

Family Bulletin 2023

(Lent Sunday Reflections)



Development and Peace – Caritas Canada is pleased to provide these Family Reflection Tools for the Sundays of Lent. These weekly reflections are meant to help bring the discussion of the Gospel and our Lenten mission into the family home and to support family reflection and prayer throughout Lent.

Some of these reflections are linked to additional resources for engaging families in discussion, prayer, fasting and almsgiving.

All our resources are available at devp.org/lent/resources. Please feel free to share these Family Reflection Tools on your parish website, in newsletters or bulletins or, where possible, as church handouts.

Feel free to contact comms@devp.org with any questions or feedback.

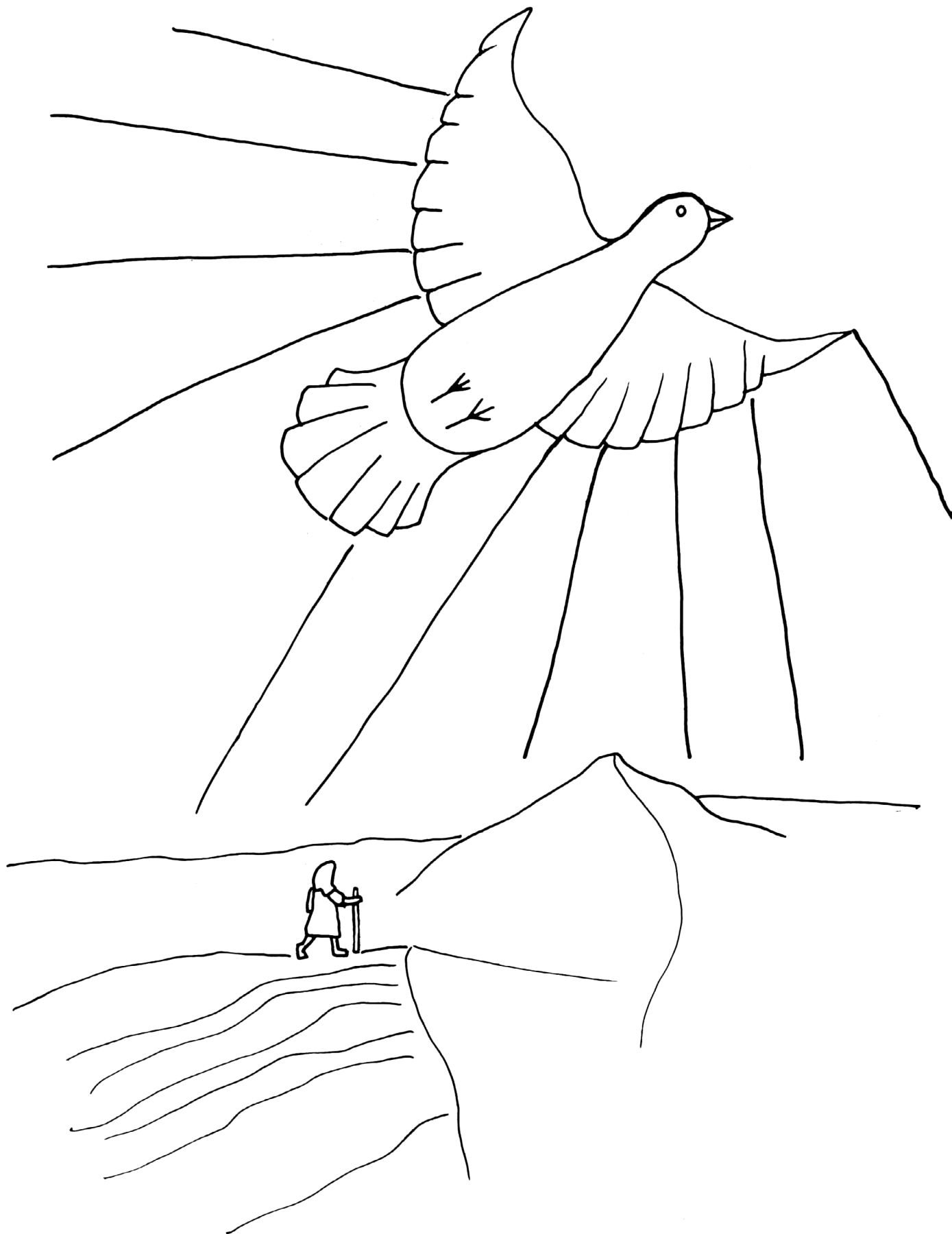
Wishing you a blessed Lenten journey!

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1st Sunday of Lent

Matthew 4:1-11

“He fasted forty days and forty nights, and afterwards he was famished.”

Fasting for 40 days and 40 nights is not easy. Yet, we are called to it every year—giving up the things that distract us from God, dedicating special time to prayer to strengthen our relationship with God, and practicing almsgiving. Almsgiving means giving of our time, talents and possessions to those who are in need in order to help build the Kingdom of God.

It is easy to live on autopilot and not really think about what we are doing. Sometimes, we need to be reminded to think about why and how we do things. Sometimes, we need to take time away from the norms of daily life to reflect and to reconnect with those who are important to us.

Taking on the Lenten challenge to pray, to simplify our lives and to share with those around us can help us come off autopilot mode and become more conscious of our choices. Jesus is ever present to give us strength when we feel tempted to give up on our Lenten commitments.

This year, we are invited to pay particular attention to our choices as they affect our Earth and the sisters and brothers with whom we share this common home. Choosing convenience over sustainability may be easy, but our easy choices are imposing rising costs on Creation that can no longer be ignored.

When choosing your Lenten challenge, consider replacing an old habit with a new one that treads more lightly on the Earth. Try making your challenge an active commitment to God and those around you. This will sustain the impact of your undertaking on your life beyond the 40 days of Lent! If you are not used to praying daily, start with five minutes a day as your Lenten prayer commitment. To fast, consider giving up a favorite food or switching from disposables to reusables for packing your lunch. For almsgiving, you could share your allowance with people experiencing poverty by donating to Development and Peace – Caritas Canada or the local St. Vincent de Paul Society.

How does Christ want us to live in the world? How can we follow His example? Seeking to answer these questions is what Lent is about.

Discussion questions:

- **What can we do this Lent together as a family to refocus ourselves on listening to Jesus?**
- **How can we support each other in our Lenten journey?**

Follow your Lenten days with Development and Peace – Caritas Canada’s Solidarity Calendar. Go to devp.org/lentcalendar to print your copy, colour it in as you wish and display it in your home.



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2nd Sunday of Lent

Matthew 17:1-9

“This is my Son, the Beloved; with him I am well pleased; listen to him!”

Peter wanted to build tents to keep the three holy figures of Moses, Elijah and Jesus with him on the mountain because they represented customs and teachings that were familiar to him. We, too, sometimes hold on only to the comfortably familiar aspects of our faith, like attending Mass and praying, without going deeper. But Jesus challenges us to go “down the mountain,” to go forth from Mass and personal prayer, to spread His love, to live out the teachings of the Gospel and to help build His Kingdom.

The voice from the cloud asked us to listen to His beloved Son. The call of Jesus is not for the faint of heart. It is a call to love our neighbours (all of them); to spend time with the outcast, the sick and the imprisoned; and to be radically inclusive (especially of those who are usually excluded).

Whom can we include who is usually left aside? Whose voices and concerns do we usually tune out? To whom can we show the love of God this week?

Sometimes, we don't do these things out of shyness or fear of what others might think. Sometimes, we are simply too lazy or stuck in our routines to even notice. Lent is a time for overcoming our bad habits and refocusing on Jesus's directives for life and His voice calling us to something greater. It may seem scary, difficult or uncomfortable. But Jesus tells us to not be afraid and assures us that He is with us. He will help us through it.

Discussion questions:

→ **What keeps us from including those who are often left out?**

→ **To whom can we reach out this week at school or work, and as a family?**

This week, think about how you can **Create Hope** for a better world. Feel free to spread hope around you by painting rocks or chalk messages of solidarity in your neighborhood to make your neighbors smile.



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3rd Sunday of Lent

John: 4:5-42 (5-15, 19-26, 40-42)

The woman said to him, "I know that the Messiah is coming" (who is called Christ). "When he comes, he will proclaim all things to us." Jesus said to her, "I am He, the one who is speaking to you."

Jews and Samaritans had different ideas about God and prayer. This affected their daily lives. They did not interact much and tended to not have much respect for one another because of their differences. So, the woman at the well is surprised when Jesus, a Jew, asks her, a Samaritan, for a drink.

Jesus affirmed the value and dignity of everyone he met, including the vulnerable, the poor and the sick. Rising above the custom of the time, Jesus did not see or judge others by their sins, their gender, their origins or their customs. He saw every person through the eyes of love.

Most women would perform the hard work of raising water at dawn or dusk. That this woman is at the well in the midday heat indicates that she is an outcast. But her sins and challenges do not matter to Jesus, who treats her with respect and love.

Jesus often affirms the place of women in His stories. Here again, He breaks prevailing social and cultural norms to address the woman at the well with dignity, speaking to her honestly, and engaging her in His love and truth. We are called to do the same with the outcasts of our society today.

In many countries of the Global South, there are two conflicting visions of how to live and prosper. The one that puts forward the exploitation of the territory with the arrival of mining companies or the construction of dams that damage the environment, and the one of local communities that want to preserve their territory to protect their livelihoods and the health of the planet.

How can we, as Jesus did, see the dignity in everyone involved in this conflict? How do we listen to the voices of those who are pushed aside, those who are different from us? How can we prioritize the needs of the most vulnerable? How do we respond to the call to live in harmony with our sisters and brothers and with the Earth?

Discussion question:

→ **What opportunities do we have in our daily lives to affirm someone's dignity?**

This week, meet Raquel Soto, a Colombian peasant woman who protects her territory and makes documentaries with ACA, a partner of Development and Peace – Caritas Canada. She will be visiting us in Canada in March! For more information: devp.org/visitors.



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4th Sunday of Lent

John 9:1-41 (1, 6-9, 13-17, 34-38)

Jesus said, "I came into this world for judgment so that those who do not see may see, and those who do see may become blind."

Sometimes, we can be like the Pharisees in today's Gospel. Sometimes, thinking we know better, we make fun of those who are trying to help solve a problem. We think they are wasting their energy, that they don't understand and that their invitations for us to join them are a waste of our time. It is easy to become disillusioned, to lose sight of the hope in Christ's message. It is easy to accept poverty, doubt, injustice and other social evils as "normal" and to not respond compassionately.

In *Laudato Si'*, Pope Francis writes that this is how we relate to the climate crisis. He notes that even committed and prayerful Christians sometimes become passive to and even critical of expressions of concern for the environment (LS, 217). He pleads us to be transformed by our relationship with Christ. This transformation would make us treat the world with the love and care to which Christ calls us. This would be a deep love of not just humanity but also the natural world, itself a divine revelation loved by God with which we are in constant relationship. The Holy Father speaks of the need to hear the Cry of the Earth and the Cry of the Poor together. This means seeing environmental degradation and poverty as connected issues to be addressed as one.

In the way of Jesus, loving is the most important rule. His call to love our neighbour means loving even those of the global family whom we don't see everyday but with whom we are connected. These are people whose lives are impacted by what we buy, what our governments do and how they are spoken of in the news and social media. We can love these distant, often-ignored neighbours by working for global justice.

When we focus on the obstacles, active love is hard. But possibilities begin to appear when we focus on the humanity of people, whether in front of us or far away; on what we have in common; and on what we can accomplish together. We must listen to other people's voices, ideas and stories with open hearts if we want to understand them better.

Accepting new ideas, new ways of working and new roles can be scary. But with Jesus accompanying us on the journey, we needn't be scared.

Discussion questions:

- **Who are the people in our daily lives to whom we can show the love and compassion of God?**
- **What practices can our family adopt for the well-being of the whole human family?**

This week, meet Elvin Hernández who helps communities defend their rights and territories in collaboration with our Honduran partner ERIC. For more information: devp.org/visitors.



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5th Sunday of Lent - Solidarity Sunday

John 11: 1-45 (3-7, 17, 20-27, 33b-45)

Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live, and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die."

Today is Solidarity Sunday. When they created Development and Peace – Caritas Canada in 1967, the Canadian Bishops set aside this day to reflect on loving our sisters and brothers in the world and to share what we can to help those of them who are most vulnerable.

Jesus was moved by the pain that Mary, Martha and their friends felt at the loss of Lazarus. He loved them like his own family. We too, should see those around the world living in poverty, oppression and exclusion as our sisters and brothers and be moved by their suffering.

Acts of love for our sisters and brothers are not about earning our way into heaven. They aren't about showing off. Jesus usually helps people in very humble and quiet ways. He heals, He teaches, He affirms and He saves people. He does so without the pomp and pageantry of "false prophets."

Helping others is not something we do for ourselves; we do it for God. Helping others is a sign of *caritas*, that is, love received and given. When we see others as God's children and our sisters and brothers, we share with them what we have, knowing that the goodness of Creation is given to all. We encounter Christ in others, and we are transformed by the relationship between sisters and brothers (and not between donors and recipients).

Discussion questions:

→ **How have we been changed by helping others?**

→ **What are some practical ways in which we can better live in solidarity with our sisters and brothers around the world?**

Bring your donations to church today for the Solidarity Sunday Collection or donate online at devp.org/give.



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6th Sunday of Lent - Palm Sunday

Matthew 26:14-27, 66

And going a little farther, he threw himself on the ground and prayed, "My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me; yet not what I want but what you want."

Committing to follow God is not an easy path. Living compassion, praying daily and protecting the dignity of our sisters and brothers—none are easy tasks. But if we do our best, act in solidarity and come together as one human family, we can surely hope for a better future.

In a message for the XXXVII World Youth Day 2022-2023, to be held in Lisbon in 2023, Pope Francis said to young people:

"Dear young people, now is the time to set out in haste towards concrete encounters, towards genuine acceptance of those different from ourselves. This was the case with the young Mary and the elderly Elizabeth. Only thus will we bridge distances – between generations, social classes, ethnic and other groups – and even put an end to wars. Young people always represent the hope for new unity within our fragmented and divided human family."

Hope as become a guiding theme for Development and Peace – Caritas Canada for the next five years. Inspired by Pope Francis's words at the 4th World Meeting of Popular Movements on October 16, 2021, we are uniting under the theme **Create Hope**.

"You are social poets, because you have the ability and the courage to create hope where there appears to be only waste and exclusion. [...] With your hands you know how to shape the dignity of each person, of families and of society as a whole, with land, housing, work, care, and community."

Just as Pope Francis speaks of creating hope in times of waste and exclusion, Jesus Christ brought hope to the world through his sacrifice on the cross. He showed us that even in our darkest moments, we can find strength and hope in our faith.

Today, let's think about how we can use our own hands and abilities to shape the dignity of each person, each family, and society as a whole. We can think about how we can create hope in a world that often feels hopeless. We can also think about how we can help those who are marginalized and excluded.

Just as Jesus Christ showed us the importance of caring for one another, Pope Francis reminds us that we too have the ability to make a difference in the world. Let us use our hands and our hearts to create hope and build a better world for all.

Discussion question:

→ **"Are you up to this? What answer will you give... with your hands and with your feet, to the Lord, who is the way, the truth and the life?"— Pope Francis, World Youth Day prayer vigil, Krakow, Poland, July 2016**

Continue your journey in Solidarity by becoming members of Development and Peace – Caritas Canada. Get involved in social justice issues and connect with people who share your values. Learn more at devp.org/joinus