the box which describes you at Mass.

At Mass each Sunday, I:

- A. Am pleasant to those around me.
- B. Sit with a frown on my face.
- A. Listen to the readings.
- B. Think how bored I am.
- A. Think about what is going on at Mass.
- B. Watch the clock to see how much longer Mass is going to be.
- A. Always greet those around me.
- B. Never greet my neighbor during the sign of peace.
- A. Stop for a few minutes to thank God for the Mass.
- B. Run out of the church the minute Mass is over.
- A. Sing all the songs.
- B. Don't sing at all.



Place yourself honestly on the continuum chart. Circle one.

The Real Me at Mass

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Actively participating and getting a lot out of Mass

Bored silly because I really don't know what's going on

Then, write three things you can do to be able to understand and participate in the Mass more fully.

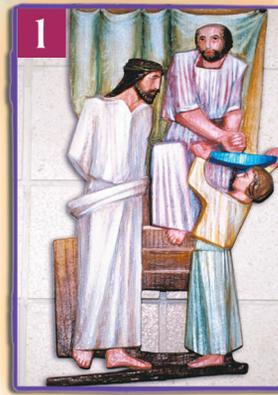
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Stations of the Cross

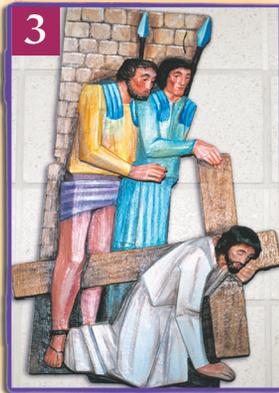
In the stations we follow in the footsteps of Jesus during his passion and Death on the cross.



Jesus is condemned to die.



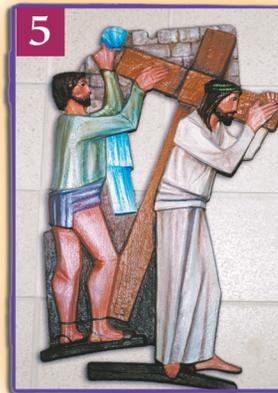
Jesus takes up his cross.



Jesus falls the first time.



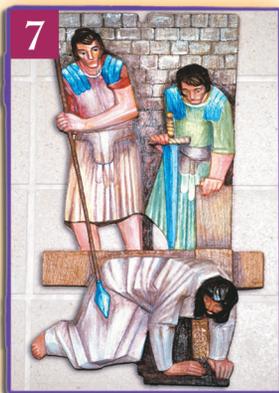
Jesus meets his mother.



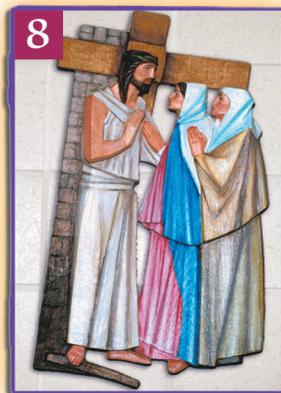
Simon helps Jesus carry his cross.



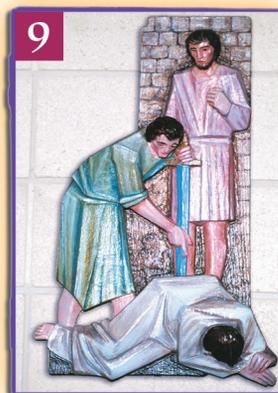
Veronica wipes the face of Jesus.



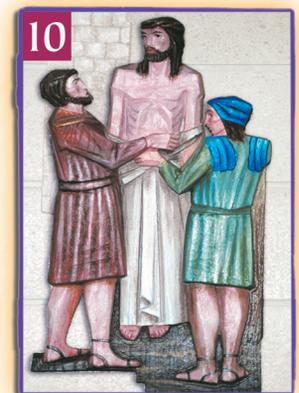
Jesus falls the second time.



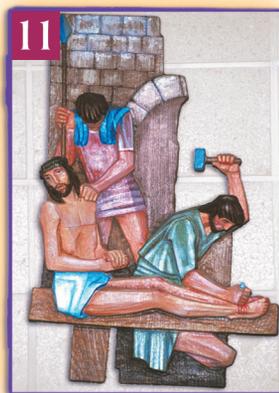
Jesus meets the women of Jerusalem.



Jesus falls the third time.



Jesus is stripped of his garments.



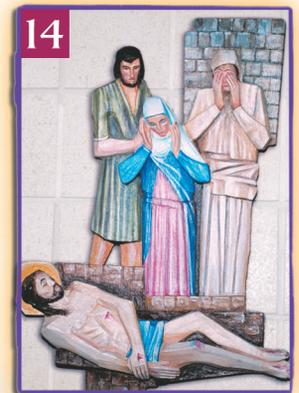
Jesus is nailed to the cross.



Jesus dies on the cross.



Jesus is taken down from the cross.



Jesus is laid in the tomb.

Reflections on the Stations of the Cross

First Station ~ Jesus is condemned to die

Jesus, it is hard to imagine how you stayed quiet when so many people wanted to hurt you. Be with me when I feel afraid. Remind me to trust in God's love for me.

Second Station ~ Jesus takes up his cross

Jesus, the cross was such a heavy load for you to bear. Yet you took it on your shoulders and carried it bravely. Give me courage when I have to face something difficult in my life.

Third Station ~ Jesus falls the first time

Jesus, the weight of the cross caused you to fall down. Lift me up when I make mistakes that cause hurt to others or to myself. Help me to trust in your forgiving heart.

Fourth Station ~ Jesus meets his mother

Jesus, you saw the sadness in Mary's face when you met her on the road. How painful it was to see you suffering. Fill my heart with kindness when I meet someone who is sad.

Fifth Station ~ Simon helps Jesus carry his cross

Jesus, Simon's help in carrying the cross must have been such a relief. Remind me how important it is to be helpful when others need my assistance.

Sixth Station ~ Veronica wipes the face of Jesus

Jesus, did you expect a strange woman to come forward to wipe your bleeding face? It was a simple thing to do and yet it provided so much comfort. Show me small ways I can soothe the pain of others.

Seventh Station ~ Jesus falls a second time

Jesus, once again you fell to the ground. Even with Simon's help, it was a struggle to get up and continue your journey. Strengthen me when I am tempted to give up and remind me to rely on your love when I need to keep going.

Eighth Station ~ Jesus meets the women of Jerusalem

Jesus, even in your anguish you stopped to offer encouragement to the grieving women. Help me to be a comfort to others.

Reflections on the Stations of the Cross

Ninth Station ~ Jesus falls the third time

Jesus, this fall must have been the hardest. You were tired and in great pain yet you struggled to your feet and resumed your journey. Inspire me to keep going when the way grows long and weary.

Tenth Station ~ Jesus is stripped of his garments

Jesus, how humiliating it was to be stripped of your clothes in front of a large crowd. Remind me to show respect to others and to do nothing that robs them of their dignity.

Eleventh Station ~ Jesus is nailed to the cross

Jesus, I can't imagine the agony of having nails driven through my hands and feet. Yet, in the midst of your pain you forgave those who did this terrible deed. Grant me the courage to forgive when I am wounded by others.

Twelfth Station ~ Jesus dies on the cross

Jesus, with a great sigh you gave up your spirit. Show me how to surrender in small ways so that each day I make an offering of my life to you.

Thirteenth Station ~ Jesus is taken down from the cross

Jesus, it was heartbreaking for Mary to hold your lifeless body in her arms. Comfort me when I grieve over the loss of someone I love.

Fourteenth Station ~ Jesus is laid in the tomb

Jesus, how dark and lonely it must have been to walk away from the tomb and yet your friends would know great hope in the days ahead. Remind me of the light that emerges from darkness because of your great love. May my faith in you grow stronger each day.

Background on the Stations of the Cross

The origin of the Stations of the Cross stretches back to the Crusades when, as a result of the conquering of the Holy Land, Christians began making pilgrimages to the sacred sites where Jesus lived, suffered, died, and rose from the dead. Today, the Stations are depicted in many ways, including paintings, sculpture, and stained glass.

The meditations for this prayer practice vary as the tragic walk from condemnation to the cross unfolds. As pilgrims on a journey of faith, we use the Stations of the Cross to reflect on the ways we suffer humiliation, rejection, suffering, and death. This makes the Stations more than a historic re-creation of Jesus' walk to Golgotha. The prayers draw us into considering how Jesus accompanies those who suffer in today's world. The injustice of being arrested and falsely accused, the pain of enduring mockery, torture, and being forced to carry the means of one's own death, the grace of small acts of compassion in the midst of an agonizing climb, and the surrender of heart and soul to God's infinite mercy all draw us into a story that is as contemporary as it is ancient.

The Stations of the Cross are one of many spiritual practices that we can reflect on as we make our way through Lent. Following in the footsteps of Jesus, we can seek ways to find and extend mercy to those who shoulder heavy loads. We can fast from destructive, cynical, or critical thoughts and behaviors, and embrace ones laced with gratitude, humility, and compassion. And we can pray for understanding and generous hearts so that we emerge from Lent, living as disciples of Jesus Christ.