



### **Purpose**

This youth ministry night focuses on preparing the youth individually and as a community for Lent with a special emphasis in participating in the diocesan initiative "40 Days of Grace." This initiative encourages youth and youth ministries to engage in intentional acts of prayer, fasting, alms giving, and service during Lent. This session is appropriate for groups from 15 to 150.

### **Goal**

To inspire youth individually and collectively to be a witness of Christ's unconditional love during Lent and every day.

### **Objectives**

- To know why we engage in practices such as prayer, fasting, alms giving, and service during Lent
- To desire a change of heart by engaging in Lenten practices
- To commit to specific practices during Lent to prepare for Easter

### **Catechism Connection**

1434-1439

### **Scripture Foundation**

Joel 2: 12-15

### **Session Overview**

5:45 p.m.	Pre-Gathering Hospitality
6:00 p.m.	Welcome and Introduction
6:05 p.m.	Opening Prayer
6:10 p.m.	Rock, Paper, Scissors Tournament
6:20 p.m.	Give What You've Got Game
6:30 p.m.	Smart Phone Search (alternative: Lenten Fact Race)
6:50 p.m.	Presentation: Forty Days of Grace: Lent Changes You
7:00 p.m.	Ash Wednesday Video
7:05 p.m.	My Forty Days of Grace Calendar
7:20 p.m.	Our Lenten Commitment
7:45 p.m.	Closing Comments
7:50 p.m.	Prayer
8:00 p.m.	Good Night

## Materials Needed

### Pre-Gathering Hospitality

- Name tags
- Markers
- Sign-in sheets
- Pens
- Music

### Rock, Paper, Scissors Tournament

- Candy for winning group
- Optional: Make a poster of **Resource 1: Rock, Paper, Scissors**

### Give What You've Got Game

- Set of 10 stickers for each person
- Garbage bag for clean up
- Music and sound

### Smart Phone Search

- Candy

### Lenten Fact Race (OPTIONAL)

One Copy of **Resource 2: Lenten Fact Race** per group

One Copy of "Seven Themes of Catholic Social Teaching" per group, found at <http://www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/what-we-believe/catholic-social-teaching/seven-themes-of-catholic-social-teaching.cfm>

Depending on size of group:

- 3-8 Dictionaries
- 3-8 Catholic Bibles
- 3-8 Copies of "Questions and Answers about Lent and Lenten Practices," found at <http://www.usccb.org/prayer-and-worship/liturgical-resources/Lent/questions-and-answers-about-Lent.cfm>
- 3-8 Copies of "Journey to the Foot of the Cross: Ten Things to Remember for Lent," found at <http://www.usccb.org/news/2012/12-032.cfm>

### Ash Wednesday Video

- TV or LCD projector
- Speakers for sound
- Computer
- Link to video, found at <http://palsundayfilm.com> for live streaming or can be purchased at the same website for download.

### *My Forty Days of Grace Calendar*

- One Copy of **Resource 4: Forty Days of Grace Calendar** per person
- Pens

### *Group Project*

1-2 Copies of **Resource 5: Planning a Food Drive** and **Resource 6: Planning Other Form of Service**

Optional: Flipchart paper for brainstorming

### *Closing Prayer*

1 Copy of "Prayer of Transformation" for each person. Found at

<http://crs.org/prayers/downloads/prayer-of-transformation.pdf>

13 Copies of "Prayer of Transformation" with the stanza highlighted for each reader

Large candle

Bible

Ash or dirt

¼ cup of salt in a bowl

13 taper candles

Rock

Cross

Clay or mud

Small loaf of bread or large roll

Water in a clear bowl

Matches

## Prepare in Advance

1. **Review through this entire session with your adult/peer ministry team including practicing games, doing all activities, and watching the video.**
2. Invite an adult or youth leader to MC the night. Be sure he/she is familiar with the schedule and the timing needs.
3. Invite an adult leader or teen peer minister to give the “Forty Days of Grace” presentation. It is highly recommended that you review the presentation with him/her beforehand.
4. Set-up TV or LCD projector, computer, and video for *Palm Sunday Video*. Make sure sound is appropriate for the size of room.
5. Assign adults or peer ministers to lead games and activities.
6. Make copies of questions for *Lenten Fact Race*, if necessary.
7. Make a poster that illustrates who beats who in Rock, Paper, Scissors (see **Resource 1, Rock, Paper, Scissors**).
8. Prepare sheets of ten stickers per person.
9. Create a prayer table. Place the items for prayer near it.
10. Find Joel 2: 12-15 in a bible and mark it.
11. Invite 14 young people to be readers for the closing prayer service. One will read Joel 2: 12-15. Assign the rest of the group a stanza (1-2 lines) from the *Prayer for Transformation*. Instruct the person with stanza 1 (“Lord, I was a pile of ash and you made me a light for the world”) that he/she is to light the main candle and put it in the holder by the ash. The person with stanza 2 should pour salt on the rock. Stanza 3 should place the cross on the clay. Stanza 8 should put bread on the table. Stanza 9 should put the bowl of water on the table. Everyone should who is reading should light their candle from the main candle after they read their stanza.
12. Optional: Decorate the room with images of prayer, fasting, almsgiving, and service.

## Pre-Gathering Hospitality (15 minutes before session officially begins)

Set an atmosphere for the evening. Make sure someone is greeting people at the door when they arrive. Play music in the background. Distribute nametags.

## Welcome (5 minutes)

The MC should be enthusiastic and excited to be there. He/she should welcome everyone by saying:

Hi, I'm (name) and this is (church youth ministry name), and we are so excited to have you here! We are going to take time tonight to begin our preparations for Easter by focusing Lent as Forty Days of Grace where we can engage in prayer, fasting, almsgiving, and service to draw us closer to the heart of God.

Before we begin, I want to especially welcome anyone who is new.

Identify the new participants and thank them for coming.

## Opening Prayer (5 minutes)

Begin with a short opening prayer such as:

Lord God, we thank you for the day and allowing us to gather here tonight. We pray that all we say and do tonight truly glorifies your name. We ask this through Jesus Christ, your Son. Amen.

## Competitive Rock, Paper, Scissors (10 minutes)

The purpose of this game is to have people meet each other and to have fun. Have two people with the Game Leader will demonstrate how the game plays while the Game Leader describes it.

Game Leader introduces the game by saying:

When I say go I want you to find a person you do not know too well and sit down facing each other. ... GO!

Give about minute to find a partner. Then give these instructions:

Ok, we are going to play a Rock, Paper, Scissors Tournament! Here is how it works: When I say go, you will introduce yourself **(pair demonstrates)** and then play three rounds of Rock, Paper, Scissors **(pair demonstrates)**. Best two out of three wins! The loser then gets behind the winner and puts his/her hand on the winner's shoulder and the winner then finds a new person to play against **(pair demonstrates)**. The players introduce themselves to each other and play another three rounds. At the end of round, the entire group behind the losing player joins the winner's group. Groups are encouraged to cheer their champion on! Winning team gets a prize.

Ready...GO!

When there are only two teams left, stop the game, bring the two winners to the middle of the room and have them play with the rest of the group watching. Make a big deal about the winner and then distribute candy as a prize.

## Give What You've Got Game (10 minutes)

The purpose of this less painful version of the "Clothespin Game" is to have fun and to introduce the topic for the evening.

While other team members are handing out the sheets of stickers, the Game Leader explains the game by saying:

This next game is called "Give What You've Got." The goal of this game is to get rid of all of your stickers. That doesn't sound too hard, does it? Well there is a twist. The way you get rid of your stickers is to put them on the arms of the people around you, however while you are getting rid of your stickers, more are being put on you! AND, you have to get rid of those too!!! The goal of this game is to be there person with the least amount of stickers on their arms after 4 minutes. Here are specific rules:

1. You can ONLY put the stickers on the arms of other people. **Ask:** Where can you only put your stickers? **(they should enthusiastically answer “On their arms!”)**
2. If you drop a sticker or a sticker drops off of you, you have to pick it up IMMEDIATELY. It is still your sticker (and it helps with the clean up later!) **Ask:** What should you do if a sticker drops? **(the should answer “Pick it up!”)**
3. When the music stops, the game is over.

Ready, Go!

Start the music and time the group for four minutes (adjust the time by energy level of the group).

Stop the music and ask the group to count their stickers. And invite them to stand up. And say:

Keep standing if you have less than 25 stickers on you. Pause  
 Keep standing if you have less than 20 stickers on you. Pause  
 Keep standing if you have less than 15  
 Less than 10  
 Less than 5  
 4  
 3  
 2  
 1

Cheer for those who have none or the lowest number you get to.

Ask:

How is this game like helping others?

Listen and affirm responses. Reinforce that often when we give of ourselves, we often receive in return. However, it is not the reason we give, share, or serve. We give because it is our call. It is who we are as Catholics. Yet, often the more we try to give away, the more we end up with in our lives. New friends, a deeper experience of God, a new perspective on life, faith, and the world—these things “stick” to us.

### **Smart Phone Search or Lenten Fact Race (20 minutes)**

The purpose of this activity it to help the youth refresh themselves on some basic facts about Lent. Because a significant number of youth have smart phones, this is a great way to incorporate technology into the session as well as introducing them to sites that they can use later to help them grow in their Catholic faith. If your group prefers, you can do the “Lenten Fact Race” which is a similar activity with the information present at stations around the space.

Begin by saying:

So let's get some Lenten facts down. Who has a smartphone? Ok, now lets break-up into groups so that everyone who doesn't have a smartphone is with someone who does.

I am going to give you a website and a question. The first person to get the answer stands up. Let's see who can find it the fastest.

Ready.

1. The website is OSV.com. Type "Catholic Dictionary" in the search box. Find the Catholic Dictionary. Scroll the to second search box and look up the definition for LENT.

Ask the first person to stand:

What does it prepare us for? (Easter)

Ask another person:

How many days? (40)

Ask a third:

Why 40 days? (It recalls Jesus' 40 days in desert of prayer and fasting before his public ministry)

After each person shares toss them some candy as a thank you! Continue doing the candy thing throughout this section.

2. Ready, next question:

Website: USCCB.org

In the Search Box type in "Lent"

Click the first link for *Lent*.

What are the traditional three pillars of Lent? (Prayer, fasting, and almsgiving)

Depending on your group size, you may want to ensure that new people answer by calling on them.

Penance and forgiveness are a significant part of Lent. What else are we encouraged to do in regard to this? (Celebrate the sacrament of penance)

3. Let's stay on this webpage:

Can you find the link to *Lenten Prayer*?

What prayer is traditionally said on the Fridays of Lent? (Stations of the Cross)

4. Let's stay on this webpage:

Can you find the link to *Fast and Abstinence*?

When fasting a person is limited to eating how many full meals? (one)

What should we abstain from eating on Fridays? (meat)

5. Let's stay on this webpage:

Find the link to *almsgiving*.

What is almsgiving? (donating money or goods to the poor and performing other acts of charity)

Bishop Ricken of Green Bay, WI says that charity is more than just "throwing money in the plate." What do you think it is more about?

Bonus: What group sponsors *Operation Rice Bowl*? (Catholic Relief Services)

Let's find out what scripture says about prayer, fasting, almsgiving and service.

6. On the USCCB website, click the "Bible" link at the top of the page. Click "Books of the Bible."

What does Tobit 12: 8 -10 say? (Prayer with fasting is good. Almsgiving with righteousness is better than wealth with wickedness. It is better to give alms than to store up gold for almsgiving saves from death, and purges all sin. Those who give alms will enjoy a full life, but those who commit sin and do evil are their own worst enemies.)

What does Matthew 6:1-8 say how we should act when we give alms or pray? (Don't flaunt it in front of others. God knows what you are doing)

7. Finally let's look at how we can put our Lenten practices into service.

In the search box, type "Seven Themes." Click the link for the *Seven Themes of Catholic Social Teaching*. In your group, pick one of them and share how a person could serve one of those themes during Lent.

Gather the group after five or so minutes and have 3-4 share their thoughts on serving the themes.

### **OPTIONAL LENTEN RACE:**

While participants are dividing into groups of 4-5 youth, other team member should scatter stations of resources around the room.

Give each team a sheet and tell them they are to look up the answers for each question. They do not have to do them in order but they cannot do the last question until all of the previous questions are complete.

At the end review the answers for each question and have the small group share their thoughts regarding service to the large group.

### **Presentation: Forty Days of Grace—Let Lent Change You (10 minutes)**

MC should transition to the presentation by saying something similar to this:

We have read up on what Lent is and what we do during Lent, but I am going to invite (Person's Name) up here to share how forty days of grace of Lent can change us.

Presenter speaks.



## **Ash Wednesday Video (5 minutes)**

This short powerful video reminds youth about why we celebrate Lent.

## **My Forty Days of Grace (15 minutes)**

The activity is inspired by a Lenten Calendar found at BustedHalo.com. The purpose of this activity is for young people to determine how they will engage in prayer, fasting, almsgiving, and service during Lent.

The MC should invite youth to spread out a bit as the other leaders hand out the prayer calendar template and pens/pencils.

Invite youth to reflect on what they have learned, what they heard and saw.

Say:

Just as we have Advent Calendars, let's make for ourselves a Lenten calendar. It will be a personalized calendar, one that reminds you to prepare your heart and your life in the Forty Days of Grace before Easter. Each week you have an opportunity to decide what you will pray for and how.

For example, will you pray every day? Will you pray the rosary, the Stations of the Cross, or another prayer? Who and/or what will you pray for? Does someone in your life need prayer? Is there a concern you need to pray about? Will you go to daily mass or celebrate the sacrament of reconciliation more often?

Each week challenge yourself not only to fast on Fridays but also to fast "from" something. How about Facebook or Twitter or video games or TV one night a week? How about Starbucks or (other popular place)? How about buying for yourself?

Turn that fasting into almsgiving and service. Can you set aside money each week for the poor? How much? Where will it go? Poor Box? CRS Rice Bowl? And how will you serve? Who will you serve? Where and when will you serve?

You don't have to put something new on each week but I do challenge you to try to go deeper in your Lenten practices each week of these forty days of grace.

Allow time for participants to complete their calendars. Have adult team and peer ministry members do the same. As MC, walk around and ask if anyone has questions.

## Our Lenten Commitment (25 minutes)

Gather everyone back together. Say:

As a youth ministry, we thought it would be powerful to engage in a service activity together for Lent. In the past, youth ministries around the Archdiocese engaged in canned food drives that have collected TONS of food for Feeding Our Neighbors and delivered them at New York Catholic Youth Day. We can participate in this or engage in a different project of our own design. What are your thoughts?

Give time for them to share. If they don't say anything take a "temperature check" and by asking:

Raise your hands if you would like to do the food drive? (do a quick count)  
Raise your hands if you would like to do something else? (do a quick count)

If the group is STRONGLY leaning in one direction start planning on how you would do it. You can use either **Resource 5: Planning for a Food Drive** or **Resource 6: Planning Other Form of Service** as a guide.

If the group is not leaning strongly in one direction ask individuals to share why they would want to do one or the other and take another temperature check.

## Closing Comments (5 minutes)

As MC, pay attention to what you heard all night. Take notes. Share the insights BRIEFLY and challenge youth to use their Lenten Calendar. Remind them that Lent is forty days of grace that call us to not just do or not do things but about become and be the person God wants us to be.

## Prayer (10 minutes)

Gather the group in a circle. Hand out the copy of *Prayer of Transformation* to each person. Have a person place the prayer table in the middle. If you want to use ritual action, place only the matches, large candle, ash, stone, and clay on the table. Place the large candle behind the pile of ash. Ensure all readers have their candles and objects. Have the readers sitting among the group. Dim lights, if possible.

Prayer Leader:

Let us begin in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit.  
Amen.

Tonight we focused on ways in which we can prepare our hearts and our lives for Lent.

Lord Jesus, we thank you for the gift of your love and the sacrifice of your life and we invite you into our hearts as we journey with you to the Cross.

Reader:

The volunteer proclaims Joel 2: 12-15. Allow a moment of silence.

Prayer Leader:

I invite you all to take out your sheet called "A Prayer of Transformation"

First Reader stands, reads his/her stanza, then walks to the table, and lights the large candle. He/she then lights his/her taper candle and returns to his/her seat.

Second Reader stands, reads his/her stanza, goes to the table, and pours salt on the stone. He/she then lights his/her taper candle and returns to his/her seat.

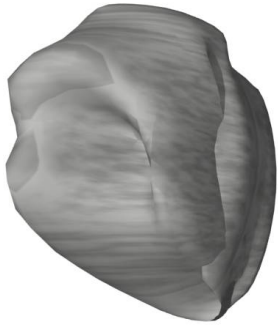
This continues until the last stanza of the second section ("When the outcasts cry for love, make me love.") After this stanza, invite the entire group to pray the last section together.

End with the Sign of the Cross.

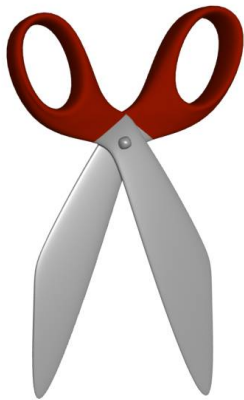
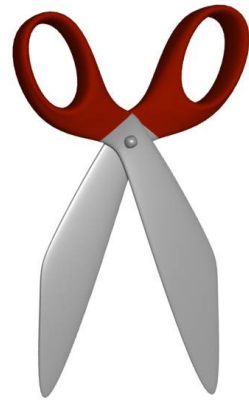
MC should thank everyone for coming.

# Rock, Paper, Scissors

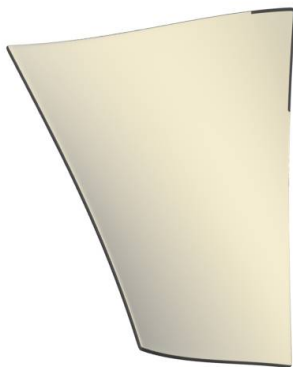
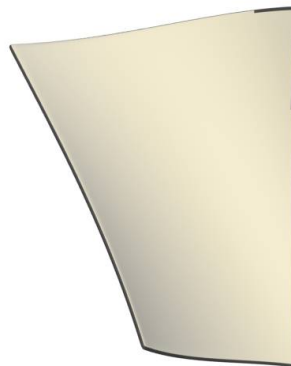
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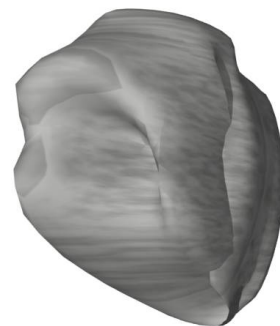
**Crushes**



**Cuts**



**Covers**



# Lenten Fact Race

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1. Look up in the dictionary the word Lent.
  - a. What is the definition of the Christian noun?
  
  - b. What does Lent prepare us for?
  
  - c. How many days are in Lent?
  
2. Find the article "Lent" in the room.
  - a. What are the three traditional pillars of Lent?
  
  - b. What are ways we can fast?
  
  - c. What are two ways we can "give alms?"
  
  - d. Lent is a season of repentance. What else are we encouraged to do during Lent?
  
3. Find the article "Journey to the Foot of the Cross: 10 Things to Keep in Mind for Lent" in the room.
  - a. Why should we pray?
  
  - b. Bishop Ricken says that almsgiving is more than "throwing a few extra dollars in the collection plate." What so you think it is really about?
  
  - c. How does Lent help us learn to love like Christ?
  
4. Find a Bible
  - a. What does Tobit 12: 8-10 say?
  
  - b. What does Matthew 6: 1-8 say about prayer and fasting?

## **DO LAST!**

Find the article "Seven Themes of Catholic Social Teaching." In your group, pick one theme and share how a person could serve that theme during Lent.

# Forty Days of Grace: Lent Changes You!: Presentation Notes

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The following are notes for your presentation. It is important that you are comfortable with this topic and are able to share with the group in an authentic manner.

- I. Transition from the activity
  - a. Remark on some of the answers you heard from the group about Lent. Congratulate them on their speed and insight!
  - b. Introduce yourself.
    - i. Share why you wanted to do this talk.
- II. Explain the purpose of this talk
  - a. Often during Lent we focus on doing more or doing less.
    - i. We pray more, give more, serve more, etc.
    - ii. We give up chocolate, lattes or mocha-frappa-chinos, Facebook, TV
  - b. These are good but they should lead us to something more
  - c. During these forty days of grace our doing should change our “being” to draw us deeper to Christ and to the life he desires for us
- III. How doing changed my being
  - a. Share a time where you consciously decided to do or not do something in the hope to grow in your faith. Make sure the story is appropriate for the group, setting, and age.
    - i. What compelled you to engage in this practice?
    - ii. What did you decide to do/not do?
    - iii. What were roadblocks, stumbling points? How did they impact you?
    - iv. What were the fruits?
    - v. When and how did you notice a change in your “being?” When did you realize you went from doing/not doing something to being the reason why you wanted to do/not do it?
    - vi. How did this impact your faith? Your relationship with Christ? With others?
- IV. God asks us to do so that we can become.
  - a. There is a theological term called *metanoia* (pronounced met-a-noy-a). It means a personal conversion—a turning to a new life with a new heart. Lent calls us to metanoia. It calls us to repent (turn away) and believe (turn to). Lenten practices should lead us to metanoia.
  - b. We pray for our needs, the needs of others, and to hear God's voice. When we pray we become closer to the heart of God.
  - c. We fast as an act of repentance. When we fast become reliant on God.
  - d. We give because others need it. In serving we become God's hands and feet in this world.
  - e. During these forty days of grace that is Lent invite the group to not just go through the motions but also become what our Lenten practices are calling us to.



# Forty Days of Grace

	<b>Prayer:</b> How will I pray? What am I praying for?	<b>Fasting:</b> What else do I need to fast from?	<b>Almsgiving:</b> What is my goal for giving?	<b>Service:</b> How can I be God's hands and feet?
<b>MARCH 9-15</b>				
<b>MARCH 16-22</b>				
<b>MARCH 23-29</b>				
<b>MARCH 30- APRIL 5</b>				
<b>APRIL 6-12</b>				
<b>APRIL 13-18</b>				

\* Consider celebrating the Sacrament of Reconciliation at least once during Lent.

# Planning for a Food Drive

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**Reason:**

How can we ensure that Christ is at the center of why we do this drive?

**When:**

**Method:**

How and when will we advertise?

How will we collect?

How will we sort?

How will we deliver?

**Supplies Needed:**

**People Needed:**

**Action Plan:**

If time allows, flesh out the *who*, *what*, *when*, and *how* to accomplish this activity.



# Planning Other Form of Service

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## ***What are needs in our community that we can address?***

Brainstorm, discuss, and choose one.

## ***What acts of service can address this need?***

Brainstorm, discuss, and choose one.

### **Reason:**

How can ensure that Christ is at the center of why we do this project?

### **When:**

### **Method:**

How and when will we advertise?

What preparation needs to occur?

What will we be doing?

What follow-up needs to happen afterward?

### **Supplies Needed:**

### **People Needed:**

### **Action Plan:**

If time allows, flesh out the *who*, *what*, *when*, and *how* to accomplish this activity.