

Handout 2: Reflection Sheets for Stations

Cut apart and give one to each participant at each station.

Station #1: First Sunday of Lent – The Deserted Step

Jesus is driven by the Spirit to a deserted place at the beginning of Lent. He will again be deserted at the end of Lent but it will be a different kind of desertion. This early desert experience is willful, purposeful and designed to build his spiritual strength. The desertion at the end of Lent when his friends flee from his side is not something he would have chosen. It is an experience of isolation that was thrust upon him as a result of weakness and sin on the part of his disciples.

Being alone and being lonely are very different experiences. One can be empowering while the other is physically and spiritually draining. The deserted step on this first Sunday of Lent is a necessary time of soul-searching. It is the time, hopefully daily even if only for a few minutes, when we make sense of our busy-ness and our many interactions with others. The deserted step is a step of integration and empowerment. We reflect upon our lives in solitude to put the pieces together with the silent guidance of the Holy Spirit. We are then empowered to move back into the hustle and bustle of daily life with a new perspective and a refreshed spirit.

Station #2: Second Sunday of Lent – The Connected Step

This step reminds us that we never need to feel lonely even if we are alone. The Communion of Saints is perhaps the most consoling tenet of Catholic faith. Christians are a deeply connected people. We are a unified body in Christ. We are in communion with those who are living and with those who are dead. We commune with divinity in the Eucharistic celebration. We draw our deepest strength from our connectedness. Our most important teaching is to love God and love our neighbors as ourselves. It is a teaching about staying connected.

The Gospel turning point for Mark is the highly connected experience of the transfiguration. Jesus, at this point in Mark's Gospel, begins to move more deliberately toward the cross, empowered by intimate communion with his closest friends, two key Old Testament figures, and his heavenly Father.

Christianity is about loving relationships above all else. Love is the reason we have faith in the first place. Love is the gateway that can connect us to this world and the next in the same moment. Lent is a journey that leads us to each other and to God in a cosmic embrace.

Who has loved you? What has that taught you about God?

Station #3: Third Sunday of Lent – The Zealous Step

The third Sunday of Lent features Jesus cleansing the temple of corrupt money changers. His disciples witness this dramatic event and the author records that they are reminded of one particular line from the Old Testament, “Zeal for your house will consume me.” (Psalm 69:9) Many writers focus on anger when they reflect upon this story from John’s gospel, but the witnesses did not see anger; they saw zeal. Zeal is passionate ardor that has a purpose. It seeks to accomplish an objective. It is not anger that so often results in blind, crazed, meaningless behavior.

In this story, Jesus is passionate about the integrity of worship and about justice. Religion, in Jesus’ day, had become corrupt and the poor were paying the price. (That scenario, of course, has been repeated over and over throughout the centuries even to the present day.) Pilgrims arriving at the temple to make an offering to God were being ripped off by clever temple money changers. The money changers were necessary because money with the image of the emperor on it was not appropriate for an offering to God. The money changers had to exchange Roman coins for temple coins. It was a perfect opportunity to take advantage of poor, uneducated pilgrims.

Jesus acts with integrity and with a sense of purpose when he drives out the money changers. He is doing in a dramatic way what everyone knows in their hearts needs to be done. He is fearlessly bringing to light what was hidden in darkness. In the process, he is speaking up for those who are powerless. This zealous step of Jesus reminds us that we are challenged in our lives to take zealous steps on behalf of the poor and vulnerable members of our society. We are also challenged to take zealous steps to challenge our own faith communities so that our worship is offered in integrity and inspires acts of kindness and justice.

Station #4: Fourth Sunday of Lent – The Healing Step

Reconciliation and healing are faith goals. Salvation is what we are shooting for and by salvation we mean the salvation of all of creation and everything and everyone in it. Jesus saves us from sin. Jesus saves us from death. Jesus saves us from illness. Jesus saves us from poverty. Jesus saves us from hatred. Jesus saves us from selfishness. Jesus saves us from alienation. Jesus wants to save every bit of us and every one of us with the healing salve of reconciliation. Salvation puts back together what has been driven apart by sin.

These verses draw an unmistakable line from healing to salvation. All who looked upon the serpent that Moses lifted up were healed in body. All who look upon the Son who is lifted up are healed in spirit. Faith brings healing of body and soul together. As disciples of Jesus, we are called to heal the physical and spiritual wounds of others and to actively participate in and celebrate our own healing.

Station #5: Fifth Sunday of Lent – The Dying Step

Death is a necessary step to new life. Christians are called to lose their lives in order to save them. This is as true in the spiritual life as it is in physical life. Human development is an appropriate example. Our infancy has to die in order for our childhood to be born. Our childhood has to die in order for our adolescent life to be born. Our adolescence has to die in order for our adulthood to be born. We can die and rise in myriad ways and on a daily basis. “Very truly, I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.” (John 12:24)

Death is not an ending; death is a passage into greater abundance. The Lenten journey calls us to think about what is dying in our lives right now. How are we going to accept this death? How will we grow through it? What is the promise of abundance if we die faithfully?

There is no need to fear death for we do it all the time. It is as ordinary as the passing seconds of time. Clinging to passing seconds is futile. Letting time pass and embracing the coming moments open us to new life... to resurrection.