

A Prayerful Celebration of Lent

Have an altar set up front with a simple standing cross. Have a bookstand ready for the Bible; prepare in advance a basket with samples of crosses made by the students and assign someone to bring it forward at the appropriate time; assign students the Bible, candles, and offering baskets as well. Prepare three students to do the readings.

Leader: For forty days we will be preparing for Easter and our new life as promised in Christ's resurrection. The cross reminds us that life is not always easy. And yet, when we accept this cross (point to altar cross), we know we are following Jesus. Let us make the sign of the cross together.

All: Hanoon Hor yev vortvoh yev hokvooyrn surpoh. Amen.

Leader: We bring a lighted candle as a reminder that Jesus is with us as we make a special effort to draw close to him during the next forty days.

All: Lord, You are the Light of the World.

(Two students come forward and place a candle on each side of the cross)

Leader: We bring a Bible. In reading the Word of God more often and more closely during the next forty days, we are getting to know and understand His way.

(A student steps forward with a Bible and places it on the bookstand.)

All: Lord, give us wisdom and love to understand the message you have for each and every one of us.

Leader: We bring the crosses we have made as signs that we are willing to take responsibility for growing in our faith and sharing that faith with others as we follow Jesus. *(A student brings a small basket of crafted crosses and places it on the altar)*

All: Help us follow you, Lord, and share our faith.

Leader: We pass a basket of offering, now, as a reminder that we will spend our money during the next forty days more for your glory than for our own pleasure. Perhaps it will become a new habit that will last a lifetime.

(Pass basket and have offering placed on altar)

All: Accept our offering Lord, We give back to you a small share of all you have given us.

Reader 1: Jesus took Peter and James and John with him into a garden and asked them to wait with him while he prayed.. When Jesus finished praying, he went back and found them asleep. He said to Peter, "Are you sleeping? Could you not watch one hour with me? *Mark 14:33,37*

Leader: Taking time to pray during Lent can be a reminder to us to use God's name often in praise and thanksgiving. Think of times during the days when we might stop and thank God for all he does for us (*accept answers and discuss*).

Reader 2: They asked a man who was coming in from the country to carry his cross. His name was Simon of Cyrene. *Mark 15:21*

Leader: Think of ways in which we are like Simon. Do we help others? Do we try to understand people who are outside of our usual circle of friends? (Discuss.)

Reader 3: Jesus said, "Whoever wishes to be my follower must think of other people first and must take up the cross daily and follow me. Whoever would save his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will save it." *Luke 9:23*

Leader: Let's think about what it means to take up Jesus' cross. Do you think Jesus wants us to have pain or to be in agony? Or is it perhaps that taking up Jesus' cross means to walk with him and be faithful, no matter what. (*Pause for reflection.*)

Have classroom teachers come forward with their baskets as each class's turn comes.

Leader: As your name is called, please come forward. (Repeats the following ceremony for each participant.) Name, are you ready for a Lent of prayer, and Bible reading, and loving service this Lent?

Person: I am

Leader: Take your cross as a sign of your promise.
(Give the person's cross to him/her to take home)

Leader: Lord, we are all here ready to take up your cross with love and spend the next forty days growing closer to you through prayer, your Word, through generous giving and loving acts. Be with us, Lord, to give us strength and keep us on track. Hold our crosses high as we make the sign of the cross together and sing "Amen yeghitzi."

All: In the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.

Sing: Amen yegheetzee, anoon Dyarn orhnyal, haysum hedeh meenchev haveedyan. Yegheetzee...Yev yeghitsi..Amen

Leader: Let us depart in peace and may we be blessed by the Holy Spirit. Have a very meaningful Lent everyone.