

~ Adult Faith Reflection Exercise ~

13. Lent - The Three Trees

Environment Suggestions: a purple cloth, candle, as well as a wooden box, boat, and cross.

Introduction:

Leader: We come together as a community to reflect on this holy season of Lent. We begin by reading The Tale of the Three Trees.

*(If a copy of the picture book is not available, see <http://www.word4life.com/threetrees.html> .
The story can be read aloud or may include the use of video presentations available online.)*

Opening Prayer:

Leader: † *In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.*

Merciful God, look on us, Your children as we journey through this holy season of Lent. Help us to understand more deeply the meaning of Your Son's death and resurrection for our lives. Teach us to grow in our desire for You and strengthen our efforts to build a more compassionate world. We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord.

All: *Amen.*

Scripture Readings and Response:

Reader 1: Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal; but store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

(Matthew 6:19-21)

Leader: Lord our God, in our fasting, help us to avoid the temptations of earthly treasures so that we can see more clearly the treasures of Your Kingdom. We pray ...

Response: **Teach me Your ways, O Lord, teach me Your ways.** *(may be sung, see CBW III #119)*

Leader: Lord our God, like the first tree, mold our lives into the kind of treasure boxes into which You daily pour Your many blessings. Help us to say thank you through our service to others. We pray ... **R.**

Reader 2: 'And whenever you pray, do not be like the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, so that they may be seen by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. But whenever you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.'

(Matthew 6:5-6)

Leader: Lord our God, create in us a desire to pray, helping us to overcome any false sense that we do not need You in our lives. We pray ... **R.**

Leader: Lord our God, like the second tree, help us to see how our smallest efforts can be used by You to overcome life's storms in ways we can hardly imagine. We pray ... **R.**

Reader 3: He sat down opposite the treasury, and watched the crowd putting money into the treasury. Many rich people put in large sums. A poor widow came and put in two small copper coins, which are worth a penny. Then he called his disciples and said to them, 'Truly I tell you, this poor widow has put in more than all those who are contributing to the treasury. For all of them have contributed out of their abundance; but she out of her poverty has put in everything she had, all she had to live on.'

(Mark 12:41-44)

Leader: Lord our God, help us to see that You can transform even our smallest contributions into something greater. We pray ... **R.**

Leader: Lord our God, like the third tree, wherever we may find ourselves in life, may our faith and willingness to give of ourselves be signs of your love for everyone. We pray ... **R.**

Faith Sharing and Guiding Questions in Small Groups:

1. During Lent we often plan to give up something, such as candy, dessert, etc. How do our actions or sacrifices help others? How does the metaphor of a treasure box inform your understanding of fasting?
2. How might you attempt to intensify your prayer life during lent? What styles of prayer have been most meaningful for you?
3. As disciples of Jesus, we must be concerned with what is happening to our neighbours. Who are your neighbours? How can you support all your neighbours through almsgiving? How are acts of charity connected to justice - the other foot of Catholic Social Teaching?

Music:

Suggested songs for reflection include Purify My Heart, Father I Give Myself, and Open My Eyes, all from the Never Too Young / Spirit and Song collections.

Closing Prayer:

Leader: Let us pray ...
God our Father,
You have taught us to overcome our sins by prayer, fasting and almsgiving.
When we are discouraged by our sinfulness, fill us with Your love.
Throughout the season of Lent, make us strong
to resist temptation, and follow You more closely
according to the plans You have for us.

We make this prayer in the name of Jesus, Your Son. *Amen*

All: † *In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.*