

A Lenten Journey

The following module on Lent (3 x 40 mins) engages with the following Learning Outcomes:

Expressing Beliefs:

Elements	Learning Outcomes Students should be able to:
Reflection and Action	1.5 explore the presence of religious themes in contemporary culture through an examination of art, music, literature or film 1.6 examine and appreciate how people give expression to religious belief in religious rituals, in formal places of worship and other sacred spaces

Exploring questions:

Enquiry	2.1 research artistic, architectural or archaeological evidence that shows ways in which people have searched for meaning and purpose in life
Exploration	2.2 consider responses from one major world religion and from a non-religious world view to some big questions about the meaning of life, such as, why are we here? How should we live? What happens when we die?

Living our Values:

Enquiry	3.1 examine different sources of values and ways in which the values of a person relate to their everyday life choices, their relationships, and their responsibilities to others

Key Learning

In this module you will:



- Explore the concept of Lent.
- Identify the ritual of Ash Wednesday and outline the main points of this ritual and the reasons why it is celebrated.
- Discuss how Lent is a time to:

- reflect on the various people, relationships and events that seek to nourish and sustain us on our journey of life.
- Identify moments of challenge in our lives and recognise ways to cope with these challenges.
- Suggest how we can learn from previous mistakes
- Reflect on how we can set goals for the future

First Lesson- Making our Lenten Journey



Look at above picture and discuss the questions.

 <p>I SEE...</p> <p>What do you see?</p>	 <p>I THINK...</p> <p>What do you think about that?</p>	 <p>I WONDER...</p> <p>What does it make you wonder?</p>
--	---	--

Then listen to this short clip about Ash Wednesday and Lent from 'Busted Halo'

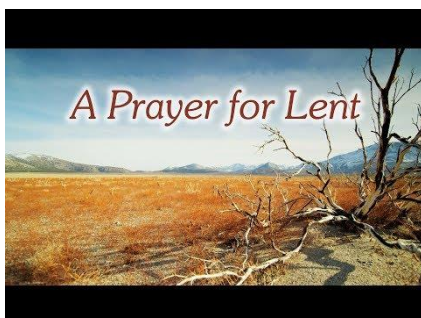
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m3L3c23MfC0>

- Try to list as many facts as you can remember from the clip.
- Share your list with the class -If you have Padlet you can add your list to the board.

We are in the season of Lent in the Catholic calendar. When we think of Lent, we conjure up images of ashes on the forehead, giving something up and Trocaire boxes. However, Lent is far more than that. It is an opportunity for 'spiritual self-improvement'. This involves taking a close look at your life, from the relationships you have, the things you value most to the choices you make. During Lent, we are given the choice to learn from past mistakes, rebuild broken relationships and renew our faith in God who is the source of all life.

A few years ago, a teacher urged students to move beyond giving up some habit of sin that marked their lives. About halfway through Lent, she asked her students how they were doing with their Lenten promise. One of the girls had promised to give up fighting with her brothers and sisters during Lent. When the teacher asked her how it was going, the girl replied, 'I'm doing pretty good, but I can't wait until Easter!'

That response indicates that this girl had only partly understood the purpose of Lenten 'giving up.' Lent is about conversion, turning our lives more completely over to Christ and his way of life. That always involves making a positive change in your life that will genuinely last beyond a certain period of time. Conversion means leaving behind an old way of living and acting in order to embrace new life in Christ.



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?app=desktop&v=V5ipEDL7Qgk>

Discussion and Reflection time based on the above clip.

What does it mean to turn your face to God?

What are the desert areas of our life? (parts that are dry and empty and need to be nourished)

Why do we hide them? From Whom? Ourselves? (Lent is a time when we reflect and try to discover the areas of our lives/ parts of ourselves on which we can improve).

How can we lay before God the desert areas of our life?

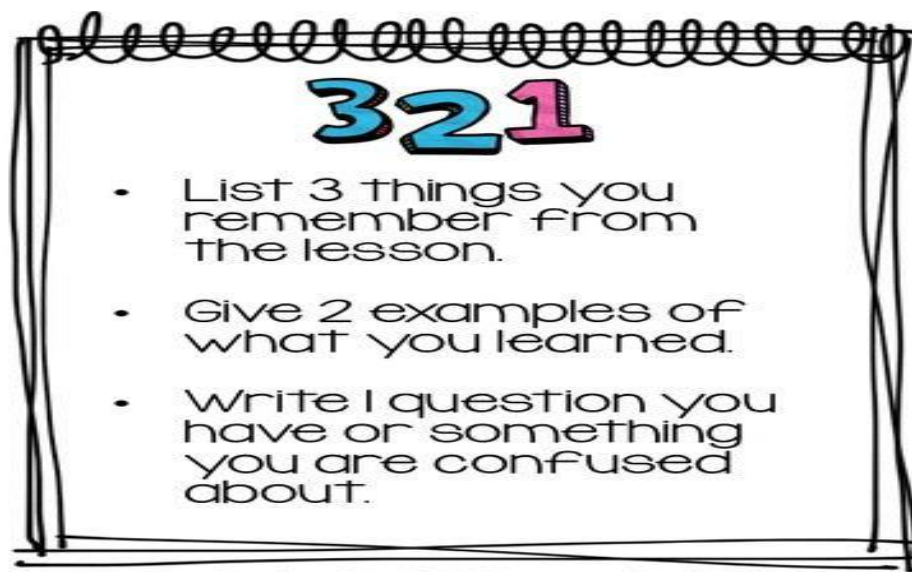
What do you think are the barren selfish pursuits?

How can we draw back from the harsh pull of media?

The prayer suggests that we can “Soak in your words of life, rest in the warmth of your love, Bath in the power of your spirit.”

What are the ways in which people of different faiths do this?

(Prayer/ Meditation etc.- This will be introduced in the next section)



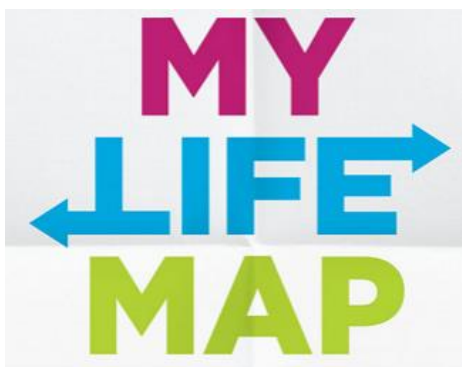
Second Lesson- Embarking on a Special Journey

Being a teenager in today's world is not easy. Each one of you have faced challenges and uncertainties that have made life seem quite gloomy at times. We have all encountered personal obstacles in our life. These obstacles may have knocked our self-confidence or undermined our sense of value and worth. You are not alone in having felt this way.

It is the difficulties of life that often serve as the greatest blessings. When we encounter hardship and our pushed to our limits, we have the opportunity to show courage, tolerance, forgiveness, understanding, wisdom and an inner strength that we may not have even know that we had. You all will face plenty more challenges in the future. However, it is your ability to tap into your inner strength and use the gifts & talents that you have at your disposal, which will enable you to grow and learn from any difficulty.



In this class we will look at how we can use this time of lent to contemplate our own journey in life. We will reflect on the various people, relationships and events that seek to nourish and sustain us on our journey of life. We will also look at the more difficult encounters that we have faced so far and explore the tools that we have to help us overcome any challenge.



Before we go any further let's say a prayer.

A prayer is an act of communication with God. In prayer, we share our thoughts, worries, hopes and fears with our Creator.

We will each think of a special person in our lives who we feel needs both the light and love of God in their lives right now.

You are invited to share the name of the person who you would like to dedicate this prayer to this morning...

I would like to pray for....

Dear God,

If I am wrong,

Right me.

If I am lost,

Guide me.

If I start giving up,

Keep me going.

Lead me in light and love.

Amen.



Icebreakers

I want you to ask yourselves, how well do you really know each other? Have you taken the time to talk to all of your classmates and really listen to their story? Are you aware of their hobbies & interests? What about their passions & fears? Do you know what their hopes are for the future?



Getting to know you- True or False

Stand in a circle or teacher calls name of student if on Zoom; first person says name and two things about themselves. One has to be true and the other made up. For example: A famous person you met or you went sky diving for charity. Works well if the unusual thing is actually the true one! Can begin a good discussion on how much there is to learn about one another.



Written Exercise/ Reflection

On a blank page write the name of one important person, one event and one experience that have defined your journey in life up until now. Include the approximate date of your encounter with each person, event or experience. Write why this person/event was so significant. The purpose of this task is to reflect on your own personal journey to date, to look back over your journey over the years and to mark the moments that mattered most in your life path to date.



Think-Pair-Share

If you are comfortable to do so discuss one of the most important people, events or experiences that you wrote with a partner. Describe this moment from memory. Explain why it has made your journey of life more rewarding and memorable.



The Challenges of Life

Jesus spent 40 days and nights praying and fasting in the desert. He took this time out of his ministry to spiritually prepare himself for the difficult road that lay ahead. We are going to use this time today to reflect on mistakes that we have made and seek to rebuild broken bridges in our lives.

The Burren in north County Clare contains some of the most extensive limestone karst scenery in Europe. This means that there are limestone hills that are devoid of a soil covering. The slabs making up the display in this garden are composed of Carboniferous limestone, as is the Burren. Despite the rugged harshness of this area, there is a combination of alpine plants growing side by side with Mediterranean species. This is due to the unique combination of cool, wet summers and mild winters in Ireland, which are favourable conditions for these plants to survive.



We too, will encounter difficult terrain in our lives that may threaten to stumble our growth. However, if we turn to God and ask him to help us stop, reflect and take a step back every once in a while, we will gain greater perspective. This will enable us to make the choices that are responsible and positive.



Don't say a word-We will now look at key scenarios in our lives in which we should always practice the pause.

When you're angry - don't let rip, even if you are justified, before you give yourself a chance to cool down. If you do, you may live to regret some harsh, thoughtless words.

When someone is telling you something detrimental about someone else, even if what is being said is true, don't allow yourself to become a member of the judgement team. Try to say something positive about the person or else change the subject.

When you're tempted to say "I told you so". They probably know that already, reminders don't help.

When someone needs your silence more than your words, even if they are words of advice. Often people who are distressed, confused or unhappy really need a good listener rather than a good adviser.

When you have something private or personal to say to someone and other people are within earshot. Respect confidentiality at all times.

Write a list of positive words and phrases that you could use when faced with any future difficult situation. These words may be of use to you when you are in disagreement with someone and in need of a compromise. They may help the other person see your point of view. They may give another person a much



need extra boost when they are feeling down. They may form part of the best advice that they will ever give.

My list of positive words/phrases:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

Share your words/ phrases with the class

A Few Words of Wisdom



Third Lesson- Be your own kind of unique

The chain tent is a remarkable circular pergola erected sometime after 1834 in the Botanic Gardens, Glasnevin by the then head gardener Ninian Niven. Until 1870 it was centred by a weeping ash tree, from which the chains descended, but this was then replaced by an iron pole. Today the pergola supports a number of venerable Wisteria plants.

This is one of the most unique structures within the Botanic Gardens.

When Jesus was praying and fasting in the desert, he came under great pressure to stray from the path that God had set for him. We, too, are sometimes tempted to abandon our morals and beliefs to fit in with everyone else. As teenagers, we are faced with the pressure to do, say and think what is socially acceptable at the time. This

sometimes come with sacrificing one's true self at the expense of what is popular or adhering to the status quo. It can be extremely difficult to simply be ourselves, at our most comfortable, when everyone else is expects us to look and behave a particular way. But Jesus never gave up on who he was, despite facing enormous pressure. In the face of

ultimate hardship and struggle, he remained focus on spreading a very simple message – to love one another and God with all your heart, mind and soul.

Let us read a reflection now to remind ourselves of just how very special we are to God.



Our True Identity

God has given us the truth about where we came from, why we are here and to where we are going. Much of the confusion in this life comes from simply not understanding who we are and to Whom we belong.

One of the most beloved storytellers of all time was the Danish writer Hans Christian Anderson. In one of his stories the Ugly Duckling, the mother Duckling discovers that one of her chicks is very large and unusually ugly. The ugly ducklings cannot leave the ugly child alone. They punish him mercilessly. The ugly duckling decided that it would be best for everyone if he left his family and so he ran away.

Then one day, he sees flying overhead a flock of majestic birds. He takes flight and follows them to a beautiful lake. The ugly duckling looks into the lake and sees the reflection of a magnificent swan.

The ugly duckling realises that the reflection is his own. He has discovered who he really is.

Think of where you come from. You're the sons and daughters of the greatest and most glorious Being in the universe.

He loves you with an infinite love. He wants the best for you.

This knowledge changes everything. It changes your present. It can change your future. And it can change the world.

If only we understood who we are and what is in store for us and how much we are loved.

Our hearts would overflow with such gratitude and happiness that it would enlighten even the darkest sorrows with a light and love of God.

Of course there will always be voices telling you that you are foolish to believe



you are swans insisting that you are ugly ducklings and that you can't expect to become anything else.

But you know better.

You are no ordinary beings. You are glorious and eternal.

Look into the water and see your true reflection.

It is my prayer and blessing that when you look at your reflection, you will be able to see beyond imperfections and self-doubt.

And recognise who you truly are.

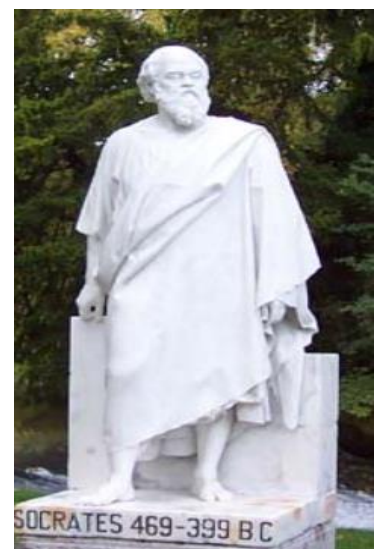
Glorious daughters and sons of Almighty God.



Learning from Previous Mistake

Socrates (469-399 BC) was an ancient Greek philosopher who is widely credited with laying the foundation for Western philosophy. His most important contribution to Western thought is known as dialectics, which involves answering a question with a question. He applied this Socratic Method to the examination of key moral concepts such as Good and Justice.

In the spirit of Socrates, let us look back on our lives and examine some of the biggest mistakes, regrets and difficult choices that we made along the way.



If you could rewind your life, would you....

...repeat anything?

...erase parts?

...do anything differently?

The purpose of this task is to reflect on our previous failures. Even though we have all made mistakes, we have the ability to grow and learn from them.

In completing this task, we are looking deeply at our lives with a sense of insight and clarity. In the spirit of Lent, may God help us to pause and reflect on difficult choices and circumstances that we may be faced up in the future.

Setting goals for the future

'A hero is someone who has given his or her life to something bigger than oneself.' (Joseph Campbell)

Jesus gave up his life on the cross so that we may have chance to live good, decent and honest lives. He gave of himself out of love for us.

What cause will you devote your life to in your future goals?

With regard to your future,

Write on a blank sheet of paper the following questions:

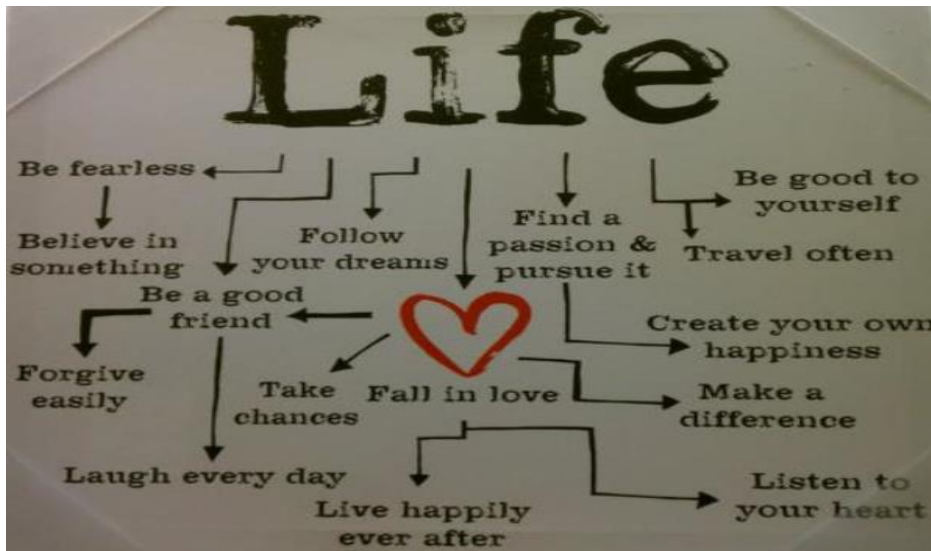
You can use a mind map or draw symbols.

Where do you want to be?

How do you plan to get there?

Are there any blocks in your way? If so, what are they?

What could help you get there?



The purpose of this task is to reflect on our future journey however unsure of it we still may be. In Your life it is important to contemplate the road ahead and to remember that the only thing that God asks of you is that you invite Him into your life. It is then that you will experience how much He loves you and you will begin to be transformed into the very best version of yourself that you can be. Even though Jesus felt weakness through temptation in the desert, he never lost sight of his ultimate purpose in life.

Backpack Meditation

Close your eyes and relax. Breathe deeply. Imagine each part of your body relaxing.

Feel the calm travel up from your toes to your legs. Relax your back and your shoulders...your neck and your head. Imagine yourself sitting here (the place where you are at).

You get up and walk to the door. You open the door and you are in your favourite place. Where are you? Picture the sights and sounds of this place as you walk around.



As you reach the centre, you can see Jesus standing there with his arms outstretched. What do you say to him? What questions do you have for him? What does he answer? As you are talking, Jesus hands you a backpack. It is filled with symbols, words, phrases, and memories of all the experiences which have influenced your faith journey throughout your life.

You look inside. What do you find? Think back to your childhood - what you first learned about God. Who or what have influenced you most since then? What obstacles have you faced in your faith journey? Who has helped you through these rough times? What questions have you wondered about?

You see at the top of the backpack those issues which you and Jesus have just discussed. You also notice that there is still room left for future growth and learning. Jesus explains that you will always wear your backpack. However, once you leave this place, it will become invisible.

When you are finished talking to Jesus, say goodbye. Walk back the way you came until you come to the door of the place where you are now. You walk inside and sit back down where you are now and slowly open your eyes.

Listen to this [Song about turning back to God](#):



God speaks to us in many ways- through people, scripture and through music.

What is God saying to you in this song?

What is his message for you?

Listen to the song a second time and write down one line of the song that you feel speaks to you.

Reflecting on Learning

Write about one thing that you learned about yourself in these classes.

What aspect did you find inspiring and why?

How will this inspiration help guide and direct you on the future path that you will take in life?

