

Encountering THE SEASON

Lent for the Family

Ash Wednesday (C)

Joel 2:12–18

2 Corinthians 5:20—6:2

Matthew 6:1–6, 16–18

Dear Family:

Read the reflection about journeying through Lent with Mary, and discuss the “Ponder and Pray” questions and prompts, thinking about how Our Lord is inviting you to encounter him this Lent. Then consider the challenges of the “Live It” section, have fun with the family activities, and dive into the *visio divina* prayer exercise.

God’s Comforting Invitation to Return

As our Lenten journey begins on Ash Wednesday, we are reminded of the comforting invitation to return to God with all our hearts (see Joel 2:12).

Whether you have observed this season for many years or this is your first time entering into the spirit of Lent, you are welcome just as you are. Lent, a sacred time of renewal, calls us to reflect, repent, and grow closer to Our Lord.

During Lent, we foster our relationship with the Triune God through prayer, fasting, and almsgiving. But at the heart of it all is the desire to know and love God more deeply. Just as we cultivate relationships by spending time with those we care about, so too must we spend time with God. Prayer becomes our dialogue with him—where we share our hopes, struggles, joys, and fears. Fasting and almsgiving help us let go

of what distracts us from God and make room for what truly matters.

As we deepen our relationship with Jesus, we encounter what is precious to him. One treasure is Mary, his mother. Throughout the Gospels, we see her closeness to Jesus—from the Annunciation to the foot of the Cross. Mary points us to her son, guiding us in our walk of faith.

“ ‘Even now,’ says the LORD,
‘return to me with all your heart.’ ”
—Joel 2:12



Jerusalem by Mike Moyers

This Lent, ask God to help you grow your relationship with him. Will you embrace the practices of this season to know him more fully? Will you draw closer to Mary? If so, she can help lead you to her son.

To delve deeper into the theme of drawing closer to Mary and relying on God, see *The Ascension Lenten Companion: Walking with Mary to Jerusalem*.

Ponder and Pray

- Going into Lent, are your thoughts positive or negative? How can we encourage one another to make this the best Lent ever?
- What is your relationship with Mary like? How can your family invite Mary into your experience of Lent?
- What are you committing to for Lent this year? Are you giving something up, like sweets, adding something in, like a daily Rosary, or something else? Share your Lenten commitment with your family.

Fun for the Family

God calls us to trust in him *and* in the people he places in our lives. This week, play a trust-building game with your family—whether it's a classic trust fall exercise or a game like Simon Says or Follow the Leader. As you play, discuss what it feels like to trust others and how we can learn to trust God in the same way Mary did.

Live It

This Lent, follow Mary's example by trusting God in moments of fear or uncertainty. As you engage in prayer, fasting, and almsgiving, see these acts not just as penance but as ways to walk with Mary, surrendering to God's will. Offer your sacrifices with the prayer, "Lord, like Mary, I trust in your plan. Amen."

Visio Divina

Engage your mind and heart as you study the image in this bulletin for a few moments. Beyond illustrating a "snapshot" of Mary's relationship with Jesus, what does the art communicate? Think of an answer and then prayerfully read the questions, asking God to fill you with all that he wishes to say to you through this work.

Question 1:

What strikes you first about this image?

Question 2:

What do you think Mary and Jesus are saying to each other in the picture?

Question 3:

How do you think Jesus is feeling as he prepares for his journey to the Cross? How do you think Mary is feeling, knowing that the journey will not be easy for her son?

For free videos and downloadable resources featuring *Lenten Companion: Walking with Mary to Jerusalem* with Fr. Mark Touns, scan this code with your camera. This bulletin's reflection by Fr. Touns and "Family Fun" were adapted from *Lenten Companion*.

