

Timely Topics for Faith Formation

January 21, 2010

Lent, already? Ash Wednesday, arriving this year on February 17, marks the return of another familiar liturgical cycle, even as the Christmas cycle seems just ended. We move so quickly from “What do I get for ___ this year for Christmas?” to “What do I give up this year for Lent?”

The cycles and seasons of the liturgical year are repeated each year. It isn't the “same old, same-old” however, but a deeper unfolding of the mysteries of God, as God continues to enter into our human experience and to act in our human time. And the invitation is *new* every year, for us to respond out of our ever-growing, ever-changing humanity. (CCC# 1163, #1171)

Lent is all about Baptism

The season itself grew and developed out of the practices of the Baptismal Catechumenate in the early church. Through the centuries, the penitential elements that we are more familiar with received greater emphasis. With the restoration of the Baptismal Catechumenate, we once again have become more mindful of the baptismal nature of the Lenten season. (CCC #1129-1233)

During Lent, Catechumens are called to focus intently on their journey to baptism at the Easter Vigil.

We who already are baptized are also called to focus on our journey of *living out* our baptismal calling with its attendant responsibilities. We are called to *renew* our baptismal promises and *reinvigorate* our Christian witness.

In our baptism we received the great *gift* of a new spiritual life in Jesus; we also received the *responsibility* for how we **live** that life and for how we **share** it with others. (CCC #1213) Our God is a God of relationships, and relationships need loving attention, healing, nurturing.

Lent is a time to Reflect

The gift of Lent is that we are not so much “pressured to give something up” as graced with an invitation to respond yet again to God's unfailing and most amazing love for us. So we ask:



- How have I grown and changed since last year?
- How has my relationship with God changed since last year?
- How have my relationships with others (family, friends, classmates) changed since last year?



In light of the above, perhaps the initial question of what to give up for Lent can now be re-framed:

What in my relationships -- with myself, with others, with God -- needs to change and be healed, in order to grow?

- What behaviors/attitudes do I need to leave behind?
- What (or whom) do I want to go toward?
- What help do I need from God?

With God's help, we can experience Lent as time of renewal, of change, of growth – not gloom and doom!

See the following links for information on a

[Lenten In-service](#)
[Ideas & Resources](#)

Preparing for Lent: In-Service

- Make copies of the reflection below for all participants.
- Use this week's "Timely Topics" page as background.
- Play some quiet, reflective music as the group gathers.
- Introduce the fact that Lent is only a short time away and that, in order to lead our learners into the season, we need to prepare ourselves.
- Distribute the copies; invite participants to read them, silently, and jot down anything that comes to mind.
- Suggest that they take the copies with them and at another time spend a few minutes in reflection on the questions.
- Close by praying together the "Our Father."

Preparing for Lent:

Our God is a God of relationships. And relationships need loving attention, healing, nurturing.

In our baptism we received the great *gift* of a new spiritual life in Jesus; we also received the *responsibility* for how we **live** that life and for how we **share** it with others. We are blessed with, and responsible for, a life of relationships.

The gift of Lent is that we are not so much "pressured to give something up" as graced with an invitation

to respond yet again to God's unfailing and most amazing love for us.

So we ask

- How have I grown and changed since last year?
- How has my relationship with God changed since last year?
- How have my relationships with others (family, friends, peers) changed since last year?

What in my relationships -- with myself, with others, with God -- needs to change and be healed, in order to grow?

- What behaviors/attitudes do I need to leave behind?
- What (or whom) do I want to go toward?
- What help do I need from God?

How can I use these questions, or something similar, to help both myself and my learners to prepare for Lent?

- Dues, Greg. Catholic Customs and Traditions. Mystic, CT” Twenty-Third Publications, 2000
- Drumm, Michael and Tom Gunning. A Sacramental People: Initiation into A Faith Community. Mystic, CT: Twenty-Third Publications, 2000
- Marriage and Family Life Office, Diocese of Columbus. Lenten and Easter Traditions: Keeping the Seasons Holy. Columbus, OH. 2009 call 614-241-2560 for copies
- Glavich, Mary Kathleen, SND. A Pictionary of Lent: Facts and Activities from A to Z for Grades 3 to 6. E. T. Nedder Publishing, 2005 (*with reproducible masters*)
- Boyer, Mark. Lent and Easter: Prayer At Home. Notre Dame, IN: Ave Maria Press, 2002
*Annual series, **Totally Lent!** from Pflaum Publishing, Dayton, OH*
- Savitskas, Margaret. Totally Lent! A Child’s Journey to Easter, 2009
- Behe, Mary and Margaret Savitskas. Totally Lent! A Kid’s Journey to Easter 2009
- Broslavick, Chris and Tony Pichler. Totally Lent! A Teen’s Journey to Easter, 2009 (*also could be adapted for use with RCIA, adult faith formation*)

Children’s Stories

- Henkes, Kevin. Lilly’s Purple Plastic Purse
- Joose, Barbara. Mama, Do You Love Me?
- Hazen, Barbara Shook. Even If I Did Something Awful
- Wilde, Oscar. The Selfish Giant
- Van Leeuwen, Jan. Sorry
- Trent, John. The Black and White Rainbow

Catholic Update, from *St Anthony Messenger Press, Cincinnati, OH*

- Lenten Customs: Baptism Is the Key March 2002 #C0302
- Lent: A Journey into the Inner Self February 1991 #C0291
- Ash Wednesday: Our Shifting Understanding of Lent February 2004 #C0204

DVD

1009	The Catechumenate in Brief	USCCB	(teens, adults)
1100	Celebrating the Seasons of Advent and Lent	Franciscan Communications	(gr. 3-8)

Video

VTE 1491	The Catechumenate in Brief	Harcourt Publishing	(adults)
VTE 1655	Lent: A Time of Renewal	Franciscan Communications	(family/adults)
VTE 1656	Lent: A Time to Forgive	23 rd Publications	(family/parents)

**You are always welcome to contact
the Office of Religious Education and Catechesis
to inquire about resources for your particular needs.**