



This newsletter is meant to give everyone at St. Luke ideas to live their faith more fully and joyfully. Each month will focus on ritual and the celebration of the Eucharist. In addition, each newsletter will include useful information about the Catholic faith, activities, models of faith, and ideas for prayer. Please take what is useful for you and your family.

Some saints to celebrate:

Feb 3 Blaise
Feb 5 Agatha
Feb 6 Paul Miki and Companions
Feb 8 Josephine Bakhita
Feb 10 Scholastica
Feb 14 Cyril and Methodius (this is superseded by our Sunday liturgy)
Feb 23 Polycarp

Feast days:

Feb 2 The Presentation of the Lord
Feb 22 Chair of St. Peter



Ritual of the month: Almsgiving

Ritual is a set of actions with meaningful and symbolic value. You can give to the poor. Creating an almsgiving ritual goes a step further and makes it full of intention and purpose.

What is almsgiving? Almsgiving is giving to those in need out of charity, or love, for the Lord. Almsgiving is more than philanthropy in that you are giving sacrificially – out of need and not out of abundance. In Tobit, we are told that almsgiving is better than prayer and fasting. When we give to those in need, we are lifting them up to the Lord in prayer and we are fasting by going without. To learn more about almsgiving, check out this link: <https://www.catholiceducation.org/en/religion-and-philosophy/spiritual-life/introduction-to-lent-almsgiving.html>

Assessment of almsgiving in your home: Take time before creating ritual to look at your almsgiving and ask:

1. Do you make caring for the poor a priority?
2. What does your almsgiving look like?
3. What is the purpose of your almsgiving?
4. How can you use ritual to deepen your commitment to the poor, and so to Christ?

“Prayer and fasting are good, but better than either is almsgiving accompanied by righteousness...It is better to give alms than to store up gold; for almsgiving saves one from death and expiates every sin. Those who regularly give alms shall enjoy a full life.” Tobit 12:8-9

Giving to those in Need

With this assessment, consider the ideas below, choosing one or two and bringing them into your time with the Lord. Remember that the idea is to create meaning and purpose, allowing you to savor the experience. It does not take a lot to do this. Simplicity is important.

“God loves a cheerful giver.”

2 Corinthians 9:7

Here are some ideas for creating an almsgiving ritual:

- Investigate the website created by Pope Francis www.missio.org which shows a variety of charities and how much money they need for a particular project. It is similar to a crowdfunding system.
- Commit to tithing. This is giving 10% of your income to those in need. Traditionally, it is 5% to your home Church and 5% to other charities.
- Support St. Vincent de Paul Society at St. Luke. At St. Luke, we have a vibrant, giving community in our St. Vincent de Paul Society. They collect food for needy families, give rent and utility assistance, and provide cash for short-term emergencies that arise. They can also help get additional help within the Archdiocese. You can help by donating non-perishable foods in the bin at the back of church, donating money in the monthly envelopes, or volunteering your time. To volunteer is a commitment that takes some work, but is important, rewarding, and open to adults who are willing to commit at least a year of service and do the training. Please contact Leigh Goodrich for more information at goodrichleigh@gmail.com
- Place a donation jar in a prominent place in your home so that giving is always present in your hearts, minds, and bodies. During Lent, this can be the Rice Bowl for CRS, but you can continue this throughout the year.
- Commit to volunteering your time in a consistent manner, either throughout the year or during a set time during the year. For example, once a month you could work at a Soup Kitchen or once a year you can volunteer a more intense amount of your time to a charity.
- Consider where your purchases come from. Do the companies have good labor practices? Are they considered ethical companies? Do they take care of the environment? While shopping like this 100% of the time is not truly possible, becoming more aware of how workers are treated and tailoring your purchases accordingly can work to alleviate inequality. In this way, you are caring for the poor and vulnerable. Check out this website: <https://www.fairtradecertified.org/products/shopping-guides>

“But when you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your almsgiving may be secret. And our Father who sees in secret will repay you.”

Matthew 6:2-3

Short Story recommendation:

“The Happy Prince” by Oscar Wilde. This story follows a beautiful statue adorned with jewels and a swallow who helps give the jewels to the poor of the city. For all ages.

<http://www.eastoftheweb.com/short-stories/UBooks/HapPri.shtml>

Septuagesima (Pre-Lenten preparation)

January 31-February 16

Septuagesima is the 9th Sunday before Easter and the 3rd Sunday before Ash Wednesday. Before the 1969 Calendar Reform, this Sunday marked a pre-Lenten preparation of 17 days. This was a time of personal and liturgical preparation. In Latin, Septuagesima means 70th. The next Sunday is called Sexagesima (60th), and the next Quinquagesima (50th). While these numbers are not exact, their names come from the fact that the first Sunday in Lent is called Quadragesima (40th), being the 40th day before Easter, and so the previous three Sundays are 50th, 60th, and 70th. Lent begins on Ash Wednesday because Sundays are not days of fasting, and 40 days of fasting reflects the 40 days Jesus spent in the desert.

This is a good time to prepare for your Lenten commitments to fasting, praying, and almsgiving. What are you going to do this Lent? What makes sense, given COVID has been weighing heavily on us for a year? How can you express your love for God, while also expressing penitence for sins?

To read more about this pre-Lenten period, go to the link:

<https://www.catholicculture.org/commentary/what-is-septuagesima/>

Activity:

Gather as a family and brainstorm individual and group Lenten promises to prepare the way of the Lord. Take some time in the next 2-3 weeks to pray and discern what would be good for you to do as well as what you could remove from your life to focus more on the Lord. Questions for the discernment process:

What is keeping you from the Lord?

Is there a vice in your daily living that you can work on removing?

What prayer can you add to your prayer life?

How can you simplify your life to make room for the Lord?

Display your promises

Once you have decided on your Lenten promises, both individually and as a family, write them down and prominently display them. Touch base with one another at mealtime to encourage and motivate one another to be faithful to these commitments.



Ideas for sacrifices as a family:

Give up technology one day a week

Give up video games, television, or eating out

Give up electric lights one day a week and use candles

Give up meat on an additional day (Fridays are meatless)

Give up complaining, gossip, sarcasm, vengeance

Ideas for actions as a family:

Attend Stations of the Cross

Attend Adoration

Listen to inspirational music

Write letters to friends and family

Cook a meal for a sick friend

Candlemas, or The Feast of The Presentation of the Lord

February 2

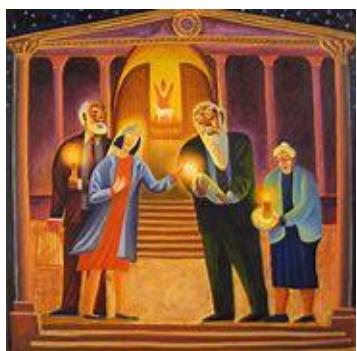
40 days after Christmas, the Feast of the Presentation of the Lord is celebrated on February 2. According to Jewish law, a woman who gave birth to a son was ritually unclean for 40 days and then went to the temple to be purified, also bringing her first-born son for presentation. If the child was a daughter, 80 days were required before purification. This feast was originally the Feast of the Purification of Mary.

When Mary and Joseph brought Jesus to the Temple, they were met by Simeon who declared Jesus, "a light to the revelation of the Gentiles." It became custom for a priest to bless candles and light them for a procession in a darkened church while singing the canticle of Simeon to celebrate the Light from Light. This day was the liturgical end of the Christmas season until the 1969 Calendar reform, and many people did not take down their Christmas decorations until February 2.

The tradition in the U.S. of watching for the prediction of the groundhog comes from Candlemas. Here is an English proverb:

*If Candlemas be fair and bright,
Winter has another flight.*

*If Candlemas brings clouds and rain,
Winter will not come again.*



Blessing of Candles

Fr. Brad will bless candles and they will be available in the Church, one per family. With this candle, celebrate the Light of the World with a procession around your house (inside or outside) on February 2, while reading the canticle of Simeon (also known as Nunc dimittis) in Luke 2:29-32.

Activity suggestion: Edible candles

Make a treat for Candlemas by making candles that the kids will love to eat.

Supplies:

Piroquette cookies

Mini-donuts

Mini-marshmallows

Orange decorative sugar

Directions:

Cut the mini marshmallow in half diagonally. Dip the freshly cut side into the orange sugar. Place the marshmallow in one end of the piroquette. Place the piroquette into the hole of the donut.

<https://catholiccuisine.blogspot.com/2010/01/light-dessert-for-feast-of-light.html>

Valentine's Day

February 14

During the rule of the Emperor Claudius II, marriage was forbidden as the emperor thought married men made bad soldiers. St. Valentine secretly married young couples and for this he was arrested and ultimately beheaded.

We celebrate love on this day, but what is love? Love is a decision that goes beyond initial feelings of excitement and infatuation. We are called to love our enemies, treating them as children of God, with dignity and respect. Love is one of the three theological virtues, along with faith and hope. Check out Kai and Libby as they explain the virtues: <https://www.catholiccentral.com/catholic-central-episodes/virtues>

How are we called to love? Jesus calls us to serve others and specifically gives us the Corporal Works of Mercy as guidance to do this. We are called to feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, give shelter to the homeless, give clothes to the naked, visit the sick and the imprisoned, and bury the dead. These acts of service, when done without thought of our own reward, shine with the love of the Lord.

Activity: make Valentine cards and send them to people you love but also to those sick, suffering, lonely, and in need of love. During our isolation of COVID-19, this includes so many of us.

Ideas: print a picture of the family and send with a note, draw or paint cards, cut out hearts and write a note on them.

Catholic Cooking

"Heart Healthy" Baked Berry Oatmeal

Ingredients

- 6 prunes, chopped (optional)
- 4 c. oats (not quick cooking)
- 1 tsp baking powder
- ½ tsp salt
- 1 tsp cinnamon
- 3 ½ c. milk (almond milk works well)
- ¼ c. honey or maple syrup
- 4 Tbsp melted butter
- 2 eggs (see note)
- 2 tsp vanilla extract
- 1 ½ c. blueberries, fresh or frozen

Directions

Butter 3-quart baking dish and sprinkle 6 chopped prunes over bottom (optional). In a large bowl, combine oats, baking powder, salt, and cinnamon. Melt the butter with the honey (to make the honey more viscous). Whisk milk, eggs, vanilla, and then the butter and honey or maple syrup. Make sure to mix warm ingredients slowly while stirring quickly into milk and eggs so that the heat doesn't cook the eggs. Mix wet and dry ingredients and pour into baking dish. Bake at 350 degrees for 35 minutes.

Egg substitute: 4Tbsp chia seeds mixed with 1 cup cold water, resting for 5 minutes.



Mardi Gras, or Fat Tuesday

February 16

The Tuesday before Ash Wednesday is known as Mardi Gras, meaning Fat Tuesday in French, because it is the last day to use all the luxury foods in your cupboard, like butter, sugar, and cream before the fasting of Lent. This day is also known as "Pancake Tuesday," so this is a great day to make pancakes for breakfast, lunch, or dinner! Make this day one of celebration, emphasizing the last day before the more penitential and somber days of Lent.

Activity: Paint wooden letters spelling, "Alleluia" and cover them with glitter. Put them out on your prayer table the week before Ash Wednesday and sing out Alleluia each day. When Lent begins, pack these letters away to physically represent the removal of the joyful word from our Mass. Bring them out again for the Easter Season.



Did you know?

The term "Carnival" for the celebration in the weeks before Lent comes from the Latin "carne levarium" or the removal of meat.

The Year of the Eucharist

June 14, 2020-June 6, 2021

Jesus gave everything to us – His body, blood, soul, and divinity and we receive Him in the Eucharist. This precious gift He gave to us shows the love the Lord has for us. This charity in the Real Presence of the Eucharist helps us to connect to the Lord and guides us to be like Him. As God gives to us, so we give to Him when we give to our neighbors in need. When someone is in need, we are called by God to give to that person. And God's gift of the Eucharist gives us the strength to do that. The Corporal Works of Mercy are how we can show our love for God and for others. Check out this link for a more in-depth look at these works of love: <https://www.catholiccentral.com/catholic-central-episodes/corporalworks>



Prayer of Generosity – St. Ignatius

Lord Jesus, teach me to be generous.
Teach me to serve you as you deserve,
To give and not count the cost,
To fight and not to heed the wounds,
To toil and not to seek for rest,
To labor and not to seek reward,
Except that of knowing that I do your will.
Amen.

Anti-racism

February is Black History Month in the United States. Why do we have a month dedicated to Black history? Because this part of our history has been sorely neglected, contributing to the sin of racism. By highlighting this large part of our history, both in the country and our Church, we can learn how to apply this knowledge beyond February. Here are two places to read more about Black History in America as well as in the Catholic Church:

<https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/history-black-catholics-in-america-180969271/>

<https://uscatholic.org/articles/200807/timeline-of-black-catholic-history/>



Movie recommendation: “Harriett.” This movie recounts the courageous journeys of Harriet Tubman, bringing many slaves North to freedom. Faith is a central theme. Ages 12+

Models of Faith

The Holy Family – February is dedicated to the holy family of Mary, Joseph, and Jesus. The Bible does not tell us much about how they lived as a family, but we see glimpses of who they were together, giving us an example to live by. Mary was obedient to God (her “yes” to being the mother of God), reflected on things in her heart, and acted on her authority as a parent (the wedding at Cana). Joseph was also obedient (marrying Mary, going to Egypt), caring (searching for Jesus), and the provider of the family. Jesus was obedient to his parents (the wedding at Cana), and dutiful to their wishes. Both Mary and Joseph were selfless in their acceptance of the roles that God gave them. They said yes to their vocation, thereby dying to themselves and living for the Lord. This is an example of the love we are asked to have for each other. Love within the family gives us a strong foundation to love our neighbors as well as our enemies. The holy family’s individual virtues came together to strengthen their human relationships while also bringing them closer to God. We are also called to bring our virtues into the family relationships, being models for each other and supporting each other when we stumble.

St. Josephine Bakhita – Born in Darfur, Sudan, in 1869, she was kidnapped around age 7 and sold into slavery. The trauma made her unable to remember her given name so, mockingly, her captors named her Bakhita, which means “fortunate.” While a slave she suffered beatings and abuse. One owner cut her 114 times and poured salt into the wounds so that the scars would remain. She converted when exposed to the Catholic faith by an owner and chose the name Josephine Margaret. When her owners tried to force her to leave Italy and return to Africa, she appealed to the courts. The Italian courts declared her free to stay in Italy and a free person, since slavery had ended. She joined the Canossian Sisters and was a religious in the community for 45 years until her death in 1947. She is the patron saint of human trafficking survivors and the Sudan.

Music

Starting Ash Wednesday, we will not be saying or singing “Alleluia” in Church. Take the first part of February to get out your “Alleluias.” Here is a nice version:

<https://www.bing.com/videos/search?q=alleluia+sing+to+jesus&view=detail&mid=13CBF18E039BFE0A72A113CBF18E039BFE0A72A1&FORM=VDRV>

Spend time looking around the internet for a version you like.

Since February is Black History month, take time to listen to Black Gospel music, whose origins are in 17th century America. Look especially for the music of Mahalia Jackson (1911-1972), “The Queen of Gospel.”

Mortification

Part 2

Mortis is Latin for death. We are called to move away from our own desires and allow Christ to move in us. So, fasting helps us to remove harmful attachments so that we can draw closer to God. Even medically, fasting has benefits, allowing healing.

This month think about how almsgiving can fit into mortification. How can we give to others so that we are less and they are more (or as John the Baptist said of Christ, "He must increase. I must decrease." John 3:30) We are offering up ourselves to God by serving those in need. Here are some ideas for mortification with an eye toward almsgiving:

Here are some ideas for mortification:

- Adults: Assess your budget and see where in it you can spare money to give to others. Find a new charity and begin giving to them along with your current commitments. Choose to cut down on what you consume so that you may give more to others who go without.
- Children: set aside 10-25% of your allowance to give to those in need. Research a charity that you can commit to. Start thinking about your Lenten resolutions and how those promises can help others.

Lent

February 17-April 1

Ash Wednesday this year is on February 17. The forty days of Lent (not including Sundays) are a time of penitence and preparation. We are considering our sins and doing penance for them as well as preparing our hearts for the death and resurrection of Jesus the Christ. The Church recommends a three-pronged approach to this of prayer, fasting, and almsgiving.

Both Ash Wednesday and Good Friday are required days of fasting and abstinence. All Fridays of Lent are required days of abstinence.



Fasting

Ages 18-59

Ash Wednesday & Good Friday

You can only eat one full meal and two other meals that do not equal a full meal together.

Abstinence

Ages 14+

All Fridays of Lent

You cannot eat flesh meat. This does not include broth, eggs, or butter.

Virtue of the Month

Cheerfulness

Cheerfulness is not a feeling but a decision, an act of will, on how to view the world. Webster's Dictionary defines it as a lightness of mind and feeling. Cheerfulness means choosing to act in a cheerful way despite how we feel because it is the right thing to do. This does not mean to pretend that everything is okay. Rather, it is an intentional adjustment to how we react to situations around us. It is easy to be happy when we get what we want, don't experience difficulty, and everyone likes us. It is difficult, but especially important, to be cheerful when we have had a bad day, but we still need to give of ourselves to those around us. Practicing the habit of cheerfulness gives us the strength to meet the challenges of life with grace and love, and without dragging down those around us with our self-centeredness. For more on cheerfulness, check out this link: <https://catholicexchange.com/charity-cheerfulness>

Here are some obstacles to cheerfulness.

- Belief in a right to happiness
- Expectation of instant gratification
- Little contradictions (the world is not cooperating)
- Mental block (you struggle with what is happening)
- Real suffering
- COVID-19 (see this mental health article: <http://www.stlukecp.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/Our-COVID-19-State-of-Mind-by-Sue-Moreland.pdf>)

“Cheerfulness prepares a glorious mind for all the noblest acts.”

St. Elizabeth Ann Seton

Movie recommendation: “Annie”

Discuss the benefits of a positive attitude and how Annie shows this virtue. Ages 6+

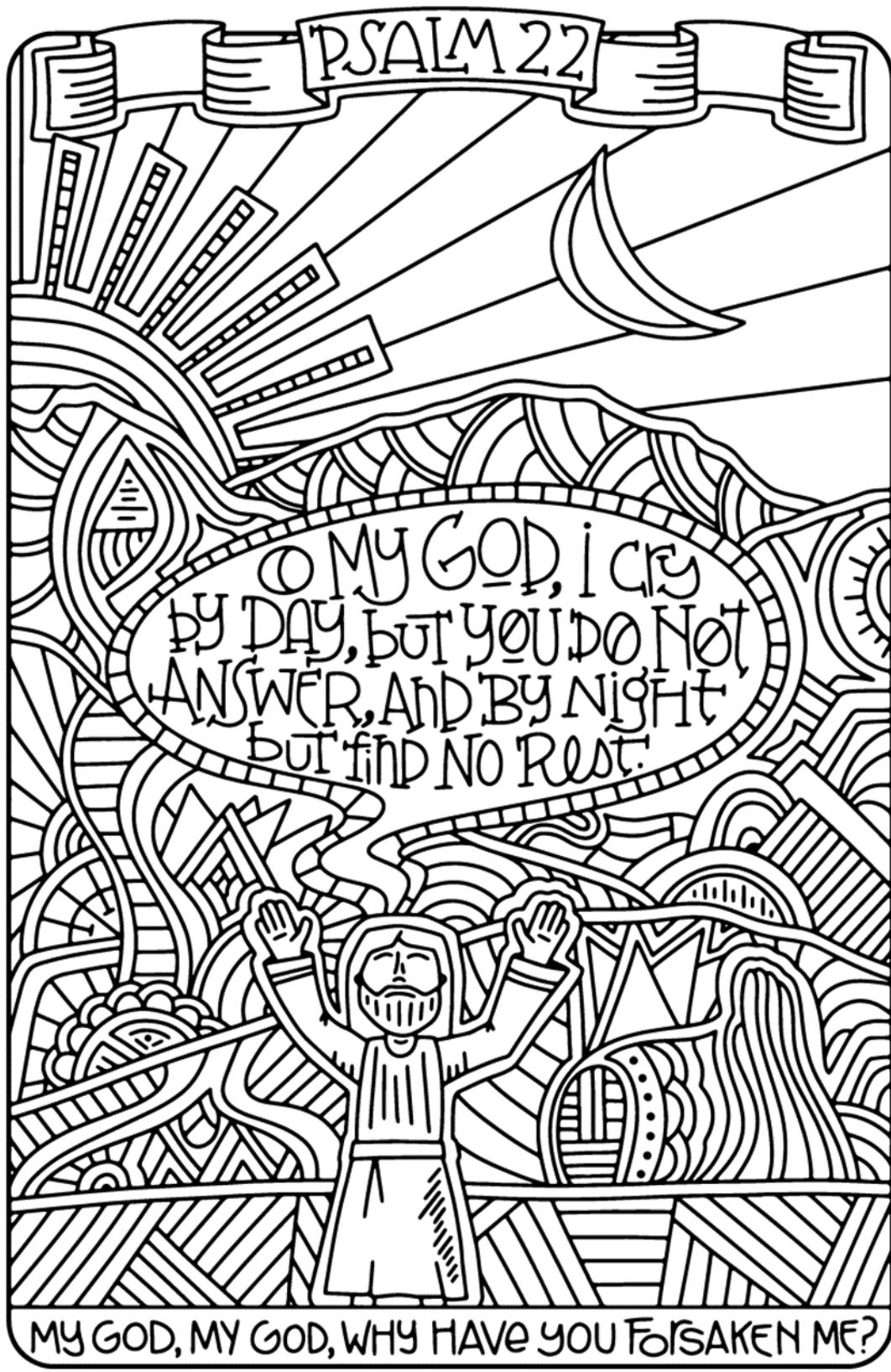
Here are some projects for both kids and adults to practice and think about the virtue of cheerfulness:

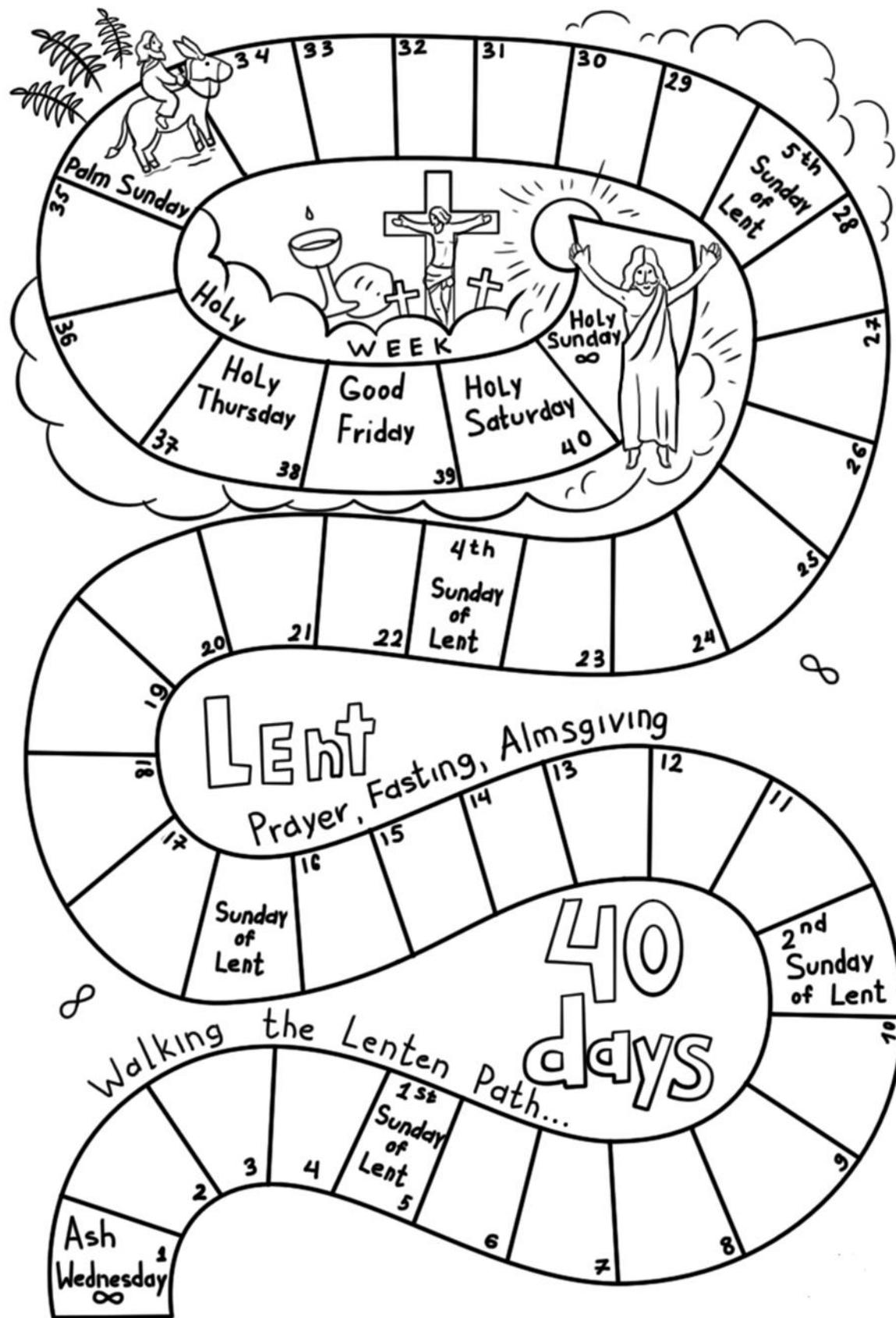
- List appropriate ways to make people smile.
- Choose a day of the week that will be a “no complaining day” in your house, at school, and at work. Discuss afterwards whether the family is happier on these days.
- Discuss “glass half-empty/half full” mentalities. What are the benefits of seeing the full half?
- Give to others whole-heartedly.
- Discuss your family’s recreational activities. Are they truly re-creative, refreshing, and restorative? Or are they draining, causing extra stress and busyness?

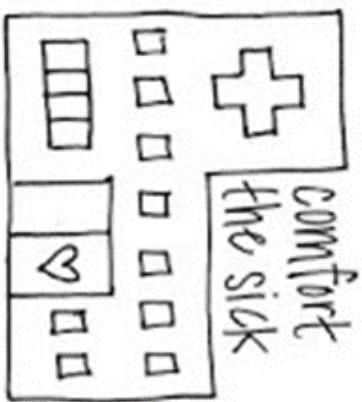
Prayer – A Lament

The Psalms have many laments where the psalmist is crying out to the Lord in suffering, grief, and sorrow. Laments are a helpful way to express, often demonstrably and out loud, feelings of sadness, helplessness, grief, and even anger. When we express these feelings of lamentation to the Lord, we are asking him to come and help us. It is important to be honest with the Lord about our feelings, and it helps us to process these feelings and eventually give them up to the Lord. This frees us from the burden of our suffering and can allow us to praise the Lord and express the virtue of cheerfulness. Lent and COVID give us a doubly good time to express lamentations to the Lord. On the cross, Jesus cried out to the Lord with Psalm 22, “My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?” Trust the Lord to take your time of pain and transform it into goodness.

Lectio Divina suggestion: Psalm 22







The Corporal Works of Mercy

Name _____

