

THIS IS HOME | A FAMILY RESOURCE FOR LENT



Week 1:
ASH WEDNESDAY

ARCHDIOCESE *of* MILWAUKEE

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SIMPLE SCRIPTURE FROM SUNDAY

MATTHEW 6:5-6

“When you pray,
do not be like the hypocrites,
who love to stand and pray in the synagogues and on street corners
so that others may see them.
Amen, I say to you,
they have received their reward.
But when you pray, go to your inner room,
close the door, and pray to your Father in secret.
And your Father who sees in secret will repay you.”

BREAK OPEN THE SCRIPTURE

After asking each question, allow your family members time to really think about the question, giving them enough time to form an answer. Take your time giving each member who would like to share a chance to do so. Parents/Guardians, be prepared to give an answer if no one is speaking up, but allow the children a chance to answer first when possible. This will help your youngest minds to come up with their own thoughts!

1. What part of this Gospel reading stood out to you? Was there a word or a phrase that is still stuck in your mind?
2. When are times in your day when you already say prayers? Are they mostly out loud, together with family, or by yourself?
3. Why do you think it is so important to make sure we are praying even by ourselves in private?



SERVING THE LORD AS A FAMILY

BEGIN TO BUILD A SACRED SPACE IN YOUR HOME

Over the course of Lent, you will be building up a sacred space in your home. This can be a corner in the living room, a shelf that can be cleared, the top of a dresser, etc. Find a space in your home that is accessible to the entire family, and clear it completely. Each week you will add to this area, creating a space that your family will associate with prayer and each other.

Set up a “Sacrifice Jar” that will be used throughout the entire Season of Lent and Easter.

Find a mason jar or large, thick glass that your family may put on display somewhere safe, but reachable for those children who are able to handle touching the jar without breaking it. Purchase a bag of dry, black beans, and make them accessible near the jar. You may label or decorate the jar if you would like, but keep it mostly clear in order to see it fill up over Lent.

*The black beans may be substituted for anything you have around the house that are not especially colorful and can slowly fill a jar: marbles, pom pom or cotton balls, small rocks, etc.

Point out the empty jar to your children, and ask them what they see. “It’s empty! Nothing! Just glass!” Praise them for those appropriate responses. “Yes! There is absolutely NOTHING in this EMPTY jar right now, but that is about to change...” Show the children the beans in the bag/bowl next to the jar, and explain that they will have chances this Lenten Season to fill up the empty jar with these black beans as they are caught making sacrifices for those around them, especially their family members.

Ask your children if they know what it means to make a sacrifice. Allow them chances to give examples and answer in whatever way they know how, making sure their voices are heard. If they seem stumped, be prepared with examples that you have already seen in their lives that very day or week. “Isabel, I noticed that you made a sacrifice for your brother, Miguel, when you gave up your toy for him when he was sad. Why don’t you put a bean in the jar?” Or, “Max, I noticed that you made a sacrifice when you stopped what you were doing and went to help Dad carry in groceries. Why don’t you put a bean in the jar?” Allow each person in the family to place a bean in the jar for something specific, and tell the children that you will be watching them for more opportunities. Yes, a sacrifice is when you give up something of yours (your time, a toy, your anger, your turn) completely for someone else without expecting anything in return.

Let them know that there are only a few rules to follow.

1. You may not ask to put a bean in the jar after making a sacrifice. Just like the Gospel says, it is very powerful to be doing these good deeds and prayers quietly, because we are not doing them just to fill the jar. We want to show Jesus and our family and friends how much we love them!
2. You (the children) may notice your siblings or parents making sacrifices, as well. Just tell me if you see a sibling or parent/guardian make a sacrifice, and if it makes sense, they will get to put a bean in the jar, thanks to your noticing their sacrifice.

Challenge them, throughout Lent, a Season ALL about Jesus' great sacrifice for us, to try and make as many sacrifices for those around us, just as He did. Promise them that Jesus will do something amazing with all of these sacrifices on Easter Sunday.

***Before you celebrate Easter, replace all of the black beans with something more colorful and edible (Jellybeans, etc.) to show that their sacrifices have been turned into joy and celebrated by Jesus!



LET US PRAY

Jesus, we thank You for Your great sacrifice, and we ask the Holy Spirit to help us learn how to make more sacrifices this Season of Lent. We love You. Amen.