

THE PILLARS OF LENT

PRAYER 

FASTING 

ALMSGIVING 

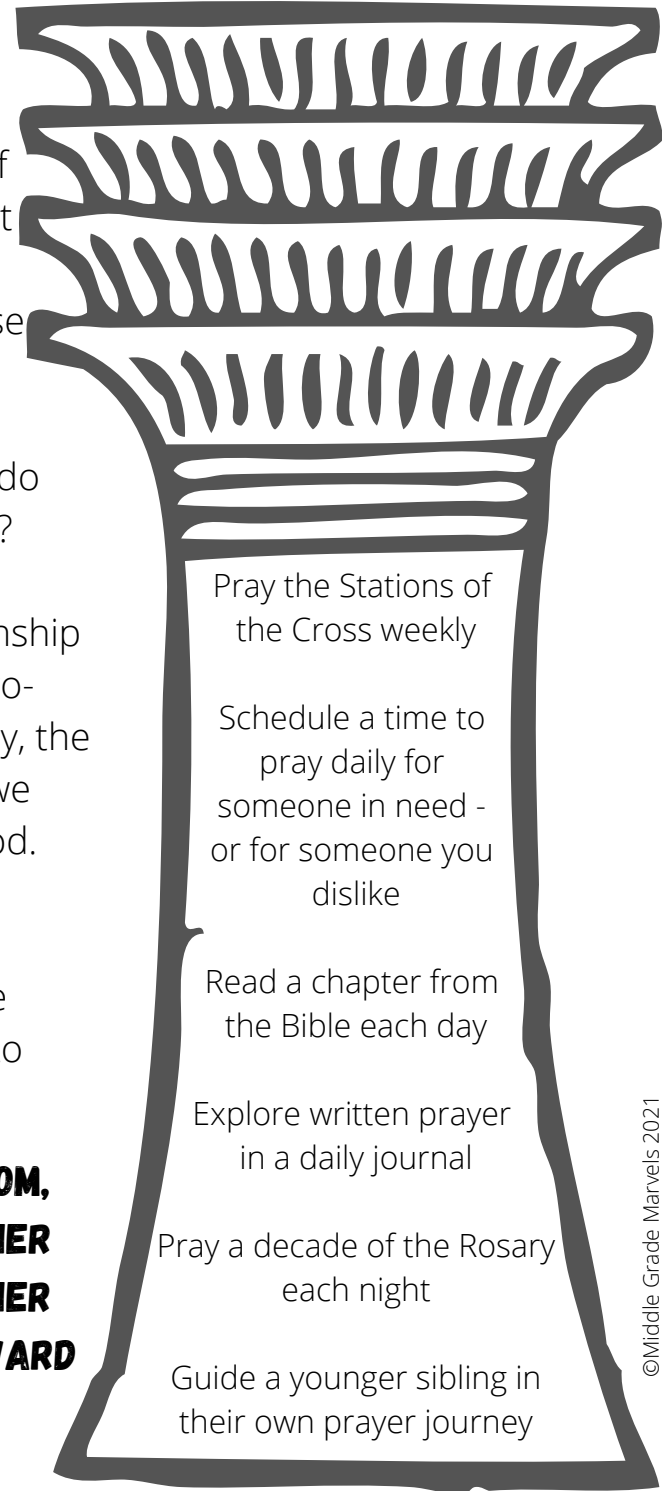
HOW WILL YOU UPHOLD THE LENTEN SEASON?

PRAYER

Prayer may seem like an unusual act to be chosen as one of the pillars of Lent. After all, aren't we supposed to be doing this anyway? Of course we are, but the truth of the matter is that sometimes we don't. Sure, we may pray during Mass or quickly before bed or when that surprise pop quiz lands on our desk. But prayer is so much more than this! Lent is a time of spiritual renewal, a time for growing closer to God. How do we accomplish this seemingly monumental task? Through prayer! The Catechism of the Catholic Church tells us that prayer is a covenant relationship between God and man. More simply put, it is two-way communication with God. The more we pray, the more we tend to want to pray, and in doing so we strengthen our ability to feel the presence of God. When put this way, it's easy to see why this is perhaps the most important component of the Lenten season! Choose an idea or two from the pillar to the right or brainstorm your own ways to deepen your prayer life this Lent.

“BUT WHEN YOU PRAY, GO TO YOUR PRIVATE ROOM, SHUT YOURSELF IN, AND SO PRAY TO YOUR FATHER WHO IS IN THAT SECRET PLACE, AND YOUR FATHER WHO SEES ALL THAT IS DONE IN SECRET WILL REWARD YOU.”

MATTHEW 6:6



Pray the Stations of the Cross weekly

Schedule a time to pray daily for someone in need - or for someone you dislike

Read a chapter from the Bible each day

Explore written prayer in a daily journal

Pray a decade of the Rosary each night

Guide a younger sibling in their own prayer journey

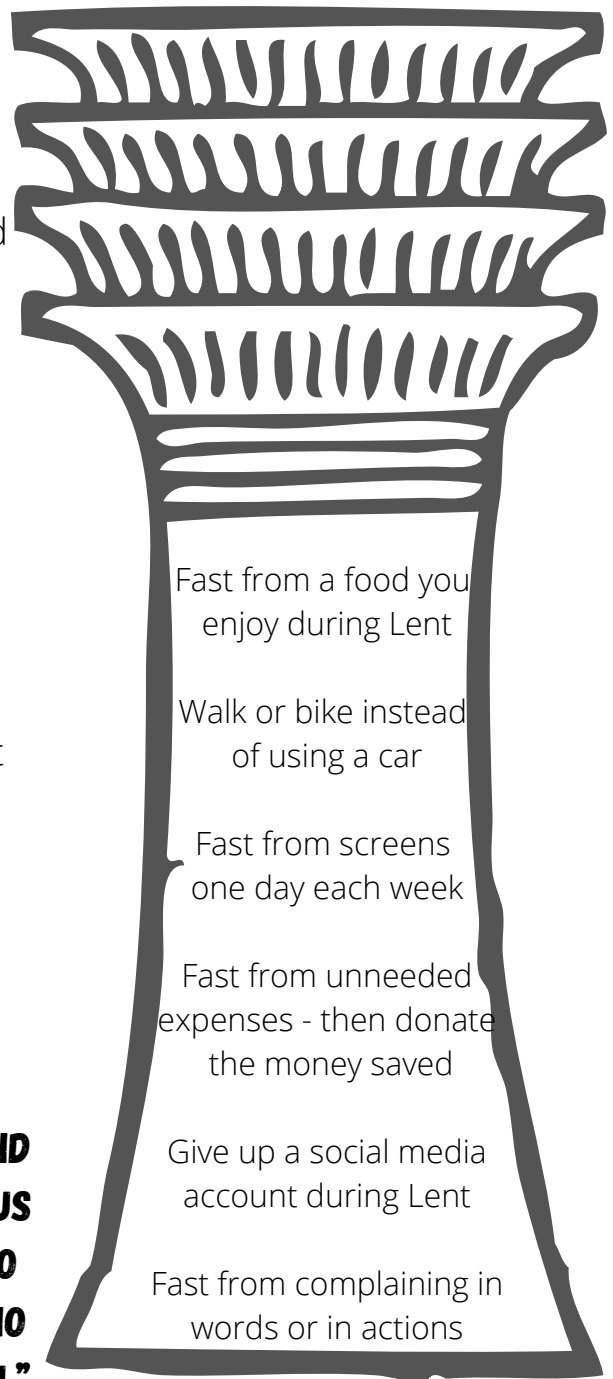
FASTING

First, let's explore the technical meaning of fasting. The Catholic Church defines fasting as having only one complete meal and two smaller snacks on the day that it is practiced. For Catholic adults, fasting is only technically required on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday. Catholics also abstain from eating meat on Fridays during the Lenten season. Many Catholics are already familiar with the practice of "giving something up" for Lent. Most often, this item is a favorite food, such as chocolate. But have you ever considered fasting from something other than food? The goal of fasting is the same - even if the item we choose to fast from isn't food! The deprivation of something we enjoy is fasting.

During Lent, this mirrors Jesus's time in the desert as he wrestled with temptation. Offering our own smaller sacrifice brings us closer to God. Fasting as Jesus told us (without complaint or bragging) also complements our increased Lenten prayer. As we deny our human wants, we can more easily focus on our spiritual prayer.

"BUT WHEN YOU FAST, PUT OIL ON YOUR HEAD AND WASH YOUR FACE SO THAT IT WILL NOT BE OBVIOUS TO OTHERS THAT YOU ARE FASTING, BUT ONLY TO YOUR FATHER, WHO IS UNSEEN. YOUR FATHER, WHO SEES WHAT IS DONE IN SECRET, WILL REWARD YOU."

MATTHEW 6: 17-18



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ALMSGIVING

Almsgiving simply means charitable giving. Of the three Lenten pillars, this is probably the one where the Church provides the least specific guidance. We're given numerous options for scripted prayer as well as specific minimal requirements for fasting. No such standards are in place for almsgiving. There are, however, numerous scripture passages to use as our guide. For example, Jesus tells us that whatever we do for the least of his followers, we do for him. He also tells us that when we give alms, we should do so in secret - without expectation of recognition or reward. Perhaps most importantly, we are reminded to do unto others as we would have done to us. This is almsgiving in its truest sense. Most people associate almsgiving with a charitable donation of money. While it certainly can be, what if our own finances are tight? Are we off the hook? Not exactly. That's where we might need to get a little more creative - and maybe even a little more personal. Almsgiving isn't limited to the financial realm. We can also share our time, shelter, compassion, advice, and company with those in need. What form of charitable giving can you provide?

“SELL ALL THAT YOU POSSESS AND DISTRIBUTE IT TO THE POOR, AND YOU SHALL HAVE TREASURE IN HEAVEN.”
LUKE 18:22



PRAYER 

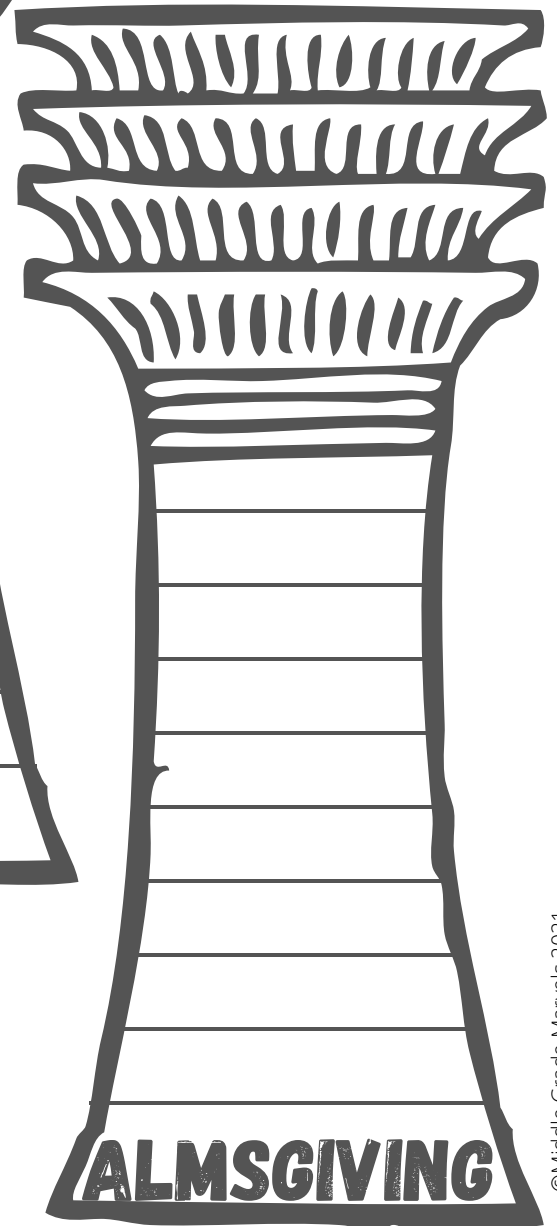
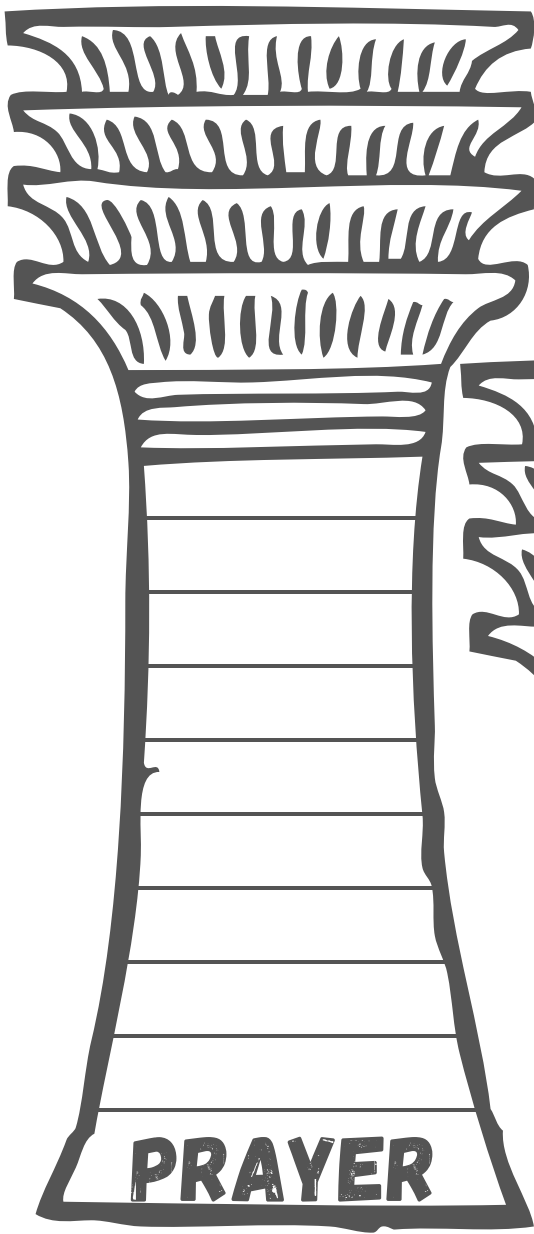
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Directions:

The three Pillars of Lent are prayer, fasting, and almsgiving. Using the lines on each pillar, write a sentence or two about how you can observe each pillar this Lenten season.