



Youth Ministry News

What is Lent, Almsgiving, and Prayer For Us As Youth and To The Church?

By Valencina Valerio

According to the Lord's teachings, Lent can be a great way to grow in our personal spirituality and it's a great opportunity for connection. Connection between our peers, leaders, those less fortunate, and our connection with God. It is a call to action within these forty days of Lent to remember what is most important to us despite our bustling daily lives. We in the youth ministry community value our faith and try our best to live out our lives by our teachings every day, but

even so there will always be a need for practice. Lent is a great time for our faith to flourish and to really think about what is needed within ourselves to fully experience a relationship with God. Prayer helps us practice this when we get busy but need an important reminder to spend time with God and let him into our lives. To give alms, especially when no one is watching but God, is the best feeling in the world. Also, it's important to remember that even the simple act of kindness can

open the eyes of someone else to be lead to Christ. Almsgiving is not to be confused with standard service of the public as opposed to service in the eyes of God. Both are important, but Almsgiving is the foundation of our experiences with Lent because it goes beyond ourselves. Prayer, almsgiving, and fasting help us to be more available and attentive to the needs of others and of God. Lent helps us recognize our primary focus and helps us grow.

What is Prayer? By Emily McGann

The dictionary definition is a solemn request for help or expression of thanks addressed to God or an object of worship. That is a pretty good definition, however I don't believe that it catches the true meaning of prayer. I think that the true definition of prayer is a conversation with God to ask for guidance or even to talk to Him about your day.

As Lent has started, now is the perfect time to ask yourself "How can I increase my prayer life?" Again, this seems like a

difficult question, but it is really quite simple. The only difficult part is creating, or strengthening, the habit.

The best piece of advice I got for starting out is setting an alarm for the same time every day and every time that alarm goes off, just sit down (or stand up or lay down, God isn't picky) and pray. 5 minutes, 10 minutes, 15 minutes. There is no time limit when you pray from the heart. There are many different forms of prayer. There are



many other ways to incorporate and increase your prayer life, but hopefully these beginning tips will help you in strengthening your spiritual life, and especially your relationship with God.

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Fasting, Alms & Prayer By Terri Nelson

Lent begins with Ash Wednesday and ends on Holy Thursday evening. It begins with the grim but honest ashes, the solemn reminder of all our limits and the church's call to conversion. Its forty days are for remembering and becoming what baptism made us. It is thoroughly personal, this Lenten time, but only because we are persons of the church and it is the church that embraces and is embraced by Lent.

Such a season means that the community, like the individual puts aside much of the business that occupies it all year long. We cannot keep Lent unless it has its own space, greatly free of the usual round of activities.

What is Lent to be free for? For hearing and pondering the scriptures that holds us to the shape and meaning of our own baptism. Can we be a church at prayer in Lent unless we are a church that is fasting? Can the words and the gestures – things like ashes, stories of wilderness and transfiguration and Lazarus, prayer on our knees and the sacrament of reconciliation – can these find any place when life is already full? Lent is possible only when it enters all the days and hours. Fasting is a way that happens. Fasting is discovering our hunger. In today's society, that is difficult for we are not supposed to have any emptiness, any hunger, and any sin. Every moment is stuffed full, every need satisfied.

Our Lenten fasting is root-

ed in experiencing hunger for food, but it goes beyond this. We are hungry so that we might discover what we truly need. The tradition shows us Christians fasting from such things as food, drink and sleep. These remain good human things over which we may exercise the discipline of fasting and, in doing so, find a life-giving gratitude for such gifts.

The tradition also knows Lent as a time when we look hard at all that we consume (and all that consumes us) and so begins to practice some discipline in areas where we need to do battle against evil, against sin. Here our fasting may be such a battleground, a place where we take a stand after discerning where the evil we renounced at baptism must be driven out. We do not speak as easily of this today, but Lent has us praying for clarity to see what's wrong and begin to put it right.

Fasting clears the deck, simplifies, frees, shows what a just world would look like, and speaks of taking on the suffering of injustice until justice is done.

Almsgiving is the other face of this. It is all the deeds we can do to remake the world, or, rather, to restore it. It has to do with time and space, with money and goods. It is about the wholeness of things and people, the right relationship of those who dwell on the earth to the earth and to each other. It aims to right the wrong distribution caused

by greed or power or whatever else.

What are "alms" today? Let the imagination go to work on what we have to share. It isn't limited to money, though money can be important. For many, time is the alms that is hardest to give, whether it is a parent giving that alms to a child generously and regularly, or a person tutoring in a literacy program, or a citizen writing elected officials on behalf of the needs of justice. Time and money are, then, two sorts of alms, but there are many others. Like fasting, almsgiving is a year-round habit, but being who we are, we need Lent to put ourselves into such a habit.

We have these two disciplines, fasting and almsgiving, and when they are present we have a place for Lent's prayer: Sunday Eucharist with the assembly, daily morning and night prayer, making intercession for the world's many needs, reflecting on the scriptures of Lent, learning psalms and Lenten songs, reciting the rosary, participating in the stations of the cross or other prayers of the tradition.

Fasting and almsgiving makes us more alive, more aware. We can hear the scriptures more clearly. We pay attention and we know what to pay attention to: inside us, at home, in the neighborhood and at work, in the newspapers. We are getting into the habit of knowing where our attention belongs – on Christ alone.

"Lent is possible only when it enters all the days and hours."

Youth Q&A

Does the Catholic Church tell us that we are going to hell?

God makes the final judgment, not any of us on earth. When we die we make the choice before God to repent and accept God and He then chooses whether we are worthy of purification in purgatory and eventually heaven. He bases his decision on the choices you made in life. He also lets us know in this passage that "With the judgment you pronounce you will be judged, and the measure you give will be the measure you get." You will be judged by the same criteria you judged others.

Judge not, that you be not judged. For with the judgment you pronounce you will be judged, and the measure you give will be the measure you get. Why do you see the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, "Let me take the speck out of your eye," when there is the log in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye.

Matthew 7:1-5

This is the passage in the Bible people usually point to when referring to judging others.

Are we to never pass judgment on others because our imperfections are too great to do so?

Jesus is saying here that if we are to be a good judge of people, we ourselves need to be good people so that our judgement will not be a foolish one.

Jesus knows that as humans we judge others. We judge whether someone looks suspicious or would make a good friend.

Whether my doctor has a good bedside manner or

my boss hates me. We judge others in this way to conserve energy. If we had to give everyone and everything a chance, we would expend a lot of wasted energy and may hurt ourselves in the process.

Does the church make the criteria for whether we get into heaven or not?

No, but it has made it easier for us to understand the criteria and has given us the tools we need to succeed so that we may end up in everlasting Glory with Our Lord Jesus Christ!

<https://www.catholic.com/magazine/print-edition/judge-not>

What do we do when our friends tell us that God is not real?

This Catholic Answers article on the following website has a very good argument on how to prove that God exists. I encourage you to read it. <https://www.catholic.com/magazine/print-edition/can-gods-existence-be-proved>

To summarize, it uses a proof we use in high school Geometry to prove the absurdity of not believing in God.

Throughout all of mankind's history, man has searched for God. Evidence of this can be found in the remains of the earliest conscious beings found on this earth.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC) states:

"In many ways, throughout history down to the present day, men have given expression to their quest for God in their religious beliefs and be-

havior: in their prayers, sacrifices, rituals, meditations, and so forth. These forms of religious expression, despite the ambiguities they often bring with them, are so universal that one may well call man a religious being" (ccc 28)

Only 11% of the U.S. believe that there is no God or believe in something else besides God. (1)

84% of the entire world has a faith and 2.2 billion are Christian. If it were absurd to believe in God, wouldn't the majority reflect that? (2)

If they need proof of God on this planet go to google and look up images of "the Fibonacci sequence in nature."

Take look at any of the images shown and ask "did nature create these methodical patterns on its own?"

When a friend tells you that god is not real, you have two choices. You can

agree to disagree or you can use that moment to help them understand that though they may not believe in God, God believes in them and loves them.

"The desire for God is written in the human heart, because man is created by God and for God; and God never ceases to draw man to himself. Only in God will he find the truth and happiness he never stops searching for" (CCC 27)



1 - <http://www.pewforum.org/religious-landscape-study/belief-in-god/>

2 - <https://www.washingtontimes.com/blog/watercooler/2012/dec/23/84-percent-world-population-has-faith-third-are-ch/>

CALENDAR

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St John Bosco YM

- March 4 Youth Group JR11:15-12:30 SR 6-8
- March 7 Confirmation Class 5:00-8:30
- March 10 Jr High Rally
- March 11 Youth Group JR11:15-12:30 SR 6-8
- March 14 Confirmation Class 5:00-8:30
- March 16 Youth Lead Stations of the Cross 7:00
- March 17 ST PATRICKS DAY
- March 18 Youth Group JR11:15-12:30 SR 6-8
- March 21 Confirmation Class 5:00-8:30
- March 24 Easter Baskets Due 6:00
- March 25 PALM SUNDAY
Youth Group JR11:15-12:30 SR 6-8
- March 28 Confirmation Class 5:00-8:30
- March 29 HOLY THURSDAY
- March 30 GOOD FRIDAY
- March 31 HOLY SATURDAY

Learn More!

So many great resources to learn more about your faith. Lots of them free.

Have questions? Catholic answers can help. Check out:

- Catholic.com

Check out crs.org to learn more about the rice bowl and what they do.

The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops has the website usscb.org, where you can find the Bible, the Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC), and lots more.

Bishop Robert Baron (Catholicism Series, Pivotal Players) has many resources on wordonfire.org.

Seattle Archdiocese has great resources to check out.

- seattlearchdiocese.org
- seattlevocations.com



Formed has great resources for all for free through the Parish's subscription. Head to formed.org and enter the parish code to create your own account to access movies, audio and E-books, and lots more.

Other sites to check out are:

- NewAdvent.org
- EWTN.org
- Loyolapress.org

Looking for some great videos YouTube has a lot. We have a couple playlists on our page:



www.youtube.com/channel/UCIrwWi5_BggTbs1DDBv5cMQ

www.youtube.com/channel/UCIrwWi5_BggTbs1DDBv5cMQ

Always on your phone? Lots of great apps out there too.

- Laudate
- 3 Minute Retreat
- CRS Rice Bowl

Looking for more check out the Parish Website:

www.stjbosco.org