





## Lenten Family Day

### Overview

*Through large group reflections and family small group activities participants will be introduced to the Catholic Church's teaching on restorative justice shared through the lens of the three themes of Lent: Prayer, Fasting (Sacrifice) and Almsgiving (Charity). Each of these three themes is presented in a brief presentation by 1 or more leaders followed by instructions for each activity. The goal is that each family will create three separate things that can be done throughout the Lenten Season in their homes to Prayer, Fast and Give for Restorative Justice.*

### Suggested Time

- 60 - 90 minutes
- Consider doing this intergenerational gathering the week before Lent begins or during the first week of Lent. This will allow families to have the advantage of the entire Lenten Season to engage with the at home activities.

### Group Size

- Adaptable to groups of any size

### Set Up

- In a space large enough for your group, place tables in a way that will allow families to sit together.
- To encourage greater conversation make sure tables and chairs are set for a minimum of 8 – 10 which will generally allow 2 to 3 families at each table.

### Materials Needed

- Projector and Screen
- Prayer – print the communal part of the prayer for each table or put it on the screen so that all may participate
- Supplies for Prayer Activity
  - Copies of Family Prayer Calendar
  - Pens/Markers for Each Family
  - List of examples
- Supplies for Fasting Activity
  - Copies of Fasting and Transformation Butterfly page (Appendix B, page 1) – one for each child
  - Copies of Circle Page (Appendix B, page 2) – each child should receive 4 pages of circles – one of each of the following colors: Green, Blue, Yellow and Purple
  - Copies of Fasting Handout (Appendix C) – one per family
- Supplies for Almsgiving Activity
  - Small jars or cans
  - Branches without leaves or greenery
  - Multi color tags (gift tag size) with ribbons
  - Rocks/beads/paper for bottom of jars/cans to stabilize branches



## *Opening Prayer – (5 minutes)*

*Adapted from the Prayer for the First Week of Lent.*

**Leader:**

Dearly Beloved, we entreat you not to receive the grace of God in vain.

For he says:

"In an acceptable time I have heard you,  
and in the day of salvation I have helped you.

Behold, now is the acceptable time;  
behold, now is the day of salvation."

Father, as we enter into this time of preparation

Let our Prayer be one of unity and mercy,

Let our Fasting seek to restore us to a more open relationship with you and others,

Let our acts of service and charity strive to bring about the world you desire

Let us strive to create a world of justice and mercy so that on

the day of resurrection we may be unified with each other and with the Lord.

Let us pray together:

**Leader:**

Through the observance of Lent, O Lord,

You purify Your Church every year.

See to it that your children lead a better life and so obtain the graces you promise

This we ask of you through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son.

**Families:**

Amen.

**Leader:**

Favor our homes and our hearts, Lord, with your presence.

Help us to avoid temptation and strive for goodness. May your blessing remain always upon us. This we ask of you through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son.

**Families:**

Let us bless the Lord. Thanks be to God.

**Leader:**

May the almighty and merciful Lord, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, bless and keep us.

**Families:**

Amen.

## *The Setup – (10 minutes)*

Say to the Group:



*Today we gather to prepare ourselves for the season of Lent. We know, and have heard, each of the three themes of Lent. Today we gather to find ways to bring these themes into our homes.*

*Lent is a season of preparation and anticipation for the great feast of Easter. But it is not just about “getting through” these 40 days until Easter, but rather about finding ways to enter into the mystery of Christ so that we will be more fully able to celebrate the miracle of the Resurrection. Lent is a time of Prayer, Fasting and Almsgiving. Why? (Ask families to give their best guesses as to why we do these things)*

*Prayer, Fasting and Almsgiving are both physical and spiritual practices that help us enter in the journey of Christ as he prepared for the Paschal Mystery. They call us to step away from the normal actions of our hectic and everyday lives. They encourage us to step back from our automatic reactions and responses and to be intentional and reflective in what we do.*

*Today we gather to consider ways that our Lenten Journey may be more fully connected to Christ. What does this mean? These 40 Days are a way for us to consider the sacrifice of Christ on the Cross and its meaning for people of Faith. We all know that Christ died for us, and if we believe that then we are compelled to live our lives differently. How you may ask? Let’s start by taking just a minute to look at one of the primary symbols of our faith – The Cross. In ancient times, the cross was a symbol of power and execution, yet through Christ’s actions he has transformed it into a symbol of justice and love. How? As people of faith, the cross serves as a reminder of how we are called to be. Knowing what was to happen, Christ could have avoided the cross, yet instead he embraced it. In doing so he created a bridge between humanity and God (the vertical line of the cross) and a bridge of right relationship between each other (the horizontal line of the cross). If we are to embrace this image fully, it is a call not only to work on our personal relationship with Christ, but to work actively on a right relationship with others. The cross calls us to be willing to outstretch our arms as Christ did; to embrace others based on respect and human dignity and to offer mercy and justice when needed – not retribution but healing and reconciliation as witnessed by Christ’s own response to those crucified with him.*

*We are called to be people that work to bring about the Kingdom of God here on earth. We are called to be a people that strive for mercy and justice, not for retaliation. We are called to be a people that work to make sure all of God’s people have the resources, rights and security that were part of the original plan of creation. We are called to be a people that work to make this world reflect the world that God desires.*

*This is a pretty large task, how do we do this? As Catholics this Lenten season provides us three ways to start. We can start by making our prayers during this season ones that seek a balance in the world. We can start by making our acts of Fasting acts of sacrifices that are more than foregoing simple treats but things that will help those in need. We can start by considering acts of charity that will help lift up others to make a more just society. Let’s start looking at what this might mean for our families.*

### **Prayer Activity (20 minutes) – Family Prayer Calendar**

#### Say to the Group:

*What is Prayer? (Ask families to discuss together for 2 to 3 minutes – ask a few families to share their definitions as a lead into to activity one).*

*Sometimes we forget that prayer is a powerful part of each of our days and all of our actions. As people of faith we believe that our prayers have power to change our hearts and our responses as well as to change the world around us. When we pray, we So, for our first activity we are going to make a family calendar that will help us focus each day on a prayer to bring about justice – the same types of prayer that Christ modeled in his ministry.*

*Prayer during this Lenten season is an opportunity to focus on things that need to be brought back to right relationship. Many times when we pray, we are asking God to do what we want, or we put most of the focus on our relationship with God. But if we are using the image of the cross, there is a second part as well – our right relationship with others. What if we took this Lenten Season to ask God what we can do differently? What if we took just a moment each day to ask God to help us correct things that we have done that harms others or makes it harder to be in relationship with others?*

*Think of the word – Restore. What does it mean? It means to return things to where they should be. What would our prayers look like if we truly asked God to help us restore peace and justice to our lives and to the world around us?*

#### Instructions for families for this Activity:

*As a family take the next 15 minutes to create a Lenten Prayer calendar. One each day write one intention that you as a family commit to pray for that would make the world a more just place. Think about those things that we do, even unintentionally that hurt others. If you need some ideas, here are some thoughts:*

- *Have I done something to another person out of selfishness?*
- *Have I treated another person with disrespect?*
- *Have I judged another person for their actions, yet silently known that I have acted in a similar way?*
- *Have I been angry at another person and failed to try to work it out with them (preferred to just be angry rather than try to right the relationship)?*
- *Do I make statements that belittle others? Do I make jokes that are based on stereotypes that put other people down and make them “less than I am”?*

*Can you as a family identify one thing for each day that you can pray for during this season that will help us address those things?*

- *Appendix A provides a sample calendar, but feel free to make your own that works for your families*

*Give families 15 minutes or so to try and fill in many of the dates on the calendar. They can certainly fill in any blanks after they return home.*

#### **Fasting Activity (10 minutes)**

##### Say to the Group:

*Fasting means to go without something. Many times when we think of fasting during Lent we think of giving up a favorite food or candy. That can be a great place to start, but fasting can also go deeper. Fasting is an opportunity to identify those things that we do which may actually separate us from God and from others. If we are striving to restore right relationships then we must make sure that we are being aware of those things that might cause division and separation. During this Lenten Season we challenge ourselves to identify those things and commit to working to avoid them.*

*This activity is one that will be done predominately at home. Lenten Fasting is about transformation, about becoming the type of loving and just person that Christ calls each of us to be - and so we will focus on our transformation using the image of a butterfly. Butterflies start as caterpillars but go through a transformation stage to become beautiful butterflies, can we use this Lenten season to do the same? It is a great image to help us understand how we are called by Christ to be transformed.*

Instructions for families for this Activity:

Each child should receive one of the Fasting and Transformation Butterflies (Appendix B, pg 1), as well as four pages of circles (Appendix B, pg 2). Each family should receive one page of the Fasting Handout (Appendix C).

Starting with the Fasting Handout, take a few minutes to read the handout. You will see at the bottom of the four columns that there are blanks. Can you and your family take some time to find additional things that you can fast from that would help make their interactions with others more just.

**Almsgiving Activity (15 minutes) – The Family Giving Tree**

Say to the Group:

The activity is based on the idea of the Giving Tree by Shel Silverstein. You can, provided the time, read the book (there are various versions of PowerPoint that will allow you to have the story visible, or you can simply read it to families). Many parents are familiar with this book, but some of the children may not be. Read the book, and then have families take a few minutes to talk about what they heard.

In a large group ask families why this book is important during Lent. Ultimately, direct them to the following thoughts:

- In this story the Tree gives to the boy, not because the boy deserved it, or even because he had been good enough – he actually was pretty selfish.
- The Tree gave out of love – out of a desire to provide the boy with what he needed to live, even if it meant sacrifices.
- During Lent we are called to Almsgiving – or acts of Charity – because of our love
- We are called to give because Christ gave, and we are called to give regardless of whether we think others “deserve it” or not.

Lent is a time that calls us to reconsider how things in the world are, and for our next activity we are asking families to make a Family Giving Tree. When we consider Christ’s sacrifice on the cross, he was willing to give to others, including those crucified with him. During this season what can we give? What can we do without in order to give to those in need? Throughout so much of his ministry Christ reminds us that we are called to love and serve those who have needs, to serve those who society may have forgotten, and even to serve those who have harmed us in some way. How can you serve during this Lent?

Instructions for families for this Activity:

Each family has been given 15 – 20 gift tags. Challenge the families to come up specific acts of service that they can do during this Lenten Season to imitate Christ. They may want to connect these to the acts of fasting from the previous activity.

For instance:

1. Can families find a word or phrase that is perhaps hurtful to others, or that causes one group to feel left out? If so, can they commit to not using that word?
2. Can parents go without purchasing coffee at a coffee shop two days a week during lent? Could the family commit that the money saved would be donated to an immigration organization that works for just wages?
3. Can children do extra chores around the house (or grandparents or neighbors) to earn extra money? If so, could that money be donated to the ministry center at a local detention center?





*Have families come up with as many things as they can, and write each one on one of the gift tags. Have the families place branches into the jars/cans. If there is time they can decorate the outside of the jar/can or they can do so at home.*

*Let families know, that the goal is to do as many of these acts of almsgiving as possible throughout Lent, and when they do, to hang the corresponding tag on their giving tree. In this way they will see their journey through lent unfold from the barren tree, to a colorful Easter Tree. Sharing information about the things they did with other family members during the Easter celebration will also serve as a way to reinforce how their small actions help in the greater picture of seeking justice.*

## **Wrap Up**

### *Say to the Group:*

*As we have gathered today to reflect on the three themes of Lent, we have done so through the lens of what the Church calls Restorative Justice. Restorative Justice offers an alternative to Retributive Justice (the eye for an eye mentality) by holding one accountable for one's actions, while simultaneously trying to redeem a broken situation. It is an acknowledgment that true justice is difficult work, but that the value and dignity of all persons involved is worth the effort. As we end our time together today, let us take a moment to reflect on the many things we have identified that will allow us to work toward restoring justice in our own lives and in the community around us so that we can more fully reflect the Kingdom of God.*

## **Closing Prayer**

*Adapted from Compassion Newsletter, Georgia Death Row, Jackson, GA. January 2013*

*O God, your love is unconditional and not based on performance.*

*It is patient, kind, forgiving, and unchanging,  
even when we behave in ways that do not reflect you.*

*Real love must give and serve unconditionally – without reservation.*

*Help us respond to this higher calling by serving one another despite conflicts  
or bad behavior and remain open to the hope of peaceful co-existence.*

*May we become the type of person that is able to say to you: "I want to  
unfold. Let no place in me hold itself closed. For where I am closed I am  
false. I want to stay clear in your sight,"*

*O God. Amen.*



# Lent 2018

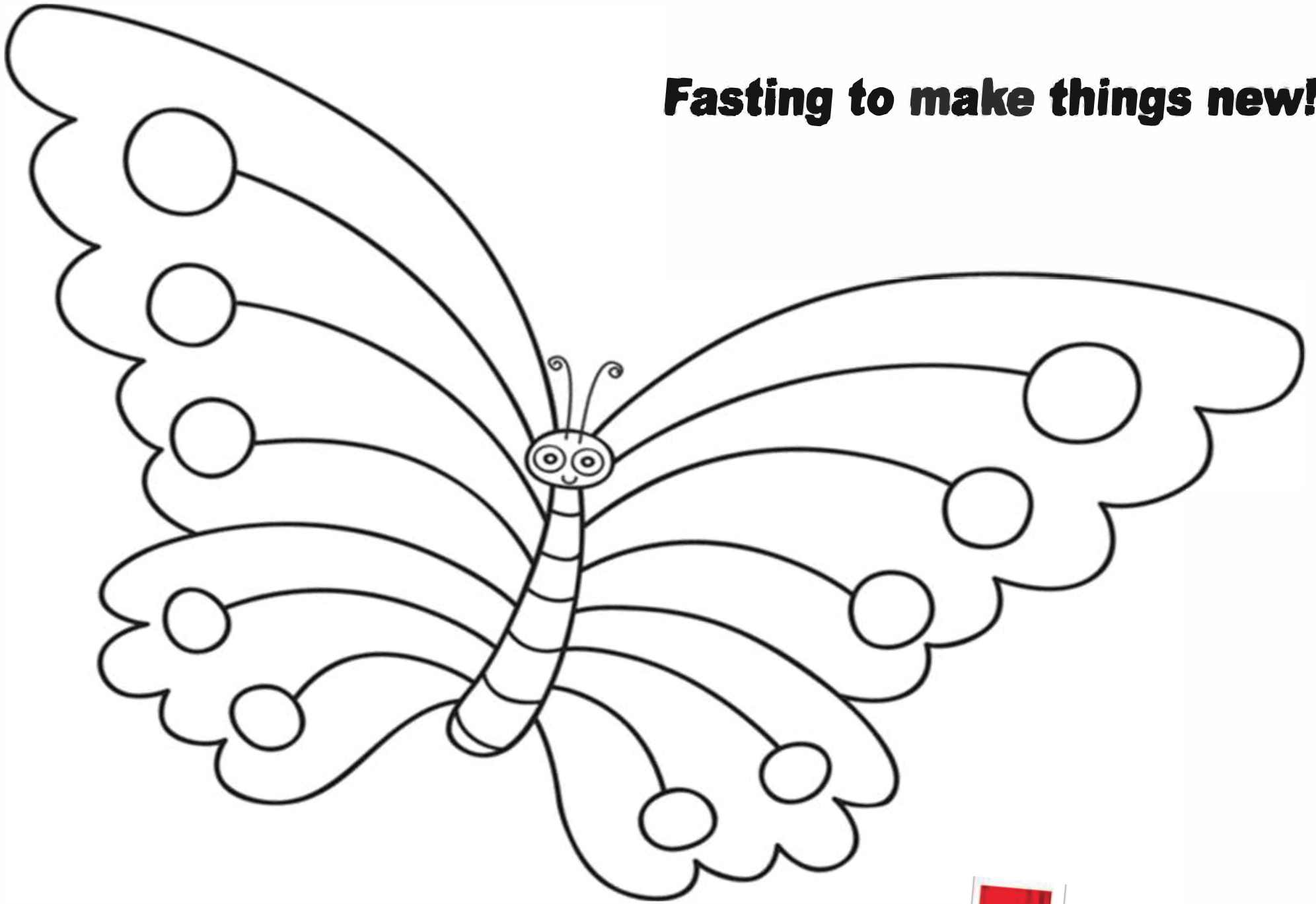
Lent provides us a time to pray for our world and to pray for a just society in which all are respected as children of God. Write one intention or prayer idea for each day that your family can do that reflects Christ's desire that all "may be one".

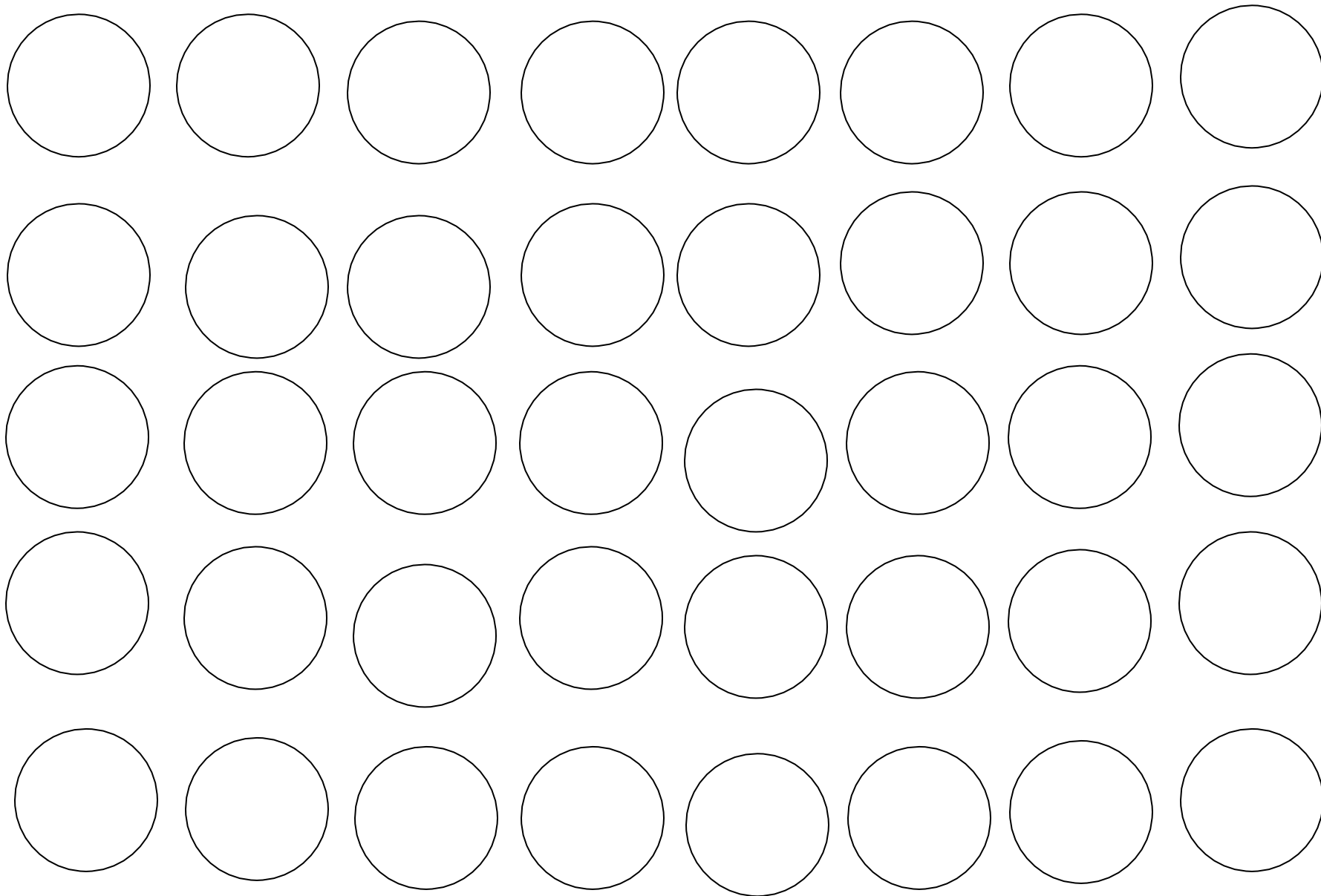
Ash Wednesday is February 14, 2018 and Easter Sunday is April 1, 2018

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
			14 Feb	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	1 Mar	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31
1 Apr						



**Fasting to make things new!**





## FASTING OR GIVING THINGS UP DURING LENT IS ABOUT BECOMING A BETTER PERSON - A BETTER CHILD OF GOD.

Each time you do one of these actions, cut out a colored circle and glue it to the wings around your larva. Watch it turn into an Easter Butterfly! Parents, your children will benefit from your help with this!

**GETTING STARTED - TODAY, WHILE YOU ARE HERE CHOOSE ONE ACTION FROM THE COLUMNS BELOW. DO IT. CUT OUT A CIRCLE THAT MATCHES THE COLOR OF THE ACTION THAT YOU DID. GLUE IT TO YOUR BUTTERFLY WINGS.** (Hint – check out the first item in the blue column)

BECOMING A NICER PERSON/GIVING UP BEING MEAN	BECOMING A MORE TRUTHFUL PERSON /GIVING UP TELLING LIES	BECOMING A MORE HONORABLE PERSON /GIVING UP CHEATING	BECOMING A CALM PERSON/ GIVING UP TEMPER TANTRUMS
Smile at or say something nice to someone you do not like.	Think of something nice and truthful to say about another person. Say it to them.	The next time you play a game think about the fun you are having and not about winning.	The next time you feel your body getting angry talk with an adult about whatever is bothering you.
Do something kind for a person who bothers you.	When you have done something wrong say, "I am sorry."	The next time you lose at a game tell the other person or people how much fun you had playing with them.	If there is a problem that makes you angry, try counting to 10 and walking away from it until you calm down.
Offer to help a person who no one else is helping.	Tell the truth about accidents.	When dividing up food give the other person the first choice of which plate they want.	Instead of getting noisy and physical when you get angry, try drawing a picture of your anger.
Tell a person that everyone picks on when they have done a nice job with something.	Stop and think when you feel yourself starting to tell a lie. Ask God to help you tell the truth.	Sometimes let other people pick the game to play even if it is not the one that you play the best.	Anger brings a lot of energy with it, try riding a bike, skateboard, or doing something active to calm down.
Pray for a person that you do not like.	Ask someone to read you the story, <i>The Boy Who Cried Wolf</i>	When you feel like you might want to cheat, ask God to help you to play fair.	When you feel yourself beginning to get angry, say a prayer and ask God to help you to calm down.
Add other ideas	Add other ideas	Add other ideas	Add other ideas