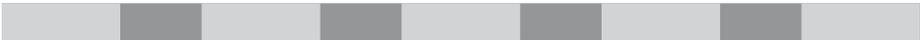


ASH WEDNESDAY



The logic of the Cross . . . is not primarily that of suffering and death, but rather that of love and of the gift of self which brings life. . . . Following and accompanying Christ, staying with him, demands “coming out of ourselves,” requires us to be outgoing; to come out of ourselves, out of the dreary way of living faith that has become a habit, out of the temptation to withdraw into our own plans, which end by shutting out God’s creative action.

—General Audience, March 27, 2013

Parent Reflection

Today is a very special day because we are entering our Lenten journey. How fortunate we are to be reminded by our Church that we are embarking on a very exceptional and holy time within the Church cycle in which we can commit ourselves to prayer, fasting, and almsgiving to please God and to grow in holiness! Today, when you call the family together to begin your Lenten observance, explain to the children that we work hard to do three things each day during Lent. First, we give up something, which is called fasting. Second, we give something to others. This can be some sort of help, possessions, or money we share with others. This is called almsgiving. Finally, we pray more. As Catholics, all three of these things should be an ordinary part of our daily lives, but during the season of Lent, we focus on them more intensely.

Ask the children if they have given any thought to *giving up* something for Lent. Or, do they want to *do something* special to please Jesus? Take time today to help them decide what to do and to formulate their Lenten resolutions. You can share with them what you plan to do. Help the children to write down their resolutions. They can refer to their notes each day throughout Lent. You might want to hang them on the refrigerator or their bedroom door, write them on a dry-erase or chalk board, or post them wherever they can be reminded easily. In addition to their general Lenten commitment, daily suggestions will be offered as you move day to day throughout Lent.

The words we will hear today when we receive our ashes, “Remember, you are dust and to dust you will return,” should help us realize that we need to turn away from sin and seek what Jesus wants for us. Let us be mindful of Pope Francis’s words above throughout our Lenten journey: “Following and accompanying Christ, staying with him, demands ‘coming out of ourselves.’”

Let’s follow, accompany, and stay with Christ this Lent. He will indeed change our lives!

Family Prayer

All make the Sign of the Cross.

Parent: Dear Jesus, help us to not be dreary Catholics. Open our eyes and our hearts to the Holy Spirit during our Lenten journey. Change our lives!

Now let us listen to these words of Pope Francis.

A parent or child reads the opening quotation aloud.

All: Blessed Mother Mary, bring us closer to your Son, Jesus.

A Story from Pope Francis’s Life

Jorge Mario Bergoglio (Pope Francis) was born on December 17, 1936, in Buenos Aires, Argentina. He is the son of Italian immigrants. His father, Mario, was an accountant who worked for the railways and his mother, Regina Sivori, was exceedingly busy dedicating her time to raising their five children.

Fasting

Today, fast from wanting things to go your way.

Almsgiving

Today, give your heart to God more fully, allowing him to work in you and through you.

Prayer

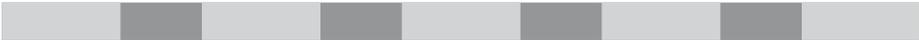
Today's Intention: Let's pray to be more attentive to those in need, especially those in our own home.

Closing Prayer: Dear Jesus, please teach us the full message of the Cross.

All pray the Our Father, Hail Mary, and Glory Be.

All through the Day: I want to prepare my heart for God to work in it throughout Lent.

THURSDAY AFTER ASH WEDNESDAY



Remain steadfast in the journey of faith, with firm hope in the Lord. This is the secret of our journey! He gives us the courage to swim against the tide. Pay attention . . . to go against the current; this is good for the heart; but we need courage to swim against the tide. Jesus gives us this courage!

—*Homily, Holy Mass of Confirmation, April 28, 2013*

Parent Reflection

How often we parents need to be courageous in our role; parenting is not for the faint of heart! To be able to stand firm and against the messages of the culture that contradict our faith, we must dig our heels in and look to Jesus for strength and guidance. He gifts us with courage and grace to lead our children on the straight and narrow path that leads to heaven.

Family Prayer

All make the Sign of the Cross.

Parent: Dear Jesus, grant us courage to walk each day in faith.

Now let us listen to these words of Pope Francis.

A parent or child now reads the opening quotation aloud.

All: Blessed Mother Mary, bring us closer to your Son, Jesus.

A Story from Pope Francis's Life

Jorge worked as a chemical technician. Through prayer and reflection, he felt called to the priesthood, which was a vocation he had first heard when he was seventeen years old. It was on the Feast of Saint Matthew in 1953 when Jorge felt the call to religious life in the footsteps of Saint Ignatius of Loyola.

Before entering the seminary, Jorge was stricken at the age of twenty-one with a serious illness requiring hospitalization. He was

diagnosed with severe pneumonia which eventually necessitated that part of his right lung be removed.

Fasting

Today, fast from fear. Any time you hesitate to follow God's teachings for fear of ridicule, actively ask for courage.

Almsgiving

Give ten minutes of your time to help bolster someone's faith.

Prayer

Today's Intention: Let's pray for those with a religious calling.

Closing Prayer: Dear Jesus, help our family to be courageous and loving helpers to others.

All pray the Our Father, Hail Mary, and Glory Be.

All through the Day: I want to remain steadfast on the journey of faith.

FRIDAY AFTER ASH WEDNESDAY

From the cross, Christ teaches us to love even those who do not love us.

—Twitter, August 28, 2014

Parent Reflection

So often we observe unjust things happening in the news or around us in our communities. We might have experienced bullying or persecution ourselves. We want to teach our children to love others, even those who treat us poorly. That doesn't mean that we go looking for abuse. But it does mean that as Christians we are called to love even when it is difficult. We are to forgive. Our example of Christian charity—real love and forgiveness—can be utterly transforming to those who receive it, who observe it in action, and even to ourselves. God has it all worked out. We need to respond lovingly to the opportunities that God allows.

Family Prayer

All make the Sign of the Cross.

Parent: Dear Jesus, love through us. Allow us to be your love.

Now let us listen to these words of Pope Francis.

A parent or child now reads the opening quotation aloud.

All: Blessed Mother Mary, bring us closer to your Son, Jesus.

A Story from Pope Francis's Life

After a full recovery from the pneumonia and lung surgery, Jorge entered the Diocesan Seminary of Villo Devoto. He entered the novitiate of the Society of Jesus on March 11, 1958. Jorge took his first vows as a Jesuit on March 12, 1960. Jorge traveled to Padre Hurtado, Chile, to study, and there he completed his courses in the humanities.