

IDEAS FOR HELPING FOCUS ON THE MEANING OF LENT

Lent is a time of prayer, fasting and almsgiving. As it is such a significant time in the liturgical calendar, we are aware that most parishes will have your own arrangements and traditions for your liturgical celebrations during this time.

As you plan for Lent, you may like to incorporate some of the following suggestions and ideas to continue to remind parishioners that Lent is a time when we reach beyond ourselves to assist people in need, particularly the most poor and vulnerable members of our local and global communities.

Suggestions:

PowerPoint – a PowerPoint is available on the Caritas website on the theme of the Bishops' Lenten Appeal. Some parishes use this as a background for quiet reflection before or after Mass, and others use it as a reflection after Communion, accompanied by quiet music. Individual slides from the PowerPoint can also be incorporated into your own parish PowerPoints, to help highlight the links between the Lenten Gospels and the selected programmes which feature in this year's Lent Appeal envelopes and Lenten Reflection Programme.

Special space – some parishes create a special space in the Church during Lent, highlighting our concern for people in need, where there is an opportunity to light a candle and offer prayers for our brothers and sisters throughout the world. Others might prefer to dedicate a special space on the parish notice board or in the Church foyer that highlights information about how the parish's donations are being used to support projects and programmes.

Prayer of the faithful – please consider including a prayer for the project or programme featured on the Lent Appeal envelopes within your Prayers of the Faithful each week. A list of prayers is attached as a starting point – please feel free to adapt and rewrite these to match your own parish expectations and guidelines.

Symbols – you may wish to display different images, objects and symbols that reflect a theme of the Gospel reading for each week of Lent to draw together prayer. For example, some parishes may have a bowl of sand on a table in the first week of Lent to symbolise the wilderness and desert.

Opportunity to respond – during prayer, have an opportunity for parishioners to respond to the theme of Lent each week, e.g. light a candle to symbolise the igniting of our hearts and turning again and again to the voice of God.

Music – include relevant hymns and music during prayer and reflection time.

PRAYER OF THE FAITHFUL

Please consider including a prayer for the project or programme featured in the Bishops' Lenten Appeal materials within your Prayers of the Faithful each week during Lent. You may wish to consider incorporating the following prayers, which are based on the prayers used on the Lent Appeal envelopes. Please feel free to adapt or rewrite according to your parish's own guidelines and expectations:

Week 1: Temptations in the wilderness

E te Ariki, we pray for Your guidance during our Lenten journey. May these times of reflection and prayer help us to more clearly see Your face – the face of mercy. Provide us with the strength to be Your voice and to make good choices. Help us to help others face the tests that challenge them.

Week 2: The Transfiguration

E te Ariki, Lord, in the times when our lives are overcome by cloud and shadow, we pray that Your light and love touches us. When we are afraid and ashamed, remind us Lord that You are always there, calling us as Your Beloved.

Week 3: The woman at the well

E te Ariki, Lord, we pray that we as Your disciples, accept Jesus' invitation to drink the living water. Fill our hearts with Your abundant love. May our cups be so full that they overflow and Your graces are poured out onto others. May our spirits be nourished so that we may never be thirsty again.

Week 4: Healing of the blind man

E te Atua o te aroha, God of love. Open our eyes to the injustices in the world. Help us understand these problems that we may work towards resolution for those who are suffering. Guide our faith to encounter others who need it.

Week 5: Raising of Lazarus

E te Ariki, Lord. We are witnesses to Your love and mercy as we experience the joy of life. When we look at the world around us, from a human perspective, we can be easily overcome with despair or doubt. Help us to remember that You are able to bring good — even from the most dire situations.

Week 6: The Passion of Christ

E te Atua, God, in the times where we have denied You, show us Your mercy and forgiveness. May we see the face of Christ and reflect Your love to those we encounter each day.