

Journey of Faith

for Lent

In the winter, the trees are asleep,
Ghosts of their former selves.
And the snow falls and softly
Blankets them with white.

And I thank you, God, for the
Quiet beauty of winter.

In the spring, the trees awaken
And shake off their white winter blanket.
New leaves appear,
And the winter, black and white,
Dissolves into the bright, cheerful noise
Of spring.

And I thank you, God, for the
New, emerging beauty of spring.

In the summer, the trees
Reach their leaves to the sky in praise.
They sway in gentle breezes
And shade the ground in shadows.

And I thank you, God, for the
Sparkling, sunlit beauty of summer.

In the autumn, the trees turn
Bright yellow and orange and scarlet.
The leaves say their good-byes in
Seas of color, then
Blanket the ground like the snow to come.

And I thank you, God, for the
Brilliant beauty of fall.

For all the seasons and all the days,
I thank you, God, in so many ways.

(Sarah Cannon, in *You Give Me the Sun*, pages 10–11)

Journey of Faith for Lent

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Journey of Faith series

Journey of Faith for Lent:

Creating a Sense of Belonging Between Young People and the Church

Journey of Faith for Easter and Pentecost:

Creating a Sense of Belonging Between Young People and the Church

Journey of Faith for Ordinary Time:

Creating a Sense of Belonging Between Young People and the Church

Journey of Faith for Advent and Christmas:

Creating a Sense of Belonging Between Young People and the Church

Pray It! Study It! Live It![®] resources offer a holistic approach to learning, living, and passing on the Catholic faith.

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Introduction

Each year the earth goes through four seasons. Different parts of the country and of the world experience the seasons in various ways. In general,

winter is a time of cooler weather;

spring, a time of new growth;

summer, a time of warmer weather;

and *fall*, a time of change.

Our lives are full of still more cycles, and the school year is a main cycle in your life right now. Each year has time for newness and for change. There is time for routines such as reading, studying, and participating in extracurricular activities. You also have time for not-so-ordinary events—major school projects or big tests and the beginning and ending of the school year.

January
December

The Church also revolves around a **calendar**, much like the seasons, the school year, and the twelve months from January to December. This cycle of Church seasons is called the *liturgical year*, and its purpose is to mark the celebration of the Church's liturgies. The Church calendar begins with Advent (usually near the first week-end of December) and ends just before Advent begins again (usually near Thanksgiving time).

The liturgical year is built around important historical events—such as

Jesus's birth, death, and Resurrection—

in which God's saving power was made real. The liturgies in the liturgical year help us remember God's saving power made real in those historical events.

The Church's calendar includes times designated as ordinary—not surprisingly, these are called **Ordinary Time**. The liturgies celebrated during Ordinary Time include stories and practices that are good for us to routinely pay attention to. The Church calendar also includes special, or not-so-ordinary, times such as **Lent, Easter, Advent, and Christmas**.

In this book, we will take a closer look at the season of **LENT**.

Now, take one minute to write down any words that come to mind when you hear the word *Lent*. If you don't feel that you know much about Lent, write down something you have heard someone else say about Lent, or write down some questions you have about Lent that you might hope to have answered in this book.

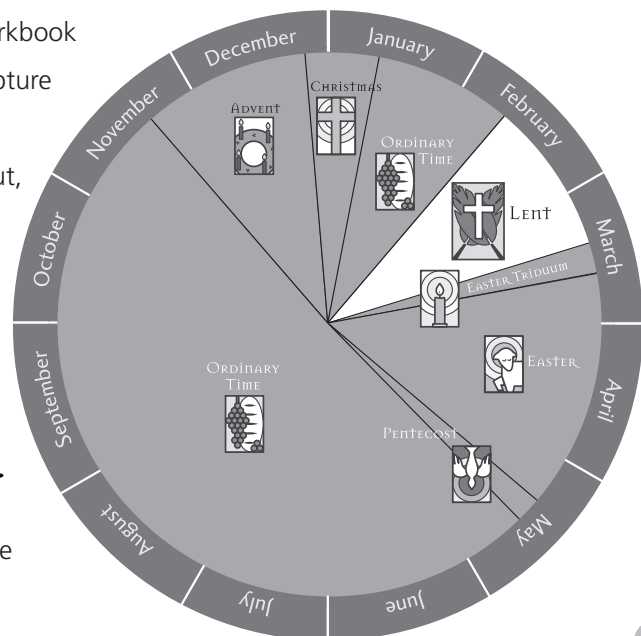
LENT is celebrated during the six weeks prior to Easter, and begins with Ash Wednesday. The date of Easter Sunday changes each year, so the dates of Lent also change. You might remember Lent as a time of *sacrifice, reconciliation, and fasting.*

Lent is all these things, and more. Lent is a specific and focused time that calls us to look beyond ourselves to see the good in every person we meet. This awareness of others helps us get ready to appreciate the great sacrifice Jesus gave for us—his life. Jesus was always thinking of others. Jesus was always seeing the good in others, especially in people who were outcast or forgotten. Jesus was always forgiving people who were hurtful. We take a cue from Jesus, and during Lent we have a whole six weeks to think about the ways that we are living our lives the way Jesus did.

This book in the Journey of Faith series will be your companion as you journey through the Lenten season. During this time you will be reminded of Lent.

For each week of the Lenten season, this workbook has corresponding activities that include Scripture **readings**, reflection and discussion **questions, ideas** to think about, and **topics** to discuss with your fellow faith-sharers, friends, and family members. In addition, this workbook has open spaces for writing your own thoughts or for drawing images during the season.

This chart shows where the season of **LENT** fits in the overall Church calendar (also known as the liturgical calendar or cycle).



Readings

First Sunday of Lent

- **Cycle A:** Genesis 2:7–9, 3:1–7; Romans 5:12–19; Matthew 4:1–11
- **Cycle B:** Genesis 9:8–15, 1 Peter 3:18–22, Mark 1:12–15
- **Cycle C:** Deuteronomy 26:4–10, Romans 10:8–13, Luke 4:1–13

Second Sunday of Lent

- **Cycle A:** Genesis 12:1–4a, 2 Timothy 1:8b–10, Matthew 17:1–9
- **Cycle B:** Genesis 22:1–2, 9a, 10–13, 15–18; Romans 8:31b–34; Mark 9:2–10
- **Cycle C:** Genesis 15:5–12, 17–18; Philippians 3:17–4:1; Luke 9:28b–36

Third Sunday of Lent

- **Cycle A:** Exodus 17:3–7; Romans 5:1–2, 5–8; John 4:5–42
- **Cycle B:** Exodus 20:1–17, 1 Corinthians 1:22–25, John 2:13–25
- **Cycle C:** Exodus 3:1–8a, 13–15; 1 Corinthians 10:1–6, 10–12; Luke 13:1–9

Fourth Sunday of Lent

- **Cycle A:** 1 Samuel 16:1b, 6–7, 10–13a; Ephesians 5:8–14; John 9:1–41
- **Cycle B:** 2 Chronicles 36:14–16, 19–23; Ephesians 2:4–10; John 3:14–21
- **Cycle C:** Joshua 5:9a, 10–12; 2 Corinthians 5:17–21; Luke 15:1–3, 11–32

Fifth Sunday of Lent

- **Cycle A:** Ezekiel 37:12–14, Romans 8:8–11, John 11:1–45
- **Cycle B:** Jeremiah 31:31–34, Hebrews 5:7–9, John 12:20–33
- **Cycle C:** Isaiah 43:16–21, Philippians 3:8–14, John 8:1–11

Sixth Sunday of Lent

- **Cycle A:** Isaiah 50:4–7, Philippians 2:6–11, Matthew 26:14–27:66
- **Cycle B:** Isaiah 50:4–7, Philippians 2:6–11, Mark 14:1–15:47
- **Cycle C:** Isaiah 50:4–7, Philippians 2:6–11, Luke 22:14–23:56

Chapter 1

From Fat Tuesday to Ash Wednesday

Party to Prayer

Lent is a time to minimize those things that are not essential to our existence. During Lent we have the opportunity to take away many of the things in our lives that distract us from our relationship with God. This time of being minimizing is a form of sacrifice, but it is also a time to be simple, uncluttered, and therefore free of excess. The extremes of excess and minimalism are played out vividly in the two days of Fat Tuesday and Ash Wednesday. Although Fat Tuesday, or Mardi Gras, is not a Church celebration or ritual, it can effectively demonstrate the difference between Ordinary Time and Lent. In this chapter you will be led from “party to prayer” in order to usher in the season of Lent with an understanding of the importance of Lent and Lenten practices. In the tradition of Mardi Gras, this session will begin with a party and end with prayer that marks the movement from the end of Ordinary Time to the beginning of the special time that is Lent.

STUDY IT!

Why Masks?

- Do you think God always expects us to do what is right? Why or why not?
- Why is it important for us to take time to think about when we sin?
- What do we stand to gain from “taking off our masks” of sinfulness and facing our shortcomings?

- How can you figure out a moral or good way to do something?

- Who or what do you turn to when you want to try to follow a Christian lifestyle? Who or what is your example?

PRAY IT!

Return to God

Symbols of Lent

- *Purple.* The color of Lent. Note that purple is also the color of Advent. Both Advent and Lent are times of reflection and focus. Advent focuses on waiting and peace. Lent focuses on sinfulness and forgiveness.
- *A Bible.* The Scriptures offer us many insightful words about focusing ourselves on drawing closer to God. Today we hear solemn words from Joel.
- *An unlit burned candle.* God is *always* with us. But during Lent we reflect on what it's like to be without light, to be in darkness, and to be searching for guidance.
- *A cross.* The ultimate symbol of our faith is the cross that Jesus died on for us. He literally gave up his life. This is a sad event. Thankfully, we know that there is more to the story: we know that Jesus overcame death. We know that after Lent, Easter will celebrate Jesus's Resurrection.
- *Dried palms or ashes.* On Ash Wednesday we are marked with ashes. This is a sign to both ourselves and others that we are not perfect and that we seek to be healed, to be forgiven, and to forgive. The ashes that we use are collected from burned palms—the same palms that were used to greet Jesus last year on Palm Sunday. It's ironic that the symbol that signals the joy of Jesus's arrival (palms) and the symbol that signals our sinfulness (ashes) are the same.

Leader: Father, all powerful and ever-living God,
All: We do well always and everywhere to give you thanks and praise.
Leader: You never cease to call us
to a new and more abundant life.
All: God of love and mercy,
you are always ready to forgive;
Leader: We are sinners,
and you invite us
to trust in your mercy.
All: Time and time again
we broke your covenant,
but you did not abandon us.
Leader: Instead, through your Son, Jesus our Lord,
you bound yourself even more closely to the human family
by a bond that can never be broken.
All: Now is the time for your people to turn back to you
Leader: And to be renewed in Christ your Son,
a time of grace and reconciliation.
All: You invite us to serve the family of mankind
Leader: By opening our hearts to the fullness of your Holy Spirit.
All: In wonder and gratitude,
we join our voices with the choirs of heaven
Leader: To proclaim the power of your love
and to sing of our salvation in Christ:
All: Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might,
heaven and earth are full of your glory.
Hosanna in the highest.
Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.
Hosanna in the highest.

Closing Prayer

Lord, you know everything about me.
You know what I think, what I do.
You know what I hope for and what I need.
You know what makes me happy; you know when I am hurting.
Lord, since you know everything about me,
Help me.
Help me to do better.
Help me to turn to you for guidance.
Help me to believe in your mercy.
Help me to forgive others, and to forgive myself.
Remind me of your sacrifices,
And remind me of your loving, open arms.
Prepare me for the great news of Easter, when we will once again be full.
Amen.

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