

THE JOURNEY FROM ***Ash Wednesday to Easter***

Activities Your Family Can Do Together



UNBOUND



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Unbound is pleased to share simple, easy-to-do family activities for Lent. They're designed to help your family pray and learn together on your Lenten journey, and to put your faith into action in your home and community.

Unbound has been working with people overcoming poverty in Africa, Asia and Latin America since 1981. We were founded by Catholic lay people from the U.S. who wanted to create an effective and trustworthy way for caring people to make a difference in the lives of others. We now help more than 300,000 children, families and elders meet their needs for school, food, shelter and more.

Wishing you a blessed Lent and a joyful Easter,
Your friends at Unbound

Note: Links to the various Scripture readings are from the New American Bible. For families with younger children, we also provide links to the International Children's Bible.



FIRST SUNDAY OF LENT

Jesus helps us make good choices

SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT:

We all face choices, but families living in poverty often have to choose between things like feeding their children, buying medicine, or sending a child to school or having them go to work. Unbound works with families to help them lift themselves up, so that their choices can be about the future and not just surviving the day.

WEEK OF FEBRUARY 21

Read the Gospel for today (Mark 1:12-15).
(Children's Bible translation.)

REFLECTION:

Every day we have to make choices. Some are easy and some are hard. Sometimes we want to do things we know are wrong. The Gospel tells us that even Jesus was tempted to make bad choices, but he never did. He always did the right thing, even when it was hard.

PRAYER:

Jesus, help us to make good choices like you did. Remind us to pray when we need help, and to ask for support from the people who love us and take care of us, like our parents and teachers. Amen.

ACTIVITY:

In the desert, Jesus went without some things that make people comfortable. He did it to get ready for the important and hard work he was about to begin. What is one thing that makes your life a little more comfortable, a little easier, that you could give up during the 40 days of Lent? It could be a special treat or a video game, or maybe a little of your spending money that could go to a good cause.

Go around and have each family member share one simple thing that they're willing to give up for Lent. Or maybe you could decide on something together as a family.



SECOND SUNDAY OF LENT

Listening to Jesus leads to happiness

SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT:

Many Unbound sponsors help elderly people who live in poverty. These elders have had difficult lives and their sponsors want to help make their later years more comfortable and less lonely. Besides helping out with things like food, medicine and social activities, sponsors exchange letters with their sponsored friends and support them in prayer.

WEEK OF FEBRUARY 28

Read the Gospel for today (Mark 9:2-10).
(Children's Bible translation.)

REFLECTION:

When Jesus took his friends up on the mountain, something amazing happened. His friends saw him for the first time as the Son of God, standing side by side with some of the greatest heroes of the Bible. And they finally understood how important he was for them and for the world.

PRAYER:

Jesus, help us remember how important you are for each of us and for our family. Help us to rely on you when we need help and to pray to you every day. Help us to never forget that listening to what you said and following your example leads to happiness. Amen.

ACTIVITY:

After the amazing event on the mountaintop, Jesus' friends wanted to stay there. But Jesus knew that there was still important work to do healing people who were sick and teaching everyone about God's love for them, so he took his friends back down the mountain.

We, too, have important work to do helping other people the way Jesus did. What is something you can do as a family to help people in your community? Maybe you could make a donation to a local food bank or homeless shelter.

Discuss together as a family something you can do together to help others and make a plan to do it.



THIRD SUNDAY OF LENT

God's love is for everyone

SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT:

Unbound sponsors keep in touch with their sponsored friends through letters. Many people choose our eLetter option that lets you send a message of encouragement and support right from your computer. During the pandemic, when many families in our program are restricted to their homes, they appreciate these more than ever.

WEEK OF MARCH 7

Read the Gospel for today (John 2:13-25).

(Children's Bible translation.)

REFLECTION:

We aren't used to seeing Jesus get upset, but when he saw people buying and selling things in the Temple, he became angry. He didn't like God's house being treated like a store and he didn't like that the poor were kept out because they had no money. He wanted God's house to be for all people.

PRAYER:

Jesus, you taught us that God loves everyone and that nothing should get in the way of knowing God. Help us to follow your example of loving and helping others, so that they will see your love in us and be reminded of how much you love them. Amen.

ACTIVITY:

Jesus never let anything get in the way of showing God's love for others. He wanted all people to be able to come to God's house and hear the Good News about God's love and forgiveness.

Some people have a hard time getting to church, and many can't go these days because of COVID-19. Is there someone you know who you could reach out to, cheer up and maybe pray with? Until it's safe to visit in person again, you can call them or visit with them using a smart phone or computer. Or do it the old-fashioned way and write a letter or make a card!

Together as a family, think of someone whose life you can brighten and make a plan to do it.



FOURTH SUNDAY OF LENT

Jesus shows us God's love

SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT:

Young people who are sponsored in the Unbound program also have chores to do, and often they do them before sunrise or after sunset. Why? It's because, for many, most of their day is spent traveling long distances to and from school. Some walk across rivers and forests and some take overcrowded buses. But they all have one thing in common. They all know that education is the key to a brighter future.

WEEK OF MARCH 14

Read the Gospel for today (John 3:14-21).

(Children's Bible translation.)

REFLECTION:

Today's Gospel has one of the most famous lines in the Bible: "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him might not perish but might have eternal life." It means that Jesus, the Son of God, came to show us how to live and how to get to heaven. It's the most important thing we can ever learn.

PRAYER:

Jesus, we know that you became one of us to teach us how to live a good life, to show us the importance of loving and helping others, and to ultimately give your life for us. As we continue our Lenten journey, help us to better understand your sacrifice and what it means for us. Amen.

ACTIVITY:

Jesus used the images of light and darkness to describe the difference between making good choices and making bad ones. When our bad choices lead to sin, in a way we have less light in our lives, and that isn't what God wants for us.

Now, when families are spending more time together at home, is a good time to pay more attention to the little moments of "light" we can offer around the house — things like putting toys away, offering to help with household chores and making an extra effort not to bicker with siblings. These are the kinds of things that, bit by bit, can make a home happier and more loving.



FIFTH SUNDAY OF LENT

We follow Jesus

SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT:

Many Unbound families make their living by growing crops, and most live in places where weather and other conditions make it difficult. But they keep going through hard work and a courageous spirit.

WEEK OF MARCH 21

Read the Gospel for today (John 12:20-33).
(Children's Bible translation.)

REFLECTION:

Here Jesus talks about his own suffering and death, which he knows is coming soon. He doesn't want to die, but he's willing to do it out of love for us. He knows that because of his death, we can have eternal life.


PRAYER:

Jesus, we don't fully understand why you had to suffer and die, but we believe in you and in your love for us. Just as you died for us, help us to live for you and follow your example of love and service. We ask this in your holy name. Amen.

ACTIVITY:

To help his friends understand why he needed to die on the Cross, Jesus used the image of a seed being planted in the ground. He said that it is only when a seed "dies" in this way that a new plant can grow.

Together as a family, plant some seeds in your yard. Let different family members take turns watering and caring for them. Get some pictures of the planting activity and the plants as they grow. Talk together about what it's like to bring about new life in this way.



PALM SUNDAY

Jesus showed his love for us

SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT:

When you support a child, youth or elder through Unbound, you help that person be able to speak for themselves and make choices that they may never have been able to make before.

WEEK OF MARCH 28

Note: The Passion Reading for Palm Sunday is very long, so you might want to read only the Procession reading (Mark 11:1-10). (Children's Bible translation.)

REFLECTION:

When Jesus came to the city of Jerusalem, people treated him like a hero, waving palm branches and cheering. Just a few days later, many of those same people would turn against him and cry out for his death. They followed the crowd because they were afraid, instead of standing up for what they knew was right.

PRAYER:

Jesus, every time we fail to stand up for those who are treated unfairly, we are like the crowd in Jerusalem that turned their backs on you. Help us to have the courage to stand up for others and to always speak the truth. We ask this in your holy name. Amen.

ACTIVITY:

Jesus said that whatever we do for another person, we do for him. Who, in your community, needs someone to speak up for them or show support in other ways? Could it be a family who came to the U.S. from another country? Someone of a different religion? Someone who doesn't speak English?

Check out social service and faith-based agencies in your community and discuss as a family how you might be of support to one family or individual who could use your help.



EASTER SUNDAY

Jesus lives for us

SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT:

There are many ways you can continue to bring life and joy to others. One is to sponsor a child, youth or elder in need through Unbound. You'll get to know the person you're helping through letters and photos, and you can write to them to let them know you care about them. Learn more about how you and your family can join our worldwide community of compassion at unbound.org.

WEEK OF APRIL 4

Read the Gospel for today (John 20:1-9).
(Children's Bible translation.)

REFLECTION:

On Easter morning, the news slowly began to spread that Jesus' body was no longer in the tomb. His friends didn't know what to think, so they went to see for themselves. When they entered the tomb and saw that Jesus wasn't there, they remembered how he'd told them he would rise from the dead and they believed.

PRAYER:

Jesus, even before they saw you after your resurrection, your closest friends believed. We, too, have faith in you because you have been a friend to us. Be with us every day and show us how to live for you as you live for us. We ask this in your holy name. Amen.

ACTIVITY:

Your Lenten family journey started more than 40 days ago. What have you learned about Jesus during that time? What have you learned about yourself and about your family? And what can you do to help keep the spirit of Easter — the spirit of new life — alive in your hearts? Discuss these questions as a family.

Thank you for walking with us on the path to Easter

We're grateful that you joined us on this Lenten journey. We hope it was a positive experience for you and your family. Check back with us from time to time for other resources designed to help individuals and families learn more about Catholic social teaching and God's deep love for the poor and marginalized.



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