

# Walking with Jesus this Lent: A Gospel Journey

## Adult Session

By Dr. Kathie Amidei

Time: 75 minutes

### Purpose

This adult faith session offers an opportunity to enter Lent in a personal way. Participants can experience Lent as a time to picture themselves on a retreat with Jesus. It reminds them that Lent is a time to join Christ in the desert in preparation for the mystery of his death and resurrection at Easter. Hopefully, these materials can help participants be formed as disciples in a similar way to Jesus forming the apostles in the time leading up to Holy Week. This session invites adults to ponder the rich Scriptural images that are associated with the Lenten season.

### Session at a Glance

- Gathering and Welcome (3 minutes)
- Opening Prayer (7 minutes)
- Opening Icebreaker (6 minutes)
- Learning Activity - The Footsteps of the Journey (10 minutes)
- Learning Activity- The Gospel Journey through Lent (40 minutes)
- Reflection and Life Application- "7-Step Bookmarks" (3 minutes)
- Closing Prayer (6 minutes)

### Supplies and Preparation

- Words or recording of the song for Opening Prayer, *Ashes* by Tom Conry
- Bible for Opening Prayer (Matthew 6:16-18)
- Duplicate *Resource 1 Script for Reader of Psalm* (one copy)
- Duplicate *Handout 1 - Footprints* PDF (one copy for every participant)
- Quiet music to play during the Footprints Activity
- Duplicate *Resource 2* (one per station)
- Duplicate *Resource 3* (one step per station)
- Duplicate *Handout 2 - Reflection Sheets for Stations 1-5* (one copy for every participant, cut into five parts)
- Duplicate *Handout 3 - 7-Step Bookmark* (one copy for every participant)
- PowerPoint Presentation used in Opening Prayer, Icebreaker Activity and Closing Prayer
- Bible Closing Prayer Service (Mark 11:1-10)
- Duplicate *Resource 2 - Reflection* (one copy for reader)

## **Gathering and Welcome (3 minutes)**

Prior to beginning the prayer service, assign someone to read the Scripture and someone to lead the Psalm reading.

Warmly welcome the participants with these or similar words:

Welcome to this adult session as we join together to prepare for our Lenten season. We come back to this journey every year to experience once again the season of Lent and to remember and walk more closely with Christ. We will align ourselves with the walk of Jesus. This session is divided into seven steps, one in the opening prayer focused on Ash Wednesday, one in the closing prayer focused on Palm Sunday, with five 5 steps in between exploring the Gospels of Lent.

We are guided in our Lenten journey by the traditional practices of prayer, fasting, and almsgiving. We are supported by the companionship of each other. We are sustained by the established traditions that developed over time like our liturgical calendar which marks the seasons and Sundays of Lent and praying the Stations of the Cross. Over the course of this session we will "map out" a Lenten journey you can begin together and continue on your own throughout Lent.

All are welcome to begin wherever you are on Ash Wednesday. The journey does not begin with judgment; rather, it begins with your life exactly as it is at this moment. We are all sinners in need of Gospel transformation. It doesn't matter what kind of sinner we are; it only matters that we are willing to move from where we are to a place that is closer to God. We are called to walk through the steps and be transformed into something new by Palm Sunday. Throughout this session we will process those steps.

## **Opening Prayer Service (7 minutes)**

Begin:

Let us begin by listening to or singing the song "*Ashes*". As you listen or sing along, consider how you personally, would like to "create yourself anew." Ask how you will align yourself with the journey Jesus made and that you will make this season.

**Song:** Play or sing *Ashes* (or another song of your choosing) with the group.

**Proclaim the Gospel**

**Reading:** Matthew 6:16-18

## Personal Reflection:

After listening to the Gospel reading, let us take some time to think about how we have approached the spiritual exercises remembered in the reading. These were common practices in the Jewish tradition and were adopted by Christians and continue through today. Take a few minutes of quiet to reflect on these questions.

Play some quiet music as the participants reflect privately.

Advance to Slide 2, then say:

Ask yourself these questions:

- What is the spirit in which I give of my financial and material resources?
- What is my private prayer like?
- Is *fasting* a part of my Lenten practice? How effective has that practice been in past Lenten seasons?

**Response:** Psalm 51 (advance to Slide 3)

Reader:

Please respond: Be merciful, O Lord, for we have sinned.

All: Be merciful, O Lord, for we have sinned.

Reader :

Have mercy on me, O God, in your goodness; in the greatness of your compassion wipe out my offense. Thoroughly wash me from my guilt and of my sin cleanse me.

All: Be merciful, O Lord, for we have sinned.

Reader:

For I acknowledge my offense, and my sin is before me always: Against you only have I sinned, and done what is evil in your sight.

All: Be merciful, O Lord, for we have sinned.

Reader:

A clean heart create for me, O God, and a steadfast spirit renew within me. Cast me not out from your presence, and your Holy Spirit take not from me.

All: Be merciful, O Lord, for we have sinned.

Reader:

Give me back the joy of your salvation, and a willing spirit sustain in me.  
O Lord, open my lips, and my mouth shall proclaim your praise.

All: Be merciful, O Lord, for we have sinned

All: Grant us mercy, O God, and out of your kindness show us your love.  
In your compassion forgive the times we have not listened to you or followed  
You. Create a pure heart inside us. Do not send us away from where you are.  
Send your Holy Spirit to accompany us. Give us a strong spirit that enables us  
to be our true self and to help others.  
Teach us your ways that we might grow closer to you in this Lenten season.  
Amen.

### **Opening Icebreaker Activity (6 minutes)**

Advance to Slide 4. Invite participants to form small groups of about 6 to 8 people. Invite them to share their thoughts and discuss these three questions:

What are your memories of Ash Wednesday?  
What are your memories of Lent?  
What is one thing you might do to grow closer in your personal relationship  
with God this Lent?

### **Learning Activity 1 – The Footsteps of the Journey (10 minutes)**

The purpose of this activity is to allow a personal reflection on various aspects of the Lenten Journey.

Invite participants to take *Handout #1 The Seven Footprints* (PDF) and read the following directions to them.

In the handout are seven footsteps and seven words associated with the journey of Jesus from Ash Wednesday through the Sundays of Lent to Palm Sunday. The words and seven steps for a Lenten walk with Jesus are: humble, deserted, connected, zealous, healing, dying, and victorious.

On Handout #1, write a note, a word, or a phrase below each footprint to indicate your initial thoughts and/or feelings about each word as a step on your own Lenten walk with Jesus. You will have 2 to 3 minutes to reflect on this. I will play some quiet music as you do this.

Allow time for this personal reflection. After a few minutes, when it looks as if everyone has had an opportunity to reflect on this, say:

I invite you to share with another person or a couple of people your reflections about your thoughts. Discuss how you apply each of the Lenten steps to Jesus and his journey.

Then invite the group back to personal reflection, saying:

As some quiet music is playing reflect once again about your sheet and write the name of someone who comes to mind when you think of that step in each footprint. After you have done so, pray silently for anyone whose name you have in a footprint. Close your silent prayer by asking the Lord who walked these steps to be with each person you named.

## **Learning Activity 2 - The Gospel Journey through Lent (40 minutes)**

The objective of this activity is to look at this season through the lens of the Gospels of the Sundays of Lent. Imagine these Gospels as a pathway or as stepping stones upon which we walk in our intention to follow Jesus. Many spiritual writers discuss Lent as a journey with Easter as the destination.

Invite participants into manageable-sized groups of approximately 10-12 people. You may need to set up more than one set of “stations”, depending on the size of your group. If it is not possible to move people, present the same activity to the large group. The “station” can be identified by the Resource #3 identification signs or by the slides in the PowerPoint (which may work better if you are doing this activity as one large group and not moving to different sites).

Tell the group:

You will symbolically “walk through” the Sundays of Lent. Each station is identified by a sign that identifies the Sunday of Lent and the word associated with it. Depending on the size of your group, you can move as one group or in smaller groups.

### **Station #1 The First Sunday of Lent The Deserted Step**

Have the group move to the first station. Have a Bible open to Mark 1: 12-15. After the group is assembled, have a participant proclaim the Scripture.

Give everyone in the group a copy of Reflection #1. Invite participants to sit by themselves, read the reflection, and sit in silence to experience a few minutes of solitude. Consider what Henri Nouwen reminds us, that in solitude we can experience God saying to us, "You are my beloved."

## **Station #2**

### **The Second Sunday of Lent**

#### **The Connected Step**

Have the group move to the second station. Have a Bible open to Mark 9:2-10. After the group is assembled, have a participant proclaim the Scripture.

Give everyone a copy of Reflection #2. Invite the participants to read the reflection and share their thoughts with another person regarding the questions at the end of the reflection.

## **Station #3**

### **The Third Sunday of Lent**

#### **The Zealous Step**

Have the group move to the third station. Have a Bible open to John 2:13-25. After the group is assembled, have a participant proclaim the Scripture.

Give everyone a copy of Reflection #3. Invite the participants to read the reflection and watch one of the following videos:

The Higher Gifts: <https://www.crs.org/resource-center/higher-gifts> (3:29)

10 Principles in the social teaching of the Church:  
<http://youtu.be/8NTWXILozH0> (7:43)

Catholic Social Teaching Movie: <http://youtu.be/YEFVDUXMFfk> (10:04)

## **Station #4**

### **The Fourth Sunday of Lent**

#### **The Healing Step**

Have the group move to the fourth station. Have a Bible open to John 3:14-21. After the group is assembled, have a participant proclaim the Scripture.

Give everyone a copy of Reflection #4. Invite the participants to read the reflection and, in pairs, mark a cross, blessing each other's hands, feet and

forehead, saying, "I bless your (hand, feet, mind) to be a healing presence in the world."

**Station #5**  
**The Fifth Sunday of Lent**  
**The Dying Step**

Have the group move to the fifth station. Have a Bible open to John 12:20-33. After the group is assembled, have a participant proclaim the Scripture.

Give everyone a copy of Reflection #5. Invite the participants to read the reflection and form small groups of 3-4 to share a personal experience of something dying. Invite them to discuss the three questions underlined in the reflection sheet.

**Reflection and Life Application- "Bookmarks" (3 minutes)**

Give everyone Handout #3. It can be cut apart into separate bookmarks and given as a set to the participants. Or you can invite them to take the sheet home, cut it apart to make bookmarks and place them in a Bible at home, marking the readings. Invite them to read the readings prior to the celebration and to write some brief reflections on the back of the bookmark.

**Closing Prayer (6 minutes)**

Advance to Slide 9 and say:

We will close our Lenten Journey Session with the reading that will be proclaimed at the procession of palms on Palm Sunday and a reflection on it. This step might be called the Victory Step but not in the sense the world calls a victory.

Finally, we close by listening to *Jesus Remember Me* as we consider what kind of victory this feast celebrates, of the humble king, Jesus.

Proclaim the Scripture of Palm Sunday: Mark 11:1-10

Read or have someone read this reflection:

The victory step of Palm Sunday is not a full victory in the same way that Easter resurrection is a full victory. We are still in the season of Lent and we



are still on the journey, but victory is our sure hope and so we celebrate it, even if imperfectly.

Palms are a symbol of victory. On Palm Sunday, Jesus is welcomed into Jerusalem as a conquering king, but again this victory is marred by deep misunderstanding. Jesus did not come to win so that there would be losers over whom the victors can gloat. The ones who are celebrating the wrong kind of victory on Palm Sunday will be terribly disappointed when Jesus doesn't overpower Rome.

Another more subtle and more permanent victory is suggested by Jesus' war horse... it's not a horse at all; rather, it is a colt with no wartime experience. It has never been ridden before. In fact, the clear reference is to Zechariah 9:9 that suggests that this colt is actually a young donkey and the king who rides it is called "humble". This is the perfect Lenten bookend to the humble step of Ash Wednesday! This is hardly the entrance procession of a king intending to conquer with violence!

Disciples of Jesus at the close of Lent are challenged to rethink their notions of victory. What does winning mean to you? How can you win in a way that doesn't produce losers? Your victory step should not be a crushing experience for anyone because the kingdom that Jesus ushers in is one of loving relationships. In this kingdom, we all win!

Play or sing the closing song *Jesus Remember Me* (Jacques Berthier) or a song of your choosing.

Closing:

Thank the participants for joining together for this session and sharing with each other. Invite them to continue their reflection as they journey into this Lenten season walking with Jesus.