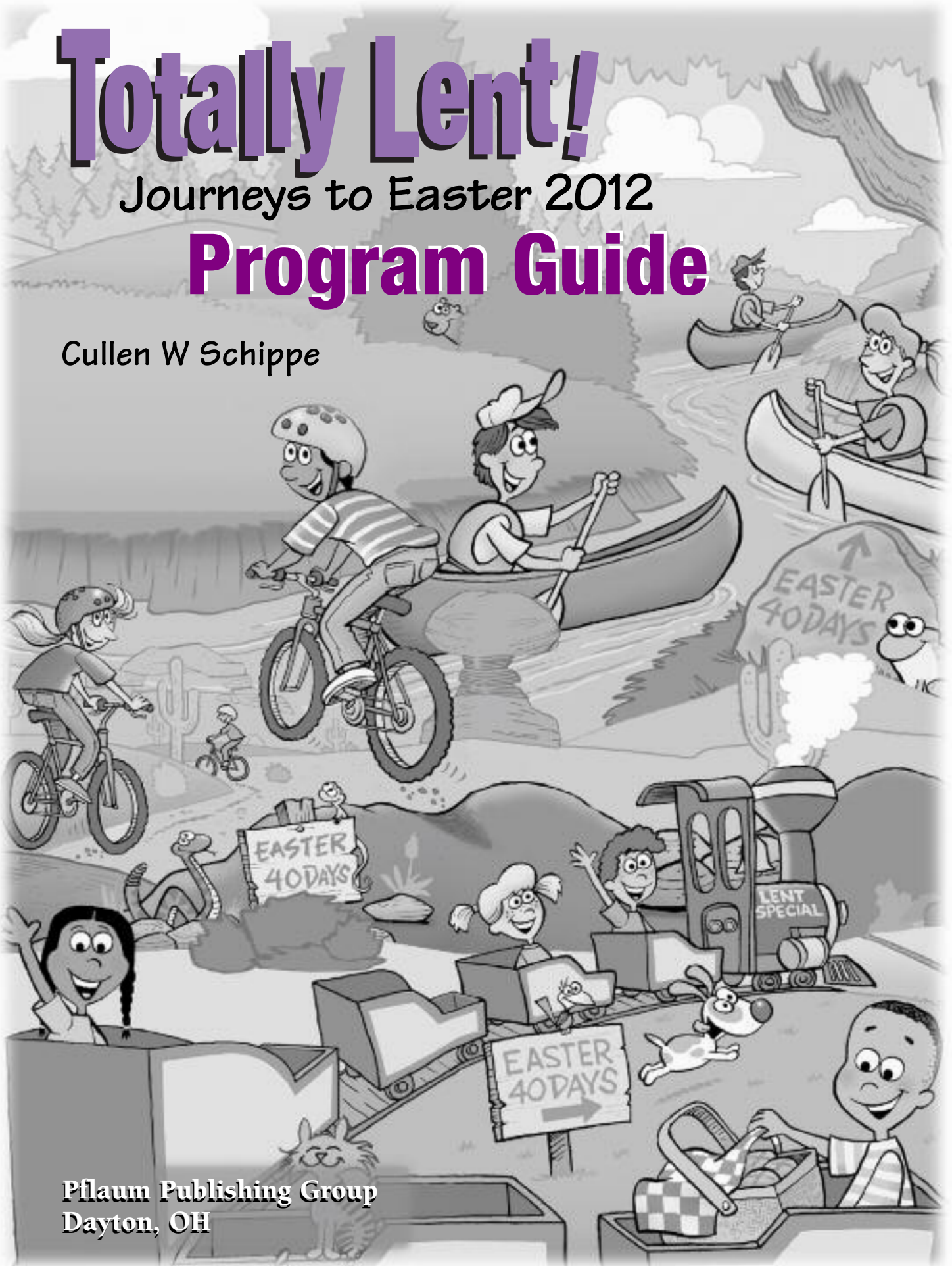


# Totally Lent!

Journeys to Easter 2012

## Program Guide

Cullen W Schippe



Pflaum Publishing Group  
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Pflaum Publishing Group  
2621 Dryden Rd., Suite 300  
Dayton, OH 45439  
800-543-4383  
pflaum.com

# Welcome to *Totally Lent!*

“Watcha doin’ for Lent?” Remember when that was the only thing we ever talked about when Lent started? The question came from a deep-seated understanding that Lent called for at least minimal self-denial, such as giving up candy or movies. At school or at CCD we were told that we should do something *positive* like get along better with our siblings, obey our parents promptly, or attend Stations of the Cross. In short, we knew that Lent was a time that we “suffered” a bit. Lent was never a “fun time.” And that was quite all right because Jesus suffered so much for us.

The whole notion of journey—of movement and pilgrimage in the footsteps of Jesus—would have been foreign to me as a youngster and yet it makes so much sense. I wish I had understood it better. I might have spent less energy storing candy away in the back of my sock drawer.

If you are reading this Program Guide, you have made a decision to let the young people under your care travel on a joyful Lenten journey. You have chosen to share with them a special discipline—one of daily study and prayer *at their own level*. The simple and yet challenging activities, readings, and reflections help young people move through Lent with a spirit of prayer, learning, celebration, and hope.

*Totally Lent!* takes the young people through a conscious participation in the journey that all Christians share as they prepare to celebrate the Paschal Mystery of the suffering, death, and resurrection of Christ. It is my hope that you will enjoy every step of the journey with the young people you serve.

**Cullen W Schippe**

# How to Use the Program

*We entreat you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God*

*As we work together with him, we urge you also not to accept the grace of God in vain. For he says,*

*“At an acceptable time I have listened to you  
and on a day of salvation I have helped you.”*

*See now is the acceptable time; see now is the day of salvation!*

2 Corinthians 5:20—6:3

*Totally Lent!* is a program designed to enrich the spiritual growth of young Catholics on their daily journeys through Lent. The three age levels provide material appropriate to each level. From Ash Wednesday to Easter Sunday, *Totally Lent!* presents a page of Scripture, reflection, and activity for each weekday. Between the weeks, a particular aspect of Lent or of the Catholic faith is explored according to the age level.

The tradition of study, prayer, and fasting during Lent is an important faith tradition that fosters Catholic identity. Young people in daily contact with Sacred Scripture can develop what could be a life-long habit of reading, thinking about, praying, and living God’s Word.

And it is in that “living” that *Totally Lent!* provides its biggest benefit. The experience these young people will have does not stop with the head or even the heart. This Lenten series leads them to action—to putting their faith to work in their everyday lives.

## Where Does It Fit In?

The Catholic school classroom and the parish catechetical session are very busy places. There are lessons that must be taught, and there is little time for extras. One of the best things about *Totally Lent!* is that it is not a textbook nor does it contain shared lessons. Young people use

these books for their *personal* spiritual discipline and formation. You can integrate *Totally Lent!* into your school or catechetical program any way that works best for you and your students. These little books should be Lenten companions for the students, keeping them focused every day on the mysteries of the season.

## A Note about Sundays

*Totally Lent!* is to be used primarily on the weekdays of Lent. Sundays are for the parish liturgy itself and it (and children’s Liturgy of the Word) will engage young people that day. Sundays also draw attention to the participants in the RCIA and their personal journeys to baptism at the Easter Vigil. Nevertheless, each level of *Totally Lent!* does provide a weekend activity should the youngster wish to do it.

## In the Parochial School

*Totally Lent!* can help your whole school take on a Lenten atmosphere. It is best to provide every student in your school with his or her own copy of *Totally Lent!* Then, build a little time into every day for the youngsters to use these daily Lenten companions. Try to make this time slot the same for every class. It is not necessary for students to finish their reading and activity during this special time, but it is important that they keep their Lenten books handy.

If it fits into the curriculum plan you use, encourage teachers to build some of the activities found in *Totally Lent!* into religion classes. Remember, of course, that many of the activities ask for personal reflections—especially in the upper levels. Caution teachers never to demand self-revelation from anyone.

Whether the journeys of *Totally Lent!* are part of a school-wide strategy or handled in the individual classrooms, make sure that there are some constant reminders of this process and loving encouragement to do the work every day. It is also important to urge the youngsters to share their discoveries with their families and friends.

Although the program is personal, it does indeed have communal and familial aspects.

## In the Catechetical Session

Time is such a precious commodity in a parish catechetical program that it can be very, very difficult to add extra activities. Nonetheless, *Totally Lent!* offers a unique opportunity for these youngsters to take part in their parish's—and the universal Church's—Lenten journey. Perhaps at the beginning of each session the catechists can allow a few moments for the young people to give feedback on their personal Lenten journeys that week. Catechists might also give a brief reminder at the end of the session to encourage youngsters to keep their *Totally Lent!* books handy to use every day.

## Lenten Prayer Time

Most parishes have some special prayer times for school children and for those in parish catechetical programs. It is important at each of these prayer times to make a conscious link to the *Totally Lent!* experiences. Such conscious inclusion of the child's work helps him or her see that, although they are doing many of these activities and reflections alone, each is a part of the larger parish journey to Easter.

## Parish-to-Home

Every parish DRE and school principal wants to see faith sharing alive and well in every Catholic home. *Totally Lent!* is a wonderful tool for encouraging just such sharing. Especially at the primary and the intermediate levels, the books themselves can become a family discipline with children and parents working, praying, and playing together as they journey through the pages. No special guide is needed for the parents to participate. There is plenty of information right on the page.

Encourage parents to set aside time after dinner to use the daily page before everybody splits for homework, playtime, or chores. Another good time for using the material is just before bed—as

a form of night prayer. No matter how families participate, you will discover that the experience is almost universally positive.

## Intergenerational Catechesis

If your parish has intergenerational catechesis, *Totally Lent!* fits right in. Two of the essential elements of whole-community programs are links to the liturgy and age-appropriate participation. This series is lectionary based and by all means age appropriate. Each child in such a parish program should have his or her own copy of *Totally Lent!* Anytime there is an intergenerational gathering during Lent, the book activity for that day can be integrated into the session.

## Helpful Hints

The more the entire parish community is aware of this program for the children, the more participation will flourish. The daily liturgy of Lent—the Eucharist and the Liturgy of the Hours—guides the adult faith community on its own journey to Easter. *Totally Lent!* extends that participation to the youngsters. The following hints will help you create a wonderful atmosphere of parish celebration and will help the children stick to the enjoyable discipline that is *Totally Lent!*

**Formal Beginning.** To make *Totally Lent!* a Totally Parish event, see page 13 for a detailed kickoff celebration. Here are a few less ambitious ideas, as well.

On Ash Wednesday or on the Sunday before Ash Wednesday, take a few moments at each Mass to announce the *Totally Lent!* program and to distribute the books to the youngsters present.

If such an approach seems impractical, have a formal presentation of the books at a school Mass or assembly or on the last catechetical session before Lent. Even if it needs to be done on a classroom-by-classroom basis, there should be some formal presentation of the books and a kickoff for the program.

**Notes Home.** There should be some simple communication with the family about *Totally Lent!* and how it is being used for the youngsters in the parish. This communication can be a written note, part of a phone tree, or parish e-mail.

**Parish Bulletin.** Put a reminder about the program in each week's bulletin. The reminder may not be read by the youngsters, but parents, grandparents, aunts, and uncles do a great job of checking on it. It would be helpful if a reminder were a part of the announcements every week as well. A short prayer for the young participants could accompany this announcement.

**Parish Displays.** Posting displays about *Totally Lent!* in the vestibule, parish hall, or other gathering places will serve as a constant reminder that the youngsters in your parish are participating in an engaging journey of prayer, study, and activity. When youngsters see these reminders, they subliminally understand that what they are doing is so much more than busy work. They are doing something important.

**Buddy System.** Teachers and catechists can establish a buddy system among their students. This system will give two or three children a shared responsibility to remind one another to use *Totally Lent!* every day.

**Refrigerator Reminders.** Early in Lent, have each child create a reminder about *Totally Lent!* that can be posted on the refrigerator or on the mirror in his or her room.

**An Easter Display.** To celebrate the successful completion of *Totally Lent!* and to link it to the Easter liturgy, create a fairly large cross out of Styrofoam or some such material. Decorate the cross with flowers and ribbons. Ask each child to bring the cover of his or her book (with personal name on it) to Mass on Easter. Right before each Mass begins, ask the children to bring their covers to the cross and hang them there. Leave this brightly colored display up throughout the Easter season.

## Summary

However you choose to use *Totally Lent!* be sure to make a big deal out of it. If you do, you will establish a parish tradition that invites children and families into the liturgical life of Lent.

*Take a look now at each of the three levels of Totally Lent! Each level is geared to the abilities and likes of that age group.*



# The Primary Level

The primary level—“A Child’s Journey to Easter”—is geared to children from kindergarten through grade three. Second- and third-grade children will be able to do most of the reading and activities for themselves. Kindergarten and first-grade children will need some help from teachers, parents, or older siblings.

## An Overview

The primary level is based on a familiar child’s game—“I Took a Trip!” This game theme helps the younger children discover the events celebrated during Lent, learn the stories told in the Gospel, experience the emotions of the journey, and learn the wonders and mysteries of Jesus’ saving love.

## A Tour of the Primary Program

**We Begin.** A path with 40 footprints starts the children on their Lenten journeys. Each footprint has a number. The children count down the days of Lent by coloring one footprint per day from number 40 to number 1.

**We Travel by Day.** Each weekday, the journey takes on a familiar pattern of three steps.

- **Scripture.** Each day’s theme is introduced in the “I Took a Trip” game format. For example, on Ash Wednesday, the opening sentence is “On my journey with Jesus, I was blessed with ashes.” A short quote from the day’s Gospel follows the opening sentence. (With the younger children, these opening sentences can be used in a singsong fashion like “The Twelve Days of Christmas” or “Old MacDonald Had a Farm.”)
- **Reflection/Application.** A short explanation of the daily Gospel reading, or some feature of the day, helps children connect Jesus’ words to their own lives.
- **Activity.** A simple activity links the Scripture and the Application to offer a fun way to further reinforce the Gospel message or the Lenten practice.

**We “Break” for Weekends.** The pages between the weeks provide some weekend diversion. The children discover some of the characters, animals, and events associated with Lenten and Easter traditions. The first week, for example, is about donkeys. The second week is about pretzels.

**We Arrive.** At the end of the journey an Easter activity is introduced by examples of New Life, both in nature and for Easter. Children are then led again on a path that keeps them walking with the Risen Lord.

**Answer Page.** The last page in the book provides the answers for the games and puzzles that need answers. (A good Lenten discipline for the youngsters is learning not to peek!)

## Guidelines

The Gospel citation given at the top of each page is for the entire Gospel reading of the day. Children in the primary grades are not able to read and understand all of the daily Gospel. The Scripture section of each page gives enough content from the Gospel to introduce that day’s theme. Nonetheless, teachers or parents may want to read the entire Gospel reading to the children or tell the Gospel story in their own words. This can help the children see and hear the connection between what they are doing in their little books and the liturgical rhythm of Lent.

The activities in the primary level of *Totally Lent!* are for the most part pencil activities—lists, puzzles, mazes, word searches, and games. The activities are of varying degrees of difficulty so that the younger children will be engaged and challenged and the older children will not be bored. Depending on the difficulty, a child should be able to spend from five to fifteen minutes each day completing the activity.

## Helping Hands

As was said earlier, the younger primary-age children may need some help with this journey. To that end, if the teacher or catechist is not doing the discipline with the children in class, probably the best help they can get will be from parents, grandparents, or older siblings. Make sure there is a plan in place to get these younger children the help they need before Lent begins. The little ones can get frustrated to the point of tears if they are encouraged to do something they need help with, but no help is available.

## Summary

It is not important that the children do every activity or even participate in the journey every day. It is important for the youngsters to color in a footprint every day. That marks the journey. Then, as many daily activities as can be done comfortably will give them a sense of accomplishment, and they will learn valuable lessons about the Lenten journey.



# The Intermediate Level

The intermediate level—“A Kid’s Journey to Easter”—is geared to children from the fourth to the sixth grade. Children in this age group are accustomed to self-study and assignment work, and they should have no trouble getting into the routine of daily activity with *Totally Lent!*. It is still important, however, to give these young people encouragement, helpful hints, and positive reinforcement.

## An Overview

The intermediate level is held together by the theme of “spiritual growth.” This theme is maintained and upheld by the readings from the Gospel and the nature of the activities. It is not just personal growth for these youngsters but a growth reflected in awareness of and service to others.

## A Tour of the Intermediate Program

**We Begin.** The penitential season of Lent is introduced as a time not only for sacrifices but also as a time to grow closer to God. A tracking device in the image of a sunflower (pages 32 and 33) is introduced. The six weeks of Lent are listed on the image of a sunflower. Checking in once each week gives the youngsters a chance for some self evaluation and to articulate how they see their own spiritual growth through the weeks of Lent. Encourage the youngsters to state their growth in expressive, creative, and even poetic ways. They may also want to use symbols, icons, or other visual images. Also at this time, the young people are asked to record a Lenten promise on their sunflower.

**We Travel by Day.** Each weekday, the journey takes on a familiar pattern of four steps.

- **Scripture.** Each day of the intermediate level begins with some part of the daily Gospel. (When the book is used in group settings, more or even all of the daily Gospel can be read to the group.) The Scripture quote sets the foundation for the reflection and activity.

- **Application.** Parallels are drawn between Jesus’ life and the lives of the young people using this book. Ways to implement Jesus’ lessons are made more clear.

- **Activity.** The activities stress spiritual growth and many of them encourage the young people to express that growth in creative, nonverbal, and generous ways.

- **Reflection.** At the end of each page is a short reflection or prayer (sometimes both). This closing reflection is either a further extension of the reading and activity, or it introduces a saint celebrated that day.

**We “Break” for Weekends.** The weekend use of the book is to expand the young peoples’ knowledge and appreciation of some aspect of Lenten tradition or lore. For example, the students “bury the Alleluia” during the first weekend in Lent. Also, it is during the weekend that the young people chart their growth on the sunflower image.

**We Arrive.** The book concludes with pages for the celebration of the Easter Feast that include the decorating of a Paschal Candle, bringing back the Alleluia, and answering Easter questions to solve a puzzle.

**Answer Page.** The last page of the book provides answers to the games, quizzes, and puzzles.

## Guidelines

Young people in this age group enjoy having a Lenten practice all their own. They are at an age when showing their membership in a larger group is becoming more and more important. They willingly participate in exercises that show that identity, and their peers help to keep them focused. It is good to get the youngsters to make a commitment to doing their daily Lenten reflection.

That does not mean that the book has no place in the classroom or the family. The classroom work or even the family work, however, should not preempt each child's personal commitment to *Totally Lent!* Some adult supervision and encouragement is needed (if not always welcome). And the family participation in the Sunday Eucharist should be an ideal preface for reviewing the week's activities and recording growth on the sunflower chart.

Finally, ritual and tradition are important to this age group. The journey to Easter will almost instantly become a tradition, and the young people will look forward to participating in the program year after year.

## Working in Groups

It is also possible for the fifth and sixth graders to work on *Totally Lent!* in small groups. These groups of no more than four can be set up for the whole of Lent, or they can change from week to week. The small groups will provide support, encouragement, and a communal framework for the experience.

## Summary

At this level, it is good to stress faithfulness to this discipline. The younger children can miss a day with no consequences. As the children get older, a lost day may mean loss of resolve. Never use shame to keep the young people at the task. It is all right, however, to remind them of their promises and to hold them to their commitments.

# The Teen Level

The teen level of *Totally Lent!* is geared to adolescents in grades seven and up. It is extremely effective at the very least through ninth grade, although as teens work up through the grades, they may be harder to motivate to the process. The teen level of *Totally Lent!* is more freeform than the other two levels. Rather than having the same elements on every page, this level provides a greater variety of approaches.

## An Overview

The theme of this year is prayer—especially the prayer of discernment. Discernment is described as learning to watch and listen in order to discover what God is asking. There is also a supporting theme of conversion. Although the journey consists of many forms of prayer, one technique is constant throughout—journaling. It should be pointed out that journaling is a very private experience. No teacher or catechist should require that any young person share what he or she has written. Nothing can undermine the teen experience of *Totally Lent!* more than forced sharing.

## A Tour of the Teen Program

**We Begin.** Right from the start, teens become involved in *Totally Lent!* Not only do they journal about their life calling but they are asked to develop the first symbol, or icon, of the book. Throughout Lent, they will be asked to develop symbols to represent the prayer forms they discover. The purpose of these is to help the teens express themselves nonverbally.

**We Travel by Day.** Although the teen level is not as predictably patterned as the younger levels, there are some features used repeatedly.

- **Scripture.** Each day begins with a reading taken either from the Gospel or the First Reading of the day. When necessary, the readings include a short “set up”—a story or teaser that helps the teens understand the Scripture.
- **The Journal.** After the reading, the young people do a guided journal prayer. They are guided both in the content of the journal as well

as the form it should take. This teaches them how to use different forms of self expression in their prayer.

- **Reflection.** After the daily journaling, there are a variety of short reflections. Many are “What Do Teens Say about Prayer?” These are quotes of reflections on prayer from real teens. “Did You Know?” is another form of reflection and introduces facts about the season, the Church, a saint, etc.

**We “Break” for Weekends.** Various forms of prayer—the Jesus Prayer, lectio divina (formal spiritual reading), the rosary, the labyrinth, faith sharing, devotions, and the Mass—are explored on the pages between the weeks.

**We Arrive.** Instead of a longer Easter section, the teen level has a device for keeping the journey going throughout the whole Easter season. This takes the form of a prayer log.

## Guidelines

Young people in early adolescence are naturally introspective. This particular journey to Easter capitalizes on that introspection. Even though young teens sometimes seem to have utter disdain for tradition, they are still very interested in how traditions came to be. They are more than willing to experiment with different prayer forms, too.

At this age, adult participation is not as important. The young people are separating themselves emotionally from their families. Nonetheless, the readings for each day can be shared occasionally at mealtime or bedtime.

Most of the time, the teens will not need to be forced to keep to their discipline. It is a good idea, however, to hold some kind of simple commitment ritual—even getting everyone in the class to sign a form. This ritual will stress for the teens the importance of this discipline for their growth in prayer.

## Working in Groups

This level of *Totally Lent!* is primarily for individual reflection. Even though a school or catechetical program may set aside a special time for the daily discipline, it is important that students be encouraged to work on their own.

This does not mean an occasional group or family discussion on the topics—especially the weekend topics—is not valuable. The journal prayer ought to remain personal and unshared. That being said, some teens might feel comfortable working with a partner or a small circle of trusted friends. No matter how this level is used in groups, privacy needs to be respected. Teens should be encouraged to keep their books in a safe place. The more secure the young people feel about what they have written, the more honest and fulfilling will be their prayer experience.

## Summary

The teen level of *Totally Lent!* will be a very rich experience. The process outlined helps the students develop a habit of reflection or, as the Prophet Jeremiah expressed it, “laying it to heart.” (Jeremiah 12:11) Reflection, meditation, and contemplation are spiritual disciplines that will serve these young people throughout their lives.

# A Totally Parish Event

Kick off the children's Lenten observance with a party for the whole parish. Hold the event as close to Ash Wednesday as is possible. (Many parishes hold a Shrove Tuesday pancake supper. Use that to kick off *Totally Lent!*)

## Make Us All New Again

You can have any theme you would like for your celebration. If your pump needs priming, here is a theme based on 2 Corinthians: "Make Us All New Again!" You could also use the simple theme of "A Parish Journey to Easter."

**Note:** Do not expect that you will have all the children in the program at your celebration, but have books to pass out to all the young people who are at the party. The rest can be handed out in class or at Sunday Mass.

## Preparations

Make sure you publish the time and date of the party. Make sure, as well, that you have the space to hold the celebration. Work with those wonderful parish assets "the event planners!" Make sure that the *totally* parish celebration is well publicized. Decorate the space appropriately. Have music playing when people arrive. Make sure that there are nametags and pens for people to use. Let people gather at tables—adults and children together.

## An Outline of the Celebration

When everybody is gathered for the pancake supper (or potluck, or other simple meal), have the short ritual before sharing the meal. The whole ritual should take no more than fifteen minutes.

**1. Let's Sing!** Start with a rousing song. It need not be a hymn. A spiritual camp song will get everybody singing. Have the pastor, the principal, and/or the DRE welcome everybody. Point out that this gathering is the kickoff for the children's journey to Easter called *Totally Lent!* Make it clear that this journey will have an effect on the whole parish.

**2. Getting to Know You.** Icebreakers can be intimidating or boring, but they are good ways of getting everybody smiling and engaged in the evening's festivities. Whatever icebreaker you choose should be simple and should contain the following elements.

- **Introduction**—Give everybody a chance to introduce him or herself.
- **Information**—Give everybody a chance to say something.
- **Fun**—Help people relax, get the room buzzing, and show that Lent doesn't have to be dour or boring.

**3. What We're Doing.** A spokesperson for the school or catechetical program can show the young people's books. Then he or she can give a brief explanation of just how you plan to use *Totally Lent!* in your parish. The person can even give some examples of activities from the books themselves.

**4. Questions?** Allow a few moments for the adults and young people to ask questions.

**5. Shine Your Light:** The leader (or perhaps the parish deacon) can read Matthew 5:13-16—about letting one's light shine. The priest or deacon can give a mini-homily on how using *Totally Lent!* will help the young people shine a Lenten light throughout the whole parish.

**6. Come and Get 'Em.** Each young person who is present can come forward and get a copy of *Totally Lent!* Simply ask what grade the youngster is in, and give the proper level. It is a good idea to use the child's name when giving the book. ("Tammy, here is your very own copy of *Totally Lent!*")

**7. Blessings on the Journeys.** If the pastor is present, he can give a special blessing. The blessing should be both for those who will be participating in the journey to Easter (students and teachers) and the food all are about to share.

**8. Let's Sing Again!** Everyone can join in a closing song—something the parish knows very, very well.

**9. Let's Eat.** There doesn't need to be anything further after the meal, let people leave when they are finished.

## Alternative

If you are unable to have this *totally* parish celebration, a *partially* parish celebration will do. Between Masses on the Sunday before Lent, invite the families with children (and anyone who wants to come) to the parish hall. Follow the celebration outline, but skip step two. After the closing song, offer whatever refreshments are usual for Sunday mornings in your parish.

## Conclusion

A *totally* (or *partially*) parish celebration stresses for the young people just how important their individual journeys are in the life of the whole parish.

## Other Resources from Pflaum

If you like what you see in *Totally Lent!* there are other Pflaum resources that will be just right for your parish. Here are just a few for you to consider. For more details, visit the Pflaum website at [pflaum.com](http://pflaum.com).

- **Absolutely Advent.** Pflaum offers an exciting and fun Christmas preparation program for youngsters at the primary and intermediate levels. The program is filled with creative activities, learning, and day-by-day expectation for the coming of Jesus.
- **Children Celebrate.** If your parish celebrates a Liturgy of the Word for children (or is even thinking about one), this wonderful year-round resource is just right. It is published four times a year, and will make every Sunday Mass special for the younger children in your parish.
- **Faith Activity Books for Catholic Kids.** These colorful activity books for grades 1-6 will add value to any catechetical program. Kids love to learn about their faith and share what they learn in these easy-to-use and effective teaching resources.
- **Creative Catechist Materials.** Pflaum is publishing a series of materials to help catechists be more at ease and creative in their ministry.
- **Pflaum Gospel Weeklies.** Pflaum offers the best lectionary-based catechetical periodicals available today. If you haven't tried them, you are missing an exciting component for your catechetical mission.

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