

Ask family members to summarize using several words or phrases that they feel is the central message of the Scripture which you read.

Ask how our relationship with each other and with God is different when we forgive and ask for forgiveness.

#### 4. What Our Family Can Do

Family leader for this reflection shares points such as the following:

*Forgiveness and repentance are central messages in the Gospels. When someone breaks a bone and the doctor sets it and puts it in a cast, that bone will be even stronger after it heals that it was before the break--if the doctor sets it correctly. The same thing is true with our broken relationships. If "set" to*

*heal properly, in the healing these relationships can end up even stronger than before. Such a miracle happens through the power of the Spirit of forgiveness in our lives, and through the true willingness on our part to reconcile with each other through Jesus. The Sacrament of Reconciliation is the visible sign of that healing happening in our lives.*

Spend time in quiet prayer. Ask each family member to ask Jesus to be present in your family with a spirit of forgiveness and reconciliation.

Reflect on your family's experience of Lent:

- ❖ How has his example of reaching out in forgiveness to others taught us to do the same?
- ❖ How has the new life offered by Jesus in the resurrection enabled us to forgive?



## Spiritual Reflection for the Family

# Conversion

### Materials Needed

Bible

### Preparation for the Family Leader

Conversion is all about change. Change of heart, shift in attitude, refashioning our lives, growing spiritually. Lent is an opportunity for conversion. Reflect with your family on your family's experience of Lent. Can you identify moments of conversion?

### 1. Introduction to the Theme

Ask family members what the word conversion means. Share synonyms such as "change," "rebirth" "shift in attitude," "remaking" or "rebuilding," etc.

Share this definition: **conversion** is to undergo a change from a practice or a belief to another one.

### 2. Time for Storytelling

Family members reflect back on Lent. Ask members to respond to these questions:

- ❖ What is different about how we act now? (I have made an effort to be nicer to my brother/sister; during Lent I really tried to tell the truth.)
- ❖ What "shifts in attitude" have we had during Lent? How have we been "remade?"
- ❖ What practices have we changed, or adopted during Lent? (We prayed regularly during Lent, we gave up some bad habits, we were involved in outreach to the poor for the first time as a family.)

### 3. Stories from Our Faith Tradition

Read the following Scripture passage aloud to the family.

John 4:5-42 (The Woman at the Well)

Ask family members to summarize using several words or phrases what they feel is the central message of the Scripture which you read. Describe the conversion of the Woman at the Well.

### 4. What Our Family Can Do

Family leader for this reflection shares points such as the following: *The call to conversion, to turn our hearts to Jesus, is a call we must answer every day. Lent has been a time for us to focus on the changes we need to make in order to be Jesus in the world.*

Spend time in quiet thought:

- ❖ How can our family continue our conversion?
- ❖ How can our attitudes and our actions continue to be transformed by the presence of Jesus in our home?
- ❖ What do we need to work on as a family to reflect Jesus' love more fully?

Reflect on your family's experience of Lent.

- ❖ How has the call to conversion, to change of heart touched you this Lent?
- ❖ How has the new life offered by Jesus in the resurrection brought conversion to our hearts?

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# Seasonal Learning Activities

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What better a time than Lent to immerse our families in the life of the Church? The Paschal Mystery, celebrated year-round, receives our focused attention as our Lenten observances prepare us for Holy Week. The life of the Church is lived both in the parish and at home. These activities will help bring Lent alive at home, and connect families to the rituals of the faith community.

## Saints for the Season

Wouldn't it be wonderful if families came to expect that the parish would provide them with learning activities such as this? That would be a happy challenge we would be delighted to address! Be sure that families receive this newsletter in the family learning packets you send home or through other means you have established to help them learn in the home.

## Virtue Reality Activities for Families: Humility, Sacrifice, Faith

These are partners to the *Saints for the Season* newsletters and families will look forward to them! Here they focus on the virtues of humility, sacrifice and faith. Talk about how these virtues are a part of their home life, and look at them as lived by Jesus.

## Family Scripture Activity

This is a particularly fun activity for families with younger children. It helps parents communicate the value of faithfulness and trust. Send it home with children in your faith formation programs.

## Living Lent

**Living Lent** is a collection of learning activities for understanding and practicing Lent at home, including: **Lent, A Season for...**, **Understanding Ash Wednesday**, **Fasting and Feasting**, and **Family Lenten Resolutions**. Imagine every family in the parish with the Lenten chain of resolutions around their home prayer space. These resolutions are personal and family pledges for service, prayer, learning and enrichment during Lent. Consider include all or selected activities with the Sunday bulletin immediately prior to Ash Wednesday. This booklet can also be used in the various large or small group gatherings of parishioners prior to the beginning of Lent.

## Fasting and Feasting Help Us to Prepare for Easter

Fasting, okay--but feasting during Lent? Read this family learning handout to see how both fasting and feasting fit into our observances this season. Not only does a family learn about these Lenten practices if you provide this sheet for them, they talk with each other about how their family will fast and feast this Lent. We include a Fasting and Feasting Prayer.

## Media and Print Resources for the Lenten Season

As families make their Lenten resolutions, the resources listed here may come in handy.

# ✦ Saints for the Season ✦

## Virtue Reality for Families Today

### Lent



### From Riches to Rags???

Most people dream of going from rags to riches, but in the fifteenth century, **St. Frances of Rome** dreamed of going from riches to rags. She had hoped to become a nun but married Lorenzo Panziano instead. She wore lovely dresses with the family jewels in order to please him, but she really wanted to be serving God by helping the poor.

One day, Frances' sister-in-law admitted that she wanted to help the poor. So, the two of them wore plain dresses and veils, sneaked out of the castle, and ministered to the sick and the poor. When Lorenzo's family found out, they made fun of them, but Frances convinced her husband to let her continue.

During floods, famine, and plagues, Frances turned her house into a hospital where she also gave out food and clothing. Eventually she founded an order of sisters who lived in their homes and served the poor.

Frances modeled humility. She placed the needs of others before her own. Deep inside, she knew she wanted to help the poor, and she did!

### Humility...

How do you reply when someone compliments your work? Do you point out the mistakes? How do you respond when someone starts a conversation? Do you avoid talking about yourself? How do you react when someone offers to help you? Do you decline? Sometimes we think that to say "yes" to these questions is to know the meaning of humility. Is it really?

Humility comes from a Latin word that means "ground." It is a combination of many qualities that come from an honest sense of self and a healthy self esteem. It means

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being lowly enough to recognize our dependence on God. It means being honest enough to identify the gifts God has given us. It means being gracious enough to use those gifts to meet the needs of others. And it means being meek enough to serve others without expecting anything in return.

Jesus modeled humility when he washed the feet of his disciples at the Last Supper. Whose feet will you wash today?

## Revised Recipe: Humble Pie

Give your family a taste of humility. For this recipe, you will need a piece of tag board, a marker, and a desire to serve. Draw a large circle on the tag board, divide it into six pie-shaped sections, and cut them apart. On each section, write one of the following directives: do a good deed, give a compliment, share something, say "thank you," serve someone, and give someone the first choice.

Discuss what the directives mean, and describe how they help you to serve others. Divide the pie pieces among each other, and write your name on the one(s) you receive. Follow the directive on your pie piece and give it to someone else. Whenever you receive a new one, sign it, follow the directive, and give it to someone who has not signed it yet. Keep passing the pie pieces until they have everyone's signature. When they do, put them on your dining table. Try to reassemble the pie before the end of the month. Then go out for dessert together.

## What Are You Doing For Lent?

Lent is a time of humility. On Ash Wednesday, we remember that we come from the earth and we return to it. During Lent, we perform acts of prayer, fasting, and service. These are all acts of humility. Through prayer, we surrender ourselves to God. During Lent, make a special effort to pray together at mealtime and bedtime. Through fasting, we let go of extravagances and recognize what our basic needs really are. During Lent, schedule some evenings without TV, stereo, or video games. See how much you really do need each other! Through service, we place the needs of others before our own. During Lent, look for ways to serve the needs of people in your community.

***Create a humble heart in me, O Lord!***



## ★ Virtue Reality Activity: Humility ★

n. 1. the quality or condition of being humble, of being unpretentious, of not putting on airs, 2. the quality of being modest. "She never considers herself better than someone else. He doesn't criticize his friends, and he learns from his mistakes."

Family life is a great place to practice the virtue of humility. We show humility everyday by accepting each other and by encouraging each other to learn and grow from our mistakes. We don't expect to be perfect, nor do we expect perfection in others. When we practice humility, we give the gifts that each of us has to give—sharing ourselves with others.

### Talk about humility in your household.

- ▶ How do members of our family focus on our own growth rather than on the faults of others?
- ▶ What happens to us when we try first to impress others rather than be ourselves?
- ▶ How do we learn from each other?

### Create a list of ways your family wants to practice humility, such as...

- ▶ Learn from our mistakes.
- ▶ Treat each other as equals; recognize each other's special gifts and talents.
- ▶ Ask for help when we need it.
- ▶ Do not pay so much attention to what others think about us.
- ▶ Try not to compare ourselves to others.
- ▶ Use our special gifts and talents.

### Use the list of ways your family wants to practice humility, to create specific goals for your family, such as...

- ▶ We will learn from our mistakes by supporting and encouraging each other when we make mistakes, rather than ridiculing and criticizing.
- ▶ We will ask for help when we feel overloaded with the chores, or cannot figure out our homework.
- ▶ Everyday we will name a special gift we see in each other.
- ▶ We will find time in our schedule so that everyone has the opportunity to pursue interests and talents they love.

### Talk about Jesus' humility.

- ▶ How was he a model of humility?
- ▶ Can you think of a situation in which Jesus was humble?

### Read more about humility in the Bible.

- ▶ Jesus realizes that everyone is a human being—each one different but still a person. Read Colossians 3:10-17.
- ▶ Jesus respects what each person contributes. Read 1Corinthians 12.
- ▶ Jesus learns from mistakes. Read Matthew 15:21-28.
- ▶ Jesus asks for help when he needs it. Read Matthew 26:36-39.
- ▶ Jesus is thankful, not boastful. Read John 12:44-50.

## Family Prayer for Humility

Holy God, your Son knelt to wash the feet of his disciples. Jesus is our model of humility. He emptied himself so that he could be filled with your grace, with your power and your righteousness. Help us to empty ourselves, to live not for ourselves but for each other. Set us free to act with honor, to serve you, and to know you. Set us free to do what is really good. We pray that we will know your strength which you make perfect in our weakness. Holy God, we pray this prayer through your Son, Jesus. Amen.

# ✦ Saints for the Season ✦

## Virtue Reality for Families Today

### Lent



### She Sacrificed Her Fortune!

Would you sacrifice a family fortune that was worth millions of dollars? **Blessed Katharine Drexel** did. She grew up in a wealthy family, so she was well-educated and well-traveled. In addition, she learned about faith from her parents who regularly practiced prayer and almsgiving. Each evening, her father prayed for thirty minutes. Three days a week, her stepmother opened their home to people who were poor.

When her stepmother became ill with cancer, Katharine spent three years taking care of her. During this time, she thought about her values and considered becoming a nun.

Katharine was very concerned about helping Native Americans in the western United States, so she asked the pope to send more missionaries to Wyoming. The pope suggested that she become a missionary, so she did!

Katharine became the first Sister of the Blessed Sacrament. She sacrificed the rest of her life and her inheritance of twelve million dollars to help Native Americans and African Americans. She established missions, mission centers, Catholic schools, and rural schools. She founded Xavier University in New Orleans, the first university for African Americans in the United States. Katharine spoke out against injustices such as racism, and she made Americans more aware of the needs of people who are poor.

### Sacrifice...

A sacrifice is something we give up in order to help someone else. Parents sacrifice their money to buy food and clothes for their children. Team members sacrifice their turn to give someone else a chance. Hospital

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volunteers sacrifice their time to help people who are sick.

During Lent, we recall the great sacrifice that Jesus made for us. He showed the people how much God loved them, and he showed them how to love each other. Some people were not ready to hear that message, and they became very angry. In the end, Jesus sacrificed his very life so that we could know eternal life. When we make sacrifices, we become a little more like Jesus and we grow in God's love.

The Church suggests three disciplines during Lent. One of them, fasting, involves sacrifice. By fasting, we give up things that are important to us. By almsgiving, we share our time and treasure with people in need. By praying, we become closer to God.

## Family Lenten Sacrifice

The cross is a symbol of the sacrifice that Jesus made. It can remind your family to make sacrifices during Lent. For this activity, you will need two different colored pieces of tag board, a straightedge, a marker, a scissors, glue, and a basket.

On one piece of tag board, use the straightedge to make a cross almost as tall as the tag board. Make the vertical and horizontal beams wide enough to write in. On the vertical beam, write the word "sacrifice" so the letters are spaced over the entire beam. On the horizontal beam, write each family members name. Make the possessive form by adding

's after each. Carefully cut out the cross and trace it on the second piece of tag board.

The first cross will be a puzzle. Cut it into at least twice as many pieces as there are people in your family. Put the pieces into the basket along with the glue. The second cross will be the form. Put the basket and the form in a place that will be visible to your family each day.

Try to make special sacrifices during Lent. For example, parents can spend extra quality time with children. Children can perform extra household duties for their parents. Children can also do special favors for each other. Families can participate in a service project together. Each time someone makes a special sacrifice, glue a piece of the cross puzzle onto the form. Try to complete the cross by Easter. Then decorate it to celebrate eternal life!

Our sacrifice is to keep offering praise to God in the name of Jesus. But don't forget to help others and to share your possessions with them. This too is like offering a sacrifice that pleases God.

Hebrews 13:15-16

## ★ Virtue Reality Activity: Sacrifice ★

n. 1. the act of offering something to God;  
2. the act of giving up something highly valued for the sake of something or someone else of high value. "She sacrificed her free time to help him with his work. He gave his lunch to the man on the street corner."

Sacrifice needs to be alive and well in family life. Everyday acts of sacrifice—parent to child, husband to wife, sibling to sibling—show how much we love and care for each other. Sacrifice focused on our relationship with God needs to be a priority too.

### Talk about sacrifice in your household.

- ▶ What are the ways members of our family make sacrifices for each other? Why do we make these sacrifices?
- ▶ What sacrifices can we make to grow closer to God?
- ▶ What sort of sacrifice does God want us to make for others—here at home, in our neighborhood, in our world?

### Create a list of ways your family wants to practice sacrifice, such as...

- ▶ Think of each other before ourselves.
- ▶ Sometimes be last instead of first.
- ▶ Find ways to use some family time to help others.
- ▶ Live with less "stuff" so that others may have the essentials.

### Using the list of ways your family wants to practice sacrifice, create goals for your family, such as...

- ▶ We will think of each others' feelings and needs, and sometimes be willing to give up what we want freely and happily.
- ▶ We will not always have to be first—to choose the seat in the car, to use the computer, to have that piece of homemade pie. Sometimes we will be last.
- ▶ We will investigate service projects in our community and choose one to do together in the next several months.
- ▶ We will forego buying the latest computer game, (or clothes fashion, or car) so that some of our resources (i.e., money) can go towards those who need life's basic necessities.

### Talk about Jesus and sacrifice.

- ▶ How was he a model of what it means to sacrifice?
- ▶ For whom did he sacrifice?

### Read about Jesus' sacrifice in Scripture.

- ▶ Jesus gives freely without hope of reward and gives freely without holding back. He is willing to sacrifice fully. Read Matthew 27:45-49.

## Family Prayer for Sacrifice

Lord of Life, you gave your life so that we might live. Help us to experience the joy of sacrifice – of giving. May we look for every opportunity to give of our time, our talents, our money, our possessions, our thanks, compliments, healing words, hugs, smiles, a helping hand, or a listening ear. Help us to give out of full hearts, and even nearly empty hearts if the need be. Bless us, that our sacrifices day to day may bring us and others closer to you. We pray this through Christ our Lord, Amen.

# ✦ Saints for the Season ✦

## Virtue Reality for Families Today

### Lent



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### Sharing Faith in...Ireland!

Most people think **St. Patrick** was Irish, but he was English! Pirates captured and took him to Ireland when he was sixteen. Eventually, he escaped and became a priest.

Years later, Patrick asked to return to Ireland. He was not well-educated, but he had the characteristics of a good missionary. He was ordained a bishop and sent to areas where people lived in clans and worshipped pagan gods. Patrick shared his faith and converted the chief of the most powerful clan. This angered the Druids, who kept the people away from any other religion. One year, the Druids celebrated their spring festival on the same night as the Easter vigil. They ordered that no fire could be lit except their own. Patrick defied the order and lit the fire of the Easter vigil. The Druids tried to extinguish the fire and kill Patrick, but they were unsuccessful.

Patrick shared his faith with actions as well as words. He was compassionate to all people. He set up monasteries, convents, and parishes. He also gave a Christian meaning to many traditional Irish celebrations.

### A Family of Faith

**St. Joseph** was obedient to God's will. In spite of his doubts, he took Mary as his wife. After Jesus was born, he took his family to Egypt to save them from King Herod.

As heads of the Holy Family, Joseph and Mary trusted God and followed the traditions of their faith. St. Joseph is the patron of fathers.

## Catechesis...

Do you wear something green on St. Patrick's Day? Do you refrain from eating meat on Fridays during Lent? Do you find Easter eggs on Easter Sunday?

If your family participates in any of the above traditions, you are participating in "family catechesis." Catechesis is a way of teaching our faith by word of mouth. Family catechesis is faith sharing within and among families. Some people think of it as echoing faith from generation to generation.

Traditions are an important part of family catechesis. They help families to express their beliefs in a way that is natural to each family's lifestyle. It is important to explain the meaning behind the tradition. That's what makes it catechesis!

Lent is a season that can be rich in family traditions. The Church asks us to perform acts of prayer, fasting, and service. During the next few weeks, think about ways that your family can perform one of each. Create traditions that will echo your faith in years to come!

## Bake a Family Tradition!

St. Patrick used the shamrock to teach about God. Just as a shamrock is one plant with three leaves, God is one God with three persons: the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. You can use the shamrock to teach your family about God.

For this activity, you will need the ingredients for this recipe, a few hours of time, and a bit of faith to share!

### Shamrock Sugar Cookies

Cream together 1 egg, 1 cup sugar, and 1 cup shortening. Add 2 cups flour, 1/2 teaspoon baking soda, 1/2 teaspoon salt, and 1/2 teaspoon vanilla. Mix thoroughly. Chill for 1 hour.

To make each cookie, roll three small balls of dough. Place the balls next to each other on a greased cookie sheet. Roll a small coil to form the stem. Sprinkle the cookies with green colored sugar and flatten them slightly with a fork. Bake them at 325 degrees until they are slightly golden.

If your children help make the cookies, tell them about God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit as they roll each ball. For variations of this tradition, use the recipe to teach them the "Glory Be" prayer or the "Sign of the Cross."

To celebrate St. Patrick's Day, assemble a plateful of cookies to share with another family. Share your faith by telling them how St. Patrick shared his faith in Ireland, and by describing how the shamrock represents the three persons of God. Include a copy of the "Glory Be" prayer.

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.

## ★ Virtue Reality Activity: Faith ★

n. 1. confident belief in the truth or value of a person or belief 2. belief and trust in God. "She has faith in his ability to get the job done. His faith in God is strong, even during hard times."

Families of faith believe in God's power to help them be happy, healthy and holy. Families of faith trust each other because they have placed their faith in God first. Faithfulness in the family also means being able to question what we believe, to find answers and to practice our beliefs. A family of faith listens to its heart.

### Talk about faith in your household.

- ▶ What are some of the characteristics of a family who has faith?
- ▶ How does your family practice its faith?
- ▶ Why is it important that family members be faithful to each other?
- ▶ In who and what does your family place its faith?

### Create a list of ways your family wants to be a family of faith, such as...

- ▶ Learn and pray together for faith.
- ▶ Practice our faith.
- ▶ Be sure that we do what we say, in other words, our beliefs and actions match.

### Using the list of ways your family wants to practice faithfulness, create goals for your family, such as...

- ▶ We will pray together each day: "Lord give this family the gift of faith," and we will learn together about our beliefs.
- ▶ We will participate in our faith community by attending Mass regularly.
- ▶ We will not talk about each other behind our backs.

### Talk about Jesus as a person of faith.

- ▶ How was he a model of faithfulness?
- ▶ To whom was he faithful?

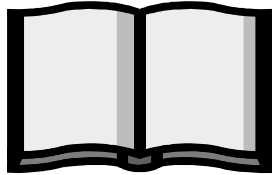
### Read about Jesus and faith in Scripture.

- ▶ Mary, the Mother of Jesus. Read Luke 1:26-56.
- ▶ Jesus and the Samaritan woman. Read John 4:3-30.
- ▶ Jesus and Lazarus. Read John 11:1-45.
- ▶ Qualities of faithfulness. Read Colossians 3:12-14.

## Family Prayer for Faith

Faithful Lord, you call us to develop relationships built on loyalty, trust and love. Help us to be faithful in our relationships, to honor our commitments, and to respect each other. Give us the gift of faith to believe in you and to let that belief shine forth in the way we live each day. Grant us the faith that can move mountains. May this family cling to you in times of fear and uncertainty, may you be the source of our security and our joy. We ask this through Christ our Lord, Amen.

# Family Scripture Activity



## Activity Outline

- ▶ Gather as a family. Have each child find a rock and hold the rock in one hand and sand in the other.

- ▶ Read Deuteronomy 32:3-4.

*Join with me in praising the wonderful name of the Lord our God.*

*The Lord is a mighty rock, and he never does wrong.  
God can always be trusted to bring justice.*

- ▶ Pour water into each child's hands. Then ask the following questions.
  - ◆ Which is still completely in your hand, the sand or the rock?
  - ◆ Which is easier to hold on to?
  - ◆ Which one did not change, the rock or the sand?
  - ◆ How is God like the rock?
  - ◆ Which one would you rather build a house on, rock or sand? Why?

- ▶ Read Matthew 7:24-27.

*Anyone who hears and obeys these teachings of mine is like a wise person who built a house on solid rock. Rain poured down, rivers flooded, and winds beat against that house. But it did not fall, because it was built on solid rock.*

*Anyone who hears my teachings and does not obey them is like a foolish person who built a house on sand. The rain poured down, the rivers flooded, and the winds blew and beat against that house. Finally, it fell with a crash.*

- ▶ Ask family members what they think about the two people who built their houses with different foundations. Who was smarter? Why?
- ▶ Share in your own words: The man who built his house on rock built his house to last. He knew that rock was the strongest foundation for his house, so he choose rock over sand. We talked earlier about God being like the rock. God is faithful, God is strong, God is always there. When Jesus told this story to the people, he was telling them that God is faithful and that we should build our lives on God. We need to put our trust and our faith in God.
- ▶ How can this family put its trust and faith and God? What can we do that shows our trust and faith?

## What you will need for this Scripture Activity...

Bible, sand, rocks, and a pitcher of water