



**WELCOMING
CHILDREN
in WORSHIP**

**THE CATHOLIC
UNIVERSITY
OF AMERICA**



ASH WEDNESDAY & LENT

Adaptive Activities for Children



**National Catholic
Partnership on Disability**

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Introduction

Welcome and thank you for your ministry that serves the liturgical formation of children for their participation in the Eucharist, the “source and summit of the Christian life.” This resource is provided by the Committee on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities of the National Catholic Partnership on Disability (NCPD). It aims to offer an adaptive catechetical opportunity for all who have a heart for disability ministry to reflect on the liturgical year. We welcome you to this virtual community and hope you find this resource beneficial.

Here you will find reflections to guide children with intellectual and developmental disabilities, or diverse learners, through the liturgical season of Lent with adaptive catechesis to help prepare them to participate fully as we journey through Lent.

Each offering includes prayer, Scripture, activities and more that incorporate the senses and take into consideration the needs of all learners. We invite you to gather children around the table of the home or the table of the classroom as a preparation for their participation at the sacred table of the Eucharist.

Each session with children follows these moments with supporting materials:

- 1. Prayer**
- 2. Sacred Scripture**
- 3. Reflection**
- 4. Faith in Action**
- 5. Activities**
- 6. Saint**
- 7. Resources/Bibliography**

Prayer

Begin with the Sign of the Cross.

Leader:

Today we begin the season of Lent, and we ask Jesus for forgiveness for our sins. We ask God for his mercy to help us as we work to follow Jesus. Repeat after me as we ask God for his mercy.

Lord, have mercy. Lord, have mercy.

Christ, have mercy. Christ, have mercy.

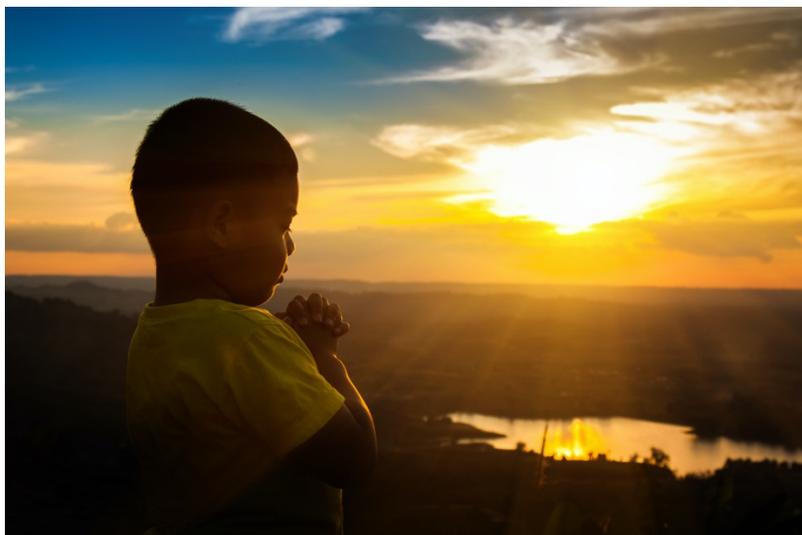
Lord, have mercy. Lord, have mercy.

Leader:

Loving God, we come together at the beginning of this Lenten season to remember that your mercy is always with us. Grant us your forgiveness for the times that we have chosen not to follow Jesus and help us to grow closer to you during this season through prayer, fasting and almsgiving. We ask this in the name of Jesus, your son, through the Holy Spirit.

Amen.

Note: Song Suggestion *We Rise Again from Ashes*
(<https://youtu.be/iPi9j0yuPUM?si=5zcP1F7nznH7Wjno>)



Reading of Sacred Scripture

Mark 1:12-15

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Mark

Right away God's Spirit made Jesus go into the **desert**. He stayed there for forty days while Satan tested him. Jesus was with the **wild animals**, but angels took care of him. After John was arrested, Jesus went to Galilee and told the good news that comes from God. He said, "The time has come! God's kingdom will soon be here. Turn back to God and **believe** the good news!"¹



Photo by Aaron Burden - Unsplash

Vocabulary

Desert a region with little to no rain and little to no vegetation

Wild animals not tamed

Believe to have confidence or faith that something is true

Reflection with Children

This Gospel written by the Apostle Mark, also known as the temptation of Jesus, follows right after Jesus is baptized by John in the Jordan River. The beginning of this story tells us that “the Spirit” drove Jesus into the desert. During the time when the Apostle Mark lived, “the Spirit” represented the great power of God.

The reading also tells us that Jesus stayed in the desert for forty days. While he was there Satan tried very hard to get Jesus to do something wrong. There were wild beasts in the desert, but angels kept Jesus safe.²

¹ *Lectionary for Masses with Children*. Catholic Book Publishing Co. New York. 1993

² [Franciscan Gospel Reflection: First Sunday of Lent 2021 - Franciscan Sisters \(fsc-calledtobe.org\)](https://www.franciscan.org/franciscan-sisters/franciscan-gospel-reflection-first-sunday-of-lent-2021)

Faith in Action

The season of Lent begins on Ash Wednesday, the forty weekdays before Easter. This year (2024) Lent begins on February 14, which is also Valentine's Day. You may be wondering how can I celebrate both holidays on the same day? While it may be challenging to celebrate a day where we eat chocolate from heart shaped boxes, and exchange cards and gifts with those we love, it is not that difficult to see the beautiful connection of the two holy days. Lent is a season where we reflect and act on our love for Jesus by praying fasting and sharing



what we have with others. Lent is a season where we focus on Jesus and not ourselves. Like Valentine's Day, during Lent, we show our love for Jesus and others in different ways. So how do we show Jesus we love him and experience Lent as a family?

Like with any Holy day or season, we want to set the stage for what is to come. For Lent that means creating a special place in our homes and hearts that welcomes the season. As a family you can create a sacred space where you can gather to pray, read the Word of God, and support each other on your faith journey. You can talk with each other about what you would like to include in your sacred space. Some things you might consider putting in that space would be a Bible, a Crucifix, a rosary, a candle (representing the light of Christ), and a prayer jar or bowl. If you already have a sacred space in your home, you can add things to it that reflect the season like a purple cloth that represents penance, and the color of the liturgical season, a cactus that represents the desert, and a special prayer book or devotional for your family to use during the season of Lent.

On Ash Wednesday, which marks the beginning of Lent, we go to church to participate in Mass and receive ashes on our foreheads. This represents that we are human and in need of forgiveness. With this forgiveness we turn away from sin and become followers of Jesus. Lent is a season where we put aside our own wants, and we focus on putting the needs of others first. During our Lenten journey we engage in three very specific acts of love – Prayer, Fasting and Almsgiving (giving to others in need). By engaging in these three things, we show Jesus how much we love him, and appreciate the sacrifices he made for us.



Photo by Ahna Ziegler Unsplash

Prayer – Join your family around your dinner table, or your sacred space and pray for each other, for the Church and for those in need.

Write or draw special prayers on heart shaped paper and place them in the prayer bowl in your sacred space.

Pray for those who do not yet know Jesus, that they will get to know him through your witness of faith and love.

Fasting – Talk with your family about what you each would like to give up this Lent. Share with each other in words or drawings what you would like to sacrifice and why. Support each other on this journey of growing closer to Jesus.

Make a decision as a family to give up something that challenges you to become more like Jesus. Perhaps you can refrain from eating out or going to the movies. Eat a simple meal at home and watch a movie on tv together, using the money you saved to give to those in need.

Almsgiving – Give to others in need, sacrificing a want or need of your own. This can be in the form of food donations to a food pantry, donating gently used clothes or toys, or helping a neighbor bring in their groceries, or walking their dog when they are not able to do it themselves.

Give to others, as Jesus gives to us. Make a point during Lent to think of others before thinking of yourself.

Grow closer to Jesus and your family as you engage in these practices of faith. Lent is a wonderful time to remember that the love that Jesus shares with each of us is the love that we can reflect for others through our thoughts, words, and actions.

Other Inclusive Lenten Activities can be found at the National Catholic Partnership on Disability [here.](#)



Photo by Thays Orrico on Unsplash

Activities with Children

“Sensory Preparations for Ash Wednesday”

Ash Wednesday begins the season of Lent and brings with it changes to the Church’s typical practices that occur during Ordinary Time. You may want to discuss with your child the adjustments he/she might need to make on Ash Wednesday and during the Lenten season. Consider preparing him/her for the following sensory experiences:



Touch/Tactile changes:

- Before Ash Wednesday, practice placing “ashes” on your child’s forehead. Unblessed ashes can be purchased at your local Catholic store or online. Instead of ashes, you can use powdered makeup (e.g., black eye shadow).
- Holy Water fonts may be empty; some parishes replace the Holy Water with sand (to remind us of Jesus’ 40 days in the desert).



Sound/Auditory changes:

- During the distribution of ashes, the priest, deacon or lay minister will say, “Repent and believe in the Gospel” or “Remember that you are dust and to dust you shall return.” Check with your parish to find out which of these formulas will be recited. Then let your child know what will be said as the ashes are marked on his/her forehead.
- Throughout Lent, “alleluia” is not said or spoken at Mass; we also do not sing or recite the “Gloria in Excelsis” (“Glory to God in the Highest”).
- There may also be limited use of musical instruments during Mass.

Sight/Visual changes:

- The altar may not be decorated with flowers.
- Crosses and images may be covered inside the church.



Photo by Esther Garcia

Smell/Olfactory changes:

- Incense might be used during the Lenten season. Incense comes in different scents. Alert your parish if you or loved one have an allergy or breathing difficulties that may be challenged when incense is used during Mass.

Taste/Gustatory changes:

- Traditionally, Catholics refrain from eating meat on Fridays throughout Lent. Consider looking through meatless recipes with your child and then making a meal together. For example, “40 Days of Soup/Lenten Soup Recipes”, by Ave Maria Press, can be found at: <https://www.avemariapress.com/40daysofsoup>.

February Activity for Lent

“Preparing My Heart for Jesus”

In Bishop David L. Ricken’s article, “10 Things to Remember for Lent³”, he states that the three things we need to work on during Lent are prayer, fasting and almsgiving. Explain to your child the importance of preparing our hearts for Jesus’ arrival on Easter Sunday. Perhaps you can discuss with your child ways that your family prepares for other events (e.g., getting ready for the school day; planning a birthday party; etc.). Just like we develop plans for other events, we need to get ready for Jesus. Praying, fasting and almsgiving are three ways that we can prepare. Keep in mind that these activities may look different for your child.

Prayer - besides reciting formal prayers, there are numerous ways to pray. For example, your child may: quietly listen while others pray or read from the Bible; make the Sign of the Cross; use his/her own words or actions to give thanks and praise to God.

Fasting - instead of giving up sweets or a favorite treat, perhaps your child can “fast” by spending less time engaged in an activity (e.g., watching television; playing a computer game).

Almsgiving - in addition to money, alms can include other forms of donations that benefit those in need. Your child can possibly give alms by helping family members or others in the community. He/She could donate gently used personal items (e.g., toys; clothing) or collect canned goods for your parish’s social concerns ministry.

Consider using the following calendar to help your child track his/her activities during Lent. Put aside time each day to discuss with your child how he/she has prepared his/her heart for Jesus. Your child can paste one of the picture symbols that reflects his/her daily action. (*Calendar images were found at <https://clipart-library.com/>.*) If your child prefers, the box can be colored purple (the liturgical color for the Lenten season), a note can be written about that day’s activity, or he/she can decorate the box.

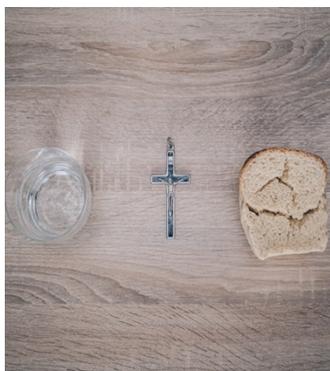


Photo by Kamil Szumotalski -Unsplash

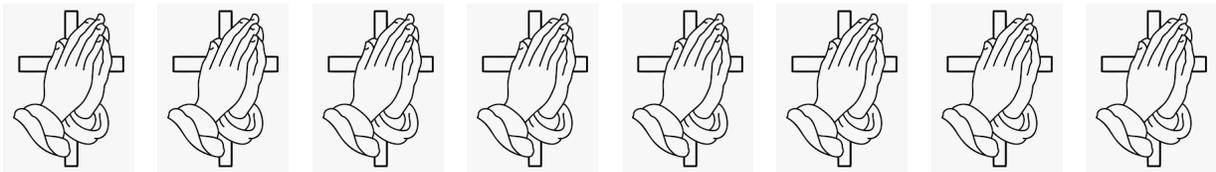
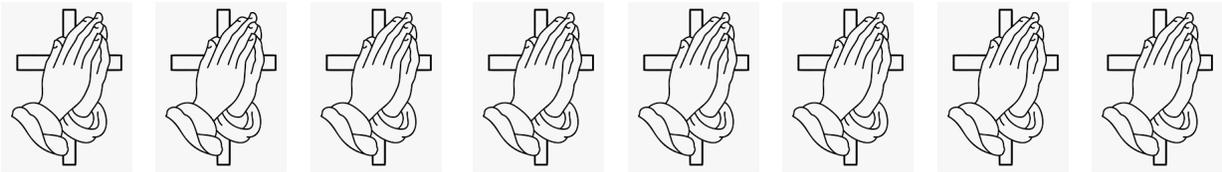
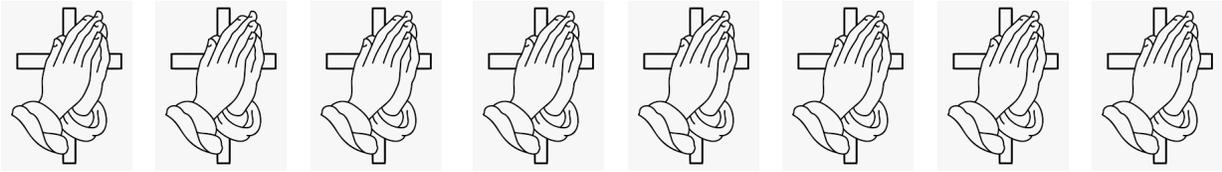
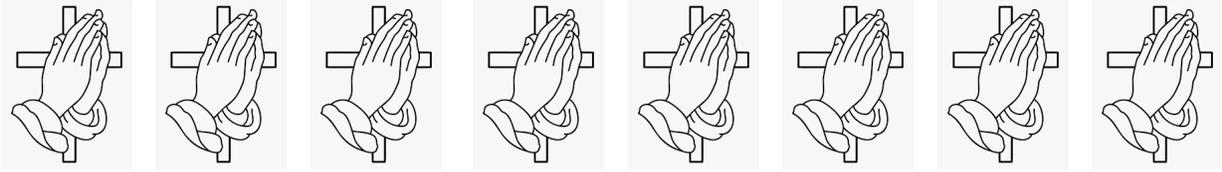
³ USCCB - *Living the Faith* - “10 Things to Remember for Lent” by Bishop David L. Ricken, 2018; <https://www.usccb.org/resources/10%20Things%20to%20Remember%20During%20Lent.pdf>

Lenten Calendar 2024

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
			February 14 Ash Wednesday	February 15	February 16	February 17
February 18 First Sunday of Lent	February 19	February 20	February 21	February 22	February 23	February 24
February 25 Second Sunday of Lent	February 26	February 27	February 28	February 29	March 1	March 2
March 3 Third Sunday of Lent	March 4	March 5	March 6	March 7	March 8	March 9
March 10 Fourth Sunday of Lent	March 11	March 12	March 13	March 14	March 15	March 16
March 17 Fifth Sunday of Lent	March 18	March 19	March 20	March 21	March 22	March 23
March 24 Palm Sunday	March 25 Monday of Holy Week	March 26 Tuesday of Holy Week	March 27 Wednesday of Holy Week	March 28 Holy Thursday	March 29 Good Friday	March 30 Holy Saturday
March 31 Easter Sunday						

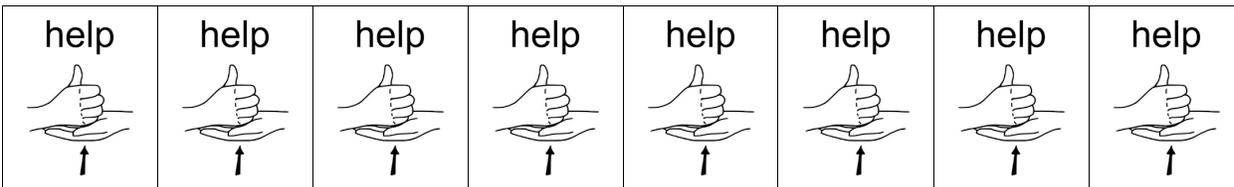
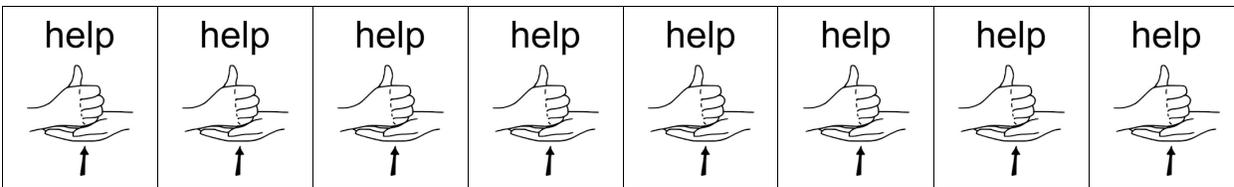
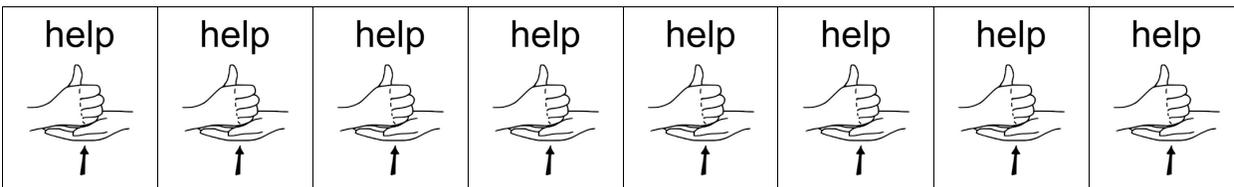
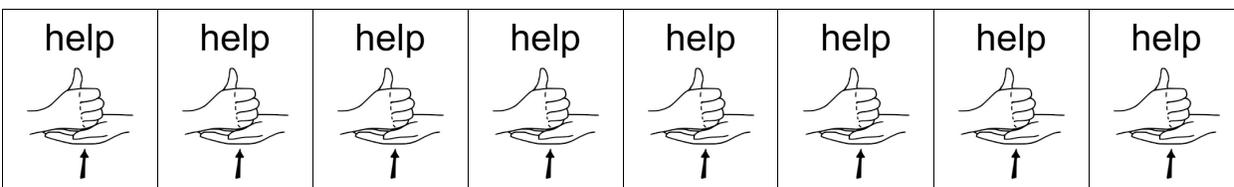
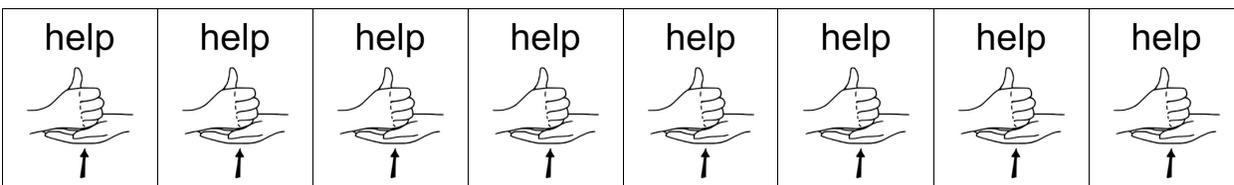
Prayer

Directions: Have your child cut out the “praying” symbol below and paste on the day(s) during Lent that he/she prayed.



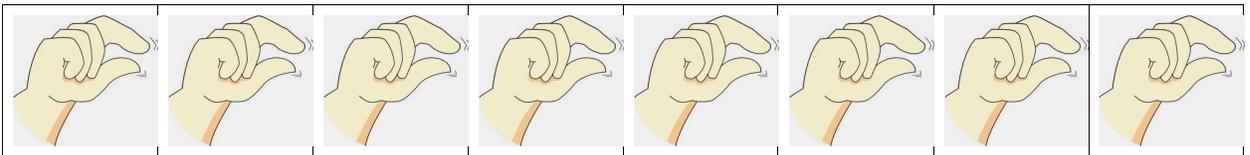
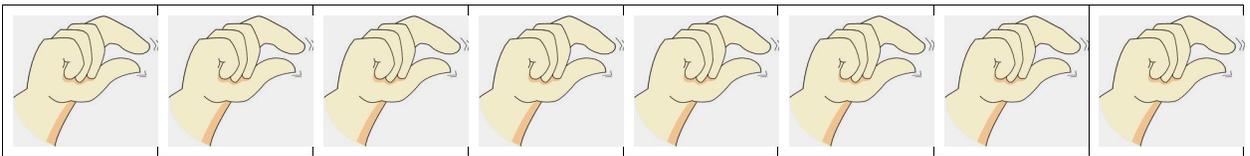
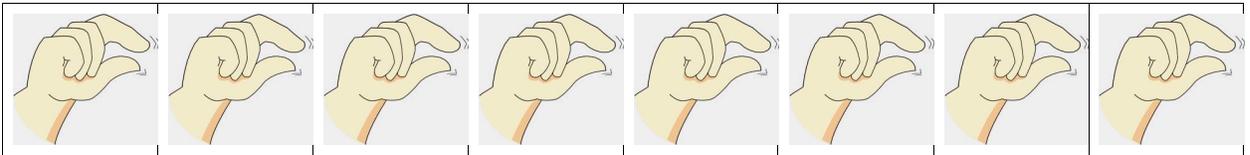
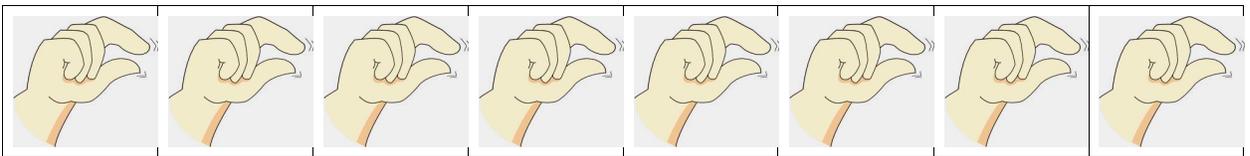
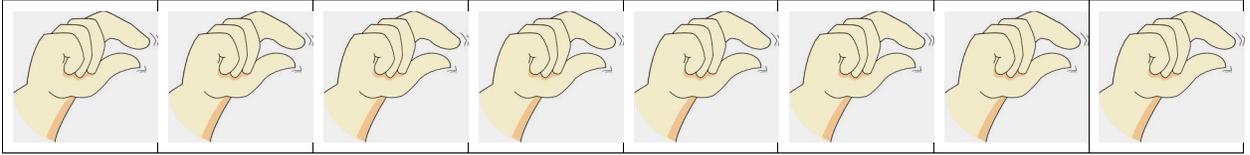
Almsgiving

Directions: Have your child cut out the “help” symbol below and paste on the day(s) during Lent that he/she gave alms.



Fasting

Directions: Have your child cut out the “little” symbol below and paste on the day(s) during Lent that he/she fasted.



Saint Highlight for February

St. Blaise

Feast Day - February 3

St. Blaise was a physician before becoming bishop of Sebaste in Armenia. Like other individuals fleeing persecution for their faith, St. Blaise hid in the wilderness where he is said to have cured many sick animals. Soldiers found St. Blaise, arrested him and put him in prison. While in prison, a mother whose child was choking on a fish bone, brought her child to St. Blaise. By healing the child, and because of his work with sick animals, St. Blaise became known as the patron saint of animals and people with throat ailments. Around the year 316, St. Blaise was martyred because he refused to worship pagan idols.

On February 3rd, the Feast Day for St. Blaise, individuals can have their throats blessed at church. Two unlit candles are held at the base of the individual's throat and the following prayer is recited:

“Through the intercession of St. Blaise, bishop and martyr, may God deliver you free from every disease of the throat, and from every other disease.

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.”

To prepare your child for this tradition, consider some of the following activities:

1. Watch the video “Blessing of Throats” from St. Mary’s Seminary in Houston, TX. While watching the video, explain to your child the simple and safe process of the blessing of throats. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n7etnHN1NAc>
2. Practice “blessing” your child’s throat. Allow your child to “bless” the throat of a family member.
3. Discuss the life of St. Blaise while coloring pictures of candles, fish, or St. Blaise. A coloring picture of St. Blaise can be found in “25 Free Coloring Pages - Catholic Saints” at <https://www.teacherspayteachers.com/Product/25-Free-Coloring-Pages-Catholic-Saints-10786716?st=5c5adf1013db11e18ebcc68f0e94562d>
4. Read to your child USCCB’s suggested optional first reading for the memorial of St. Blaise (see following). Discuss the lines about “we even boast of our afflictions, knowing that affliction produces endurance . . . “

Rom 5:1-5

Brothers and sisters:

Since we have been justified by faith,
we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,
through whom we have gained access by faith
to this grace in which we stand,
and we boast in hope of the glory of God.

Not only that, but we even boast of our afflictions,
knowing that affliction produces endurance,
and endurance, proven character,
and proven character, hope,
and hope does not disappoint,
because the love of God has been poured out into our hearts
through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us.



Resources

“Ash Wednesday FREEBIE! K-3”; Created by - Teacher Wings and Other Things

<https://www.teacherspayteachers.com/browse?order=Price-Asc&search=ash%20wednesday>

Loyola Press - free resources:

<https://www.loyolapress.com/catholic-resources/liturgical-year/lent/ash-wednesday/>

Ave Maria Press - “40 Days of Soup/Lenten Soup Recipes”

<https://www.avemariapress.com/40daysofsoup>

Sadlier - free resources:

<https://www.sadlier.com/religion/blog/bid/79007/resources-for-lent>

Strong Catholic Family Faith

<https://www.catholicfamilyfaith.org/lenten-season-resources.html>

National Catholic Educational Association

https://ncea.org/NCEA/NCEA/How_We_Serve/Resource/Lenten_Resources/Lenten_Resources.aspx?Lenten_Resources=2

Holy Trinity Catholic Church <https://trinity.org/parent-resources-lent>

The Institute for Catholic Formation

<https://formationreimagined.org/lenten-resources/>

Loyola Press <https://www.loyolapress.com/catholic-resources/liturgical-year/lent/activities-and-resources/lent-at-home/>



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Blogs; March 3, 2020

<https://www.ncregister.com/blog/6-liturgical-no-nos-during-lent>

Roman Catholic Diocese of Portland (Maine) - "The 40 Days of Lent"

<https://portlanddiocese.org/40-days-lent>

USCCB - Fact of Faith - "Why is Lent Forty Days?", 2018;

<https://www.usccb.org/resources/Why%20is%20Lent%2040%20Days.pdf>

USCCB - Fact of Faith - "Why Ashes?" by Fr. Larry Rice, 2019

<https://www.usccb.org/resources/Why%20Ashes.pdf>

USCCB - Living the Faith - "10 Things to Remember for Lent" by Bishop David L. Ricken, 2018

<https://www.usccb.org/resources/10%20Things%20to%20Remember%20During%20Lent.pdf>

"Feast of St. Blaise", Archdiocese of Galveston Houston

<https://www.archgh.org/news-events/news/announcements/announcements/tomorrow-feast-of-st-blaise/>

"The Blessing of St. Blaise", Simply Catholic

<https://www.simplycatholic.com/the-blessing-of-st-blaise/>

USCCB's suggested optional first reading for the memorial of St. Blaise -

<https://bible.usccb.org/bible/readings/0203-memorial-blaise.cfm>

"Why Catholics bless throats on the feast of St. Blaise", Archdiocese of Baltimore,

<https://www.archbalt.org/why-catholics-bless-throats-on-the-feast-of-st-blaise/>