

LENTEN SUGGESTIONS

Week 1: "I was hungry"

"For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, naked and you clothed me, I was ill and you comforted me, in prison and you came to visit me." (Mt 25:35-40)

Hunger Facts:

- . 800,000,000 people worldwide suffer from chronic hunger and malnutrition.
- . Half of the deaths of all children under age 5 are caused by malnutrition.
- . Over 40,000 people die of hunger-related causes every day.

Class Activity:

Did you know that for the price of a couple of candy bars and a large bag of chips -- about \$2.50 -- a person in a needy country can be fed for up to one month? For your class activity, have everyone list some "junk foods" that are regularly bought and consumed by them in an average week. List all soft drinks, cookies, etc., with the approximate cost of each. Add these and calculate how much is spent per week on junk food. For the next two weeks, give up all junk food. The money saved should be put aside in a "sharing bank" to later be given toward helping the starving throughout the world. Your classes sacrifice throughout this first week of Lent will help provide life-giving food for the truly needy.

Closing Prayer:

Close the evening with a spontaneous prayer of thanksgiving for the food God provides for your class. Let each class member give thanks for what his nourishment enables them to do. For example, food gives strength to enable us to participate in sports, work, play, caring for others. Spend a final moment praying for the children who are hungry today.

Week 2: "I was a stranger"

"Share your bread with the hungry, shelter the oppressed and the homeless; clothe the naked when you see them and turn not your back on your own." (Isa 58:7)

Refugee Facts:

- . Nearly 16,000 refugees throughout the world have been displaced by natural and political disasters.
- . More people have become refugees in this century than at any other point in history.
- . Over half the refugees in the world today are children under 16 years of age.

Class Activity:

Many situations cause people to be uprooted from their homes. These situations include earthquakes, floods, war, droughts and political oppression. In the next week, your class can provide comfort or necessities to a poor family. If you don't already know of a family you would like to assist, World Relief (800-431-2808) can help you locate a needy family in your area. Decide what you'd like to share with this family. Your class may want to give clothes, toys or household necessities that they no longer need or use. Or, your class may want to cook a meal and take it to the poor family or invite them to your home for supper.

Closing Prayer:

Thank God for the blessing of your home. Allow each person to give thanks for what they are particularly grateful for about your home (a warm bed, shelter from the cold, and so on). Pray for all who are lonely and homeless today. Ask God to lead them to the warmth and shelter of His love.

Week 3: "I was thirsty"

"Whoever drinks the water I give him will never be thirsty; the water I give them shall become a fountain within him, leaping up to provide eternal life."
(Jn 4:14)

Water Facts:

- . 80% of all disease in the Third World is directly related to contaminated water.
- . Unsafe water is the direct cause of 10,000,000 deaths each year.
- . 70% of the Third World lacks safe drinking water.

Class Activity:

In some countries, malnourished villagers walk as much as 10 hours every other day to find water. Compare this to how readily available and abundant water is in your home. Have everyone name ways they use water daily -- for drinking, cleaning and recreation. Discuss how water is wasted and ways to use water more responsibly.

Talk about other examples of waste in your daily living and how money is wasted on unnecessary or luxury items. Have each person think of one luxury item which they spend money on every week. Plan to cut down or completely give up buying that item for the next week. The items might be cigarettes, video games or coffee. Determine how much money will be saved that week and put that amount in your sharing bank. This sacrifice gives class members an opportunity to give up one of many luxuries to help others meet vital necessities.

Closing Prayer:

Ask God to help your class be mindful of waste both with water and with other gifts of comfort. Thank God for the many luxuries that you have been given and let each class member give thanks for a luxury item they particularly enjoy. Close with a prayer for those who have no luxuries -- who suffer from acute thirst, disease and other hardships.