TOTALLY LENT!

A TEEN'S JOURNEY TO EASTER 2018

Introduction

In biblical times wearing "sackcloth and ashes" was a sign of mourning, repentance, or humility.

Sackcloth wasn't a burlap bag with a neck and armholes. It was cloth woven from coarse, black goat hair and was typically used for making sacks. Are you feeling itchy just thinking about it?

Those expressing even greater sorrow for their offenses would then toss ashes on themselves. There are many Scripture passages about persons who displayed their sorrow with sackcloth and ashes. You might want to read a couple of examples: 1 Maccabees 3:47 and Matthew 11:20-21.

Today we still see people wearing black or dark clothing at funerals or other solemn, sorrowful events. Today, too, our Church continues to use ashes on Ash Wednesday to mark the beginning of the forty-day season of Lent—a time of repentance. The auto mechanic who fixes vehicles can't be afraid to work in grime and grease. In a similar way the Church is using the symbol of ashes to tell us not to be afraid of getting dirty while we fix those actions or words that lead us away from the resurrected Jesus.

We begin by examining our lives. For teens, that probably means asking questions like, What about the quippy, rude remarks to your parents? What about your embarrassment at having others see you hang out with an unpopular classmate? What about neglecting household chores? What about…? We can all fill in the blanks.

What needs to be different? What needs to be better? What needs to be started?

When you're tempted to make a sarcastic remark, try saying something like this: "Sure, Dad, I'll take care of that right away." And, of course, actually do it.

Instead of avoiding the person who seems not to have many friends, take some leadership in creating space in your circle of friends for

this person. Instead of whining about household chores, why not try saying something like this? "I can finish cleaning the garage before I leave for practice."

Ashes are dirty. Maybe this Lent the gift of the ashes that we wear for a day can be a reminder that repenting or repairing may require some action, some "elbow grease." So, don't be afraid to get dirty!

Finding Your Way Through Lent!

What Would Saints Do?

Looking for good examples to follow along your Lenten way? Pope John Paul II wanted us to know that we can find saints all around us. That's why he canonized more saints than any other pope. Throughout this book, you'll find the stories of people Pope John Paul II declared "blessed" and people he canonized as saints.

On May 1, 2011, just six years after his death, Pope John Paul II was beatified. St. John Paul II was then canonized on April 27, 2014, Divine Mercy Sunday, a celebration he established in 2000.

What Teens Say

You're not alone on your journey through Lent. Read what other Catholic kids are thinking and saying about their Lenten journeys.

Try This

Follow these suggestions for activities that can help you to experience Lent in a deeper way than ever before!

Ready?

The journey and the countdown to Easter begin now.

My Goals for Lent 2018

Make a list of behaviors or expressions that you will work to fix during these next forty days. Check them off when you have accomplished your goals. Add other items throughout the Lenten season. Use invisible ink or code language only where absolutely necessary.

I need to fix…	I'll try to…	
my sarcastic remarks to my parents	answer respectfully	✓

Ash Wednesday — February 14

Did you ever put your "whole heart" into a task, project, or event? Then you know that putting "all your heart" into something means being willing to put a great deal of effort into reaching a worthy goal.

Through the prophet Joel, God is asking you to open your heart, to "return to me with all your heart." And, while doing what you know to be right may be very difficult at times, the rewards are great.

> *Yet even now, says the LORD,*
> *return to me with all your heart,*
> *with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning;*
> *rend your hearts and not your clothing.*
> *Return to the LORD, your God,*
> *for he is gracious and merciful,*
> *slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love,*
> *and relents from punishing.*
>
> Joel 2:12-13

What Teens Say

When I was little and I heard my Mom and Dad talk, I didn't always know what they were saying, but I knew when it was important. I could just tell. Now, just like when I was a kid, even though I don't understand everything about Lent, I know it is important. I can just tell.

Jeni, 14

How will you open your heart to God during this Lenten season?

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Thursday after Ash Wednesday — February 15

Everyone likes choices, but not everyone likes consequences. The consequences of good choices are usually favorable; the consequences of poor choices are…. Well, have your parents had that talk with you? It's an ancient message. After their struggles to leave Egypt, Moses offered the Israelites some advice about the benefits of good choices.

> *I call heaven and earth to witness against you today that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Choose life so that you and your descendants may live, loving the* LORD *your God, obeying him, and holding fast to him….*
>
> Deuteronomy 30:19-20

Describe a good, though difficult, choice you or someone you know made that resulted in a favorable consequence.

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St. Edith Stein (1891-1942) was born in Breslau, Germany, into a Jewish family. Influenced by the autobiography of St. Teresa of Avila, Edith converted to Catholicism in 1922. Twelve years later she entered a Carmelite convent in Cologne and took the name *Teresa Benedicta of the Cross*.

In 1938, the Nazis in Germany were burning synagogues and killing Jews. Because of her Jewish background, Edith was smuggled out of Germany to the Netherlands. But she could not escape the Nazis forever. She was arrested in 1942. Edith wrote: "I never knew that people could be like this, neither did I know that my brothers and sisters would have to suffer like this.... I pray for them every hour."

On August 7, 1942, Edith was taken to Auschwitz, a concentration camp, where she was gassed to death on August 9, the day on which the Catholic Church remembers her. St. John Paul II beatified Edith Stein in 1987 and canonized her in 1998.

Friday after Ash Wednesday — February 16

"Timing is everything." "When you grow up..." "Not now!" Do these sound familiar?

At certain times, like when you are visiting in a hospital, you must be respectfully quiet. In the fall of the year you can advance from one grade to the next. At a given age you can apply for a driver's license. It's all a matter of timing.

In the Old Testament, the Book of Ecclesiastes says that there is an appointed time for everything—a time to laugh, a time to mourn, and so on (Ecclesiastes 3:1-8). In this passage from the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus explains to his friends why they are not fasting.

> *Then the disciples of John came to [Jesus], saying, "Why do we and the Pharisees fast often, but your disciples do not fast?" And Jesus said to them, "The wedding guests cannot mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them, can they? The days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast."*
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> Matthew 9:14-15

Lent is now. Think of several actions that you will take during Lent.

Lent is a time for me to . . .

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What Teens Say

To me Lent is an opportunity to make myself a better person. I make sacrifices to remind myself how Jesus made the ultimate sacrifice for us: his life. During Lent I try to focus on God.

Paul, 15