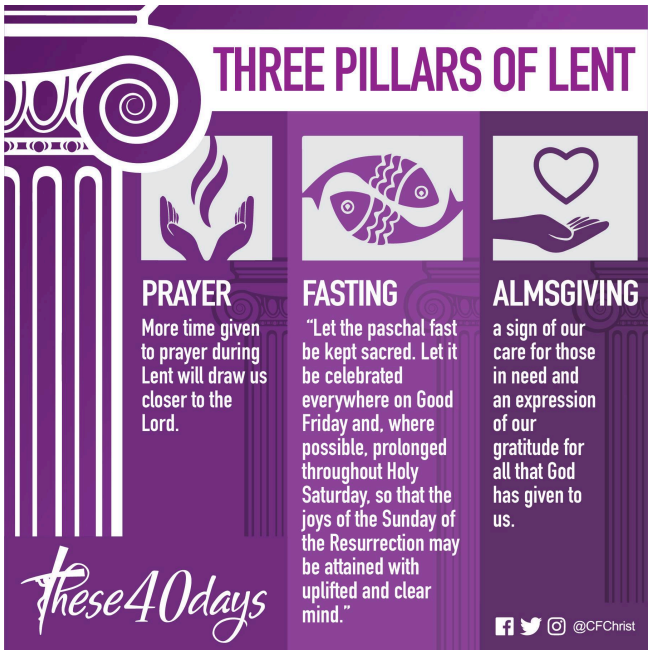
The Season of Lent

- Liturgical color: Purple (for penance and preparation)
- Comes from an Old English word ("lencten"), meaning springtime. It's related to the word "lengthen" since the days grow longer in the spring.
- Begins on **Ash Wednesday**
    - Blessed ashes are a **sacramental.**
    - The ashes are a sign that you recognize your sinfulness
        - Sinners used to have to wear ashes publicly as a penance.
    - They are in the sign of a **cross** because they are also a sign that you will try to be better and follow Jesus more closely every day.
    - The person distributing ashes can either say:
        - "Repent and believe in the Gospel" OR
        - "Remember you are dust and to dust you shall return."
            - It's important for Christians to remember that the earth is only our temporary home. "Eternal life" with God is our end goal for "someday"!
    - You don't have to be a Catholic or have received all your sacraments of initiation to receive ashes. There are other Christian denominations who celebrate Ash Wednesday as well.
    - Ash Wednesday is a special day where MANY Catholics choose to attend Mass, but it is **not** a holy day of obligation.
    - Ash Wednesday is a day of **fast and abstinence**, along with Good Friday.
        - Fasting: Adults (18-59) can eat 2 light meals and one full meal. No eating between meals
        - Abstinence: We abstain from meat on Fridays in Lent and Ash Wednesday. (Give up meat) Age 14+ but many families follow this practice from childhood on.

- 40 days of Lent
    - does NOT include Sundays! 46 days if you count Sundays
    - 40 days DOES include Holy Thursday, Good Friday, and Holy Saturday (which are part of a separate liturgical season, **the Easter Triduum**, but are still days of penance and preparation)
    - Sundays, even during a penitential season, are a day of celebration where we recall Christ's **Resurrection**
    - Many people don't include Sundays as days of sacrifice if they give something up during Lent since they are, in a literal sense, not counted.
    - **Sundays** are meant to be a **day of rest**.
        - 3rd Commandment: "Keep holy the Sabbath/Lord's Day."

        - We observe this commandment by worshiping God at Mass and refraining from unnecessary work. Sundays are meant to be a day for God and family, a day of some quiet and contemplation in a busy, noisy world.
    - You get to decide the “rules” of the sacrifices you chose to make! It’s a personal choice.
- **The 3 pillars of Lent**
    - Pillar: Think of an architectural column! Something solid and stable that holds up a structure.
    - The “Pillars” of Lent are the foundations of a holy Lent:
        - **Prayer**
        - **Fasting**
        - **Almsgiving**
    - These three things will help us to live holier lives and grow closer to Jesus during this Lenten season.



- PRAYER is at the center of all we do!
    - Prayer opens your heart to God
    - Prayer will help you to stay on track with your other Lenten practices
    - Prayer helps you to grow in holiness
    - When we prayerfully listen to the **Word of God**, God speaks to us.
- Why do we make **sacrifices**?
    - We follow the example of Jesus’s BIG sacrifice by making our own small sacrifices

    - Jesus told us to! “Whoever wishes to follow me must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me.” Mt 16:24
    - Giving things up reminds us that **GOD** is what we truly need. A lot of the other things in our lives are “extras” and can distract us from what is truly important.
    - We can’t fully understand *why* there is **redemptive power in suffering,** but as Catholics, we believe that there is. Jesus saved us through his suffering, death and resurrection. As Catholics, Christ invites us to “offer up” our small sacrifices with His in love. When we unite our sufferings with His, we can offer up our own “crosses” for the redemption of souls and the forgiveness of sins.
    - We can fast from **habits** as well as from things.
        - There is goodness just in making sacrifices, but you can also think of what behaviors you should/can work on. Do you need to listen more? Yell less? Be more patient?
- **Almsgiving** means donating food or money to the poor or performing other acts of charity (in other words, good deeds).
    - During Lent we try to do with less for ourselves, and be more selfless and giving towards others.
    - Following Jesus more closely means reaching out to the people in our lives and our world who need out help.
        - It can be someone in your class who is often left out
        - It can be donating money and food to the poor
        - As Christians living in love, we need to be giving both to those we see every day and people in our larger community who need help,

U.S. Bishops’ info on Lent: https://www.usccb.org/prayer-worship/liturgical-year/lent