

Walking with Jesus this Lent: A Scriptural Journey, Year B Intergenerational Session (2021 Pandemic Edition)

By Jim Merhaut (with adaptations by Paul Canavese)

Time: 120 minutes

Purpose

This faith learning session is designed to walk participants through a series of activities which help them to explore a kernel of truth from Ash Wednesday and the Sundays of Lent. Inspired by the Gospel passages for these Lenten liturgies, the participants will make plans for transforming their lives by incorporating gospel themes into daily living.

Catechism References

CCC #'s 540, 1095, 1438

Session at a Glance

Gathering and Welcome (15 minutes)

Lenten Learning Stations (100 minutes: 7 stations at 13-14 minutes per station)

Closing Prayer and Announcements (5 minutes)

Adaptations for Hosting As a Virtual Event

This resource was designed for use as an in-person, parish-hosted event. However, pandemic requirements for social distancing will make that impossible in many parishes in 2021. We have made some additional suggestions in this edition to help you host the experience as a live, interactive video event. If you are able to safely hold this event in-person this year, we recommend that you use the “normal” leader guide.

You will obviously need to make your own decisions on how best to adapt, based on your local situation. We strongly encourage you to read *Sending Faith Home: Guide to Hosting Virtual Events* before you begin your planning.

Remote coordination. There are four different ways you can offer this experience remotely:

1. Live video with breakout rooms. With this approach, all attendees would join a single session together for the gathering and welcome. If your video platform supports the feature, a breakout room could be created for each learning station, each hosted by a different leader. Alternately, separate video sessions could be created for each learning station, and families could connect to a different one for each rotation. Either way, set a schedule and rotate everyone at the same time.
2. Live video with sequential stations. In this case, everyone stays together in one large session and experiences the learning stations one after the other. This is a simpler way to go, but the size of the group can limit interaction and conversation.
3. Send-home. The simplest approach is to send the instructions and materials home so that families can facilitate the event for their own family. This has the advantage of removing scheduling

issues from the equation. However, this could be somewhat intimidating, and some may not follow through because it seems like too much work.

4. Send-home with pre-recorded facilitation. This is a combination of numbers 1 and 3. Instead of hosting a live event, have leaders pre-record videos for each station, with introduction and explanation. They could even suggest that participants pause the video at certain points while they complete a task. Post the videos publicly on a site like YouTube.

Materials. Many of the materials for this event are generally available in homes, but some are more difficult to find. Regardless, families will greatly appreciate not having to do the work of tracking down various materials, especially in the midst of pandemic shopping restrictions. Therefore, we recommend that you prepare bags/packs of materials for each family for pickup at the parish before the event.

Adaptations by station.

1. Ash Wednesday – Being Humble. The first station is probably the hardest to adapt for at-home use, as it ideally involves a sandbox. You will need to employ some creativity to adapt. One idea is to send home smallish bags of sand so families can create their own mini sandboxes and/or create some kind of sand art. Or you might have them go outside and play with some dirt! Or perhaps you can simply invite them to draw or paint something earth-oriented.
2. First Sunday of Lent – Alone, not Lonely. Works without adaptations.
3. Second Sunday of Lent – The Connected Step. Social distancing has certainly made us more attuned to our need for physical touch. Certainly discuss it from this perspective. It may feel too intimate for some families to demonstrate hugging on video. If so, they can do so off camera.
4. Third Sunday of Lent – The Zealous Step. The definitions of anger and zeal could be shared through Powerpoint slides, but it can be just as effective to hold a page or card on which they are written.
5. Fourth Sunday of Lent – The Healing Step. Works without adaptations.
6. Fifth Sunday of Lent – The Dying Step. The flash paper can be used by each family at home, but care obviously must be taken. Give clear guidance on how to use the paper safely, such as suggesting that they use it over a large baking pan. Alternately, families could use regular paper and tear/shred it into small pieces before recycling, composting, or burying it. The final ritual can be prayed in the same way, with each family taking its turn to be in the video spotlight.
7. Palm Sunday – The Victory Step. The game could be played by sharing your screen and typing in letters to a template, but sometimes lower tech is better. Feel free to use newsprint and simply point your camera to it!

Materials Needed

- Station 1: Ash Wednesday
 - Bags of sand (or alternative)
- Station 2: First Sunday of Lent
 - Crayons and blank paper
- Station 3: Second Sunday of Lent
 - YouTube video of boys being disciplined with a hug - https://youtu.be/BnOB_LRqUGI
- Station 4: Third Sunday of Lent
 - Poster board with the following phrases on it:
 - Anger: the emotion that supports evil attacking good
 - Zeal: the emotion that supports good challenging evil
 - Modeling clay (one handful per person)
 - Pencils
- Station 5: Fourth Sunday of Lent
 - Two sticks for each family (one 12" long and the other 24" long)

- One piece of rough twine per family (about 12" long)
- Several 3x5 notecards per family (cut in half by cutting along the short edge in the middle to make them 3"x2.5"). Perhaps pre-punch holes in the cards if you would like participants to attach them to the crosses.
- Ball of yarn
- Crayons
- Station 6: Fifth Sunday of Lent
 - Magician flash paper (one small piece per person)
 - Pencils
 - Candle
 - Metal kitchen tongs
- Station 7: Palm Sunday
 - Newsprint and marker

Prepare in Advance

- 1.** Even when hosting as a virtual event (and especially so), be attentive to being welcoming. **Hospitality is important!** As the leader, spend the arrival time chatting with participants as they log in, greeting and speaking with them. See *Sending Faith Home: Guide to Hosting Virtual Events* for additional tips.
- 2.** Prepare seven facilitators for the seven stations. Give them the appropriate page from Resource 1: Lenten Learning Stations. Note that station 3 should be facilitated by a married couple, an engaged couple, or two close friends.

Session Outline

Gathering and Welcome (15 minutes)

After the participants have arrived, offer a warm welcome and make logistical announcements. Arrange for how participants will rotate through the stations.

If participants will not be experiencing each station at the same time, divide them into seven intergenerational groups. Instruct each group to move to one of the seven learning stations. After the groups are assigned and have moved to their first station, you will rotate them six additional times so that every group experiences every learning station.

There is no opening or closing prayer for this session because prayer and ritual happen within several of the learning stations.

Seven Lenten Learning Stations (100 minutes)

Each station lasts about 13-14 minutes.

Resource 1 contains learning station instructions, separated on individual pages for each station. Print these pages and distribute them to the facilitators of each station to help them prepare for and lead the learning stations.

Closing and Dismissal (5 minutes)

Thank the participants for their contributions at the learning stations. Ask two or three participants to share one insight they gained from the experiences.

Close with any necessary announcements and then dismiss the participants.

Websites and links in this session were accessed successfully on December 6, 2020.

This session was written by Jim Merhaut. Jim is a relationship coach, ministry consultant, writer, retreat director and teacher. He holds a Master of Science degree in Religious Education from Duquesne University in Pittsburgh. He is an author and co-author of several books and dozens of other publications, including the award-winning book, *Your Catholic Family: Simple Ways to Share the Faith at Home*. Jim's most recent book is a collaboration called *Generations Together*. He is a professional musician and recording artist with *JD Eicher and the Goodnights*. Jim and his wife, Debbie, have five children and reside in Ohio where they enjoy vegetable gardening, raising small livestock, and pursuing a simple lifestyle. Jim can be reached at www.CoachingToConnect.com.