



**Cross Catholic
OUTREACH**

Delivering Food, Shelter and Hope to the Poorest of the Poor

2025 Lent Activity Guide

for Children and Families



Pray. Fast. Share a Glass.



Dear Parents,

This activity guide is a companion to Cross Catholic Outreach's **Water for Life** Lent Campaign and will connect your family with those in sub-Saharan Africa. In it, you will learn about the challenges they face every day in obtaining water and the importance of faith in their daily lives.

In this guide, you will also find the Sunday Mass Readings for each week of Lent, weekly reflections, discussion questions and activities for the whole family to enjoy together. For the first time, we have also included an illustrated children's story inspired by the stories of beneficiaries! Most of the weekly reflections will direct you to a corresponding part of the story, so children can discover the challenges, heartaches and persevering faith of the poor families we serve.

We hope these stories will help your children feel more deeply connected to their peers a world away and that they become ambassadors on behalf of those vulnerable boys and girls. As you engage with the story and activities found in this guide, we invite you to prepare your hearts as the Church calls us to: through prayer, fasting and almsgiving.

Yours in Christ,

Michele Sagarino

Michele Sagarino, President



Angel's Story

Meet Angel, a young girl in a farming village in Malawi who loves to play with her friends and to sit and eat a meal with her family — just like you do. But Angel lives in a village where there isn't always time to play or enough food to eat. Follow along as she shares her story (starting on page 8), and as you complete the activities found in this guide, consider how you can help young girls like Angel.



Scan the QR code to read the stories of African families in need and to give today.



Ash Wednesday | March 5

Today's Readings

Joel 2:12-18 • Psalm 51:3-6, 12-14 and 17 • 2 Corinthians 5:20-6:2 • Matthew 6:1-6, 16-18

What Is an Ambassador?

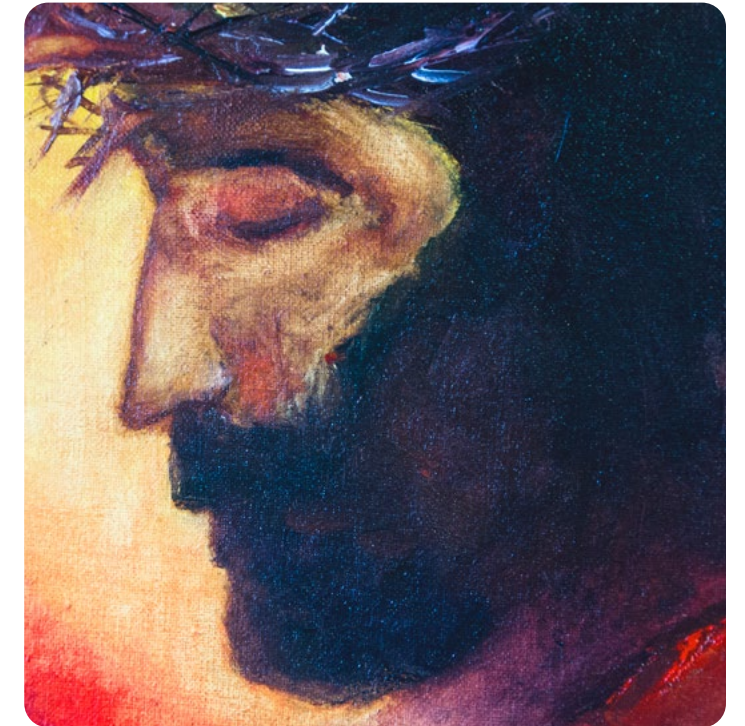
An ambassador is someone who represents or helps promote a person, place or activity. So, when we read today's second reading and Saint Paul tells us, "We are **ambassadors** for Christ," he is saying that we have an important role to play by representing Jesus here on earth. Here is another way to think of it: When people see you, they should be reminded of Jesus.

If we are Jesus' ambassadors, how should we act? Throughout Lent, the Church invites us to a special season of prayer, fasting and almsgiving. These are great ways to show the world the power of Christ!

PRAYER is an opportunity to talk to God and tell him about your concerns and the needs of the world. We encourage you to include the children in countries like Kenya and Malawi in your daily prayers because they desperately need water, food and medicine.

FASTING teaches us to remember what is most important in life. Giving things up for Lent reminds us that God should always be the most important person in our lives — more important than our favorite foods, video games or TV shows.

The final practice of Lent is **ALMSGIVING**, which means sharing what we have with the poor. Usually, we practice almsgiving by collecting money to help support the Church's missions worldwide. This Lent, we also encourage you to be ambassadors for these missions by praying for them and by spreading the word about the needs of young boys and girls in Africa.



Family Discussion



1. What does Lent mean to you?
2. How can your family practice prayer, fasting and almsgiving together this Lent?
3. Our mission is to bless children and their families with water and other urgent needs. How can you be an ambassador for this mission during Lent?



Take Action: Make a Collection Box

Need an idea for putting almsgiving into practice this Lent? Try completing Cross Catholic Outreach's DIY collection box activity. Scan the QR code to find a printable PDF so you can put together a collection box. Throughout Lent, fill this box with spare change so that at Easter, you can donate to help build wells in Ghana, Ethiopia, Kenya, Malawi, Zambia and Eswatini.



Week 1 | March 9-15

Sunday Mass Readings

Deuteronomy 26:4-10 • Psalm 91:1-2, 10-15 • Romans 10:8-13 • Luke 4:1-13

Why Is Lent 40 Days?

Have you ever wondered why Lent lasts 40 days? The Bible provides the answer. Today, the Gospel tells the story of Jesus' 40 days of prayer and fasting in the desert. Perhaps while hearing the Gospel, you remembered the 40 years the Israelites spent in the desert before they entered the promised land.

When we see things repeated in the Bible, it's a good idea to pay attention. So, why the number 40? Our bishops tell us the number symbolizes "a time of testing, trial, penance, purification and renewal" (USCCB). The Israelites did penance and were purified while they were in the desert. Jesus endured tests and trials while he was in the desert. This Lent, we invite you to spend the next 40 days facing your own trials through prayer, fasting and almsgiving.

As a family, we encourage you to reflect on what you want the next 40 days to look like and how you want to grow in your relationship with the Lord. Complete the following vision board activity to help keep your prayers and goals for this Lent at the forefront of your mind.



Anganile is a young girl and the inspiration for Angel's story. She lives in the village of Chankholombe in Malawi, an African country known for its diverse wildlife and the enormous Lake Malawi.



Take Action: Create a Lent Vision Board

As a family, create a vision board for Lent to help guide your prayer and fasting over the next 40 days. Scan the QR code to learn how to create your vision board and to hear the inspiring story of a woman in Malawi, whose own vision board is helping guide her family toward a brighter future!



Family Discussion

(Read the beginning of "Angel's Story," on pages 8-9)

1. In the first part of our story, Stella and Angel couldn't imagine life without their daily journey to collect water. How would you respond to Stella's question?
2. In many parts of Africa, young girls walk long distances for water, and often those journeys are difficult. Sometimes, the path is rocky or goes up a hill, and the girls trip and scrape their knees. Can you remember the last time you made a difficult journey? What was it like?



Week 2 | March 16-22

Sunday Mass Readings

Genesis 15:5-12, 17-18 • Psalm 27:1, 7-9, 13-14 • Philippians 3:17-4:1 • Luke 9:28-36

Counting the Stars

In the first reading, we hear about God's promise to Abraham. For many years, Abraham and his wife could not have children, and thought they might never have children. Then, something miraculous happened. God asked Abraham to count the stars, and told him he would have as many descendants as there were stars in the sky. I don't know if you've ever tried to count the stars, but it's an impossible task on a clear, dark night. There are millions and millions of them!

Abraham had tremendous faith in God to believe he would have one child, let alone a galaxy full of descendants. Do you know who else has this kind of faith? The families in Africa.

Every day, despite facing thirst, hunger or hardship, many of these families pray and ask God for help. Sometimes it takes a while for him to answer, and it can feel like they are asking for the impossible — but God wants to give his children hope and show them how deeply he loves them.

In the next part of Angel's story (pages 10-11), you'll read about some of the challenges her family has had to face. Though Angel doesn't know how God might respond to their needs, she doesn't lose hope.



Patricia, the inspiration for Angel's friend Stella, scoops water from the Chahuwa Stream. This is her family's water source for drinking, cooking, bathing and cleaning.



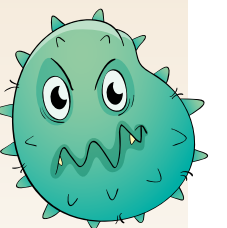
Family Discussion

1. God seemed to promise Abraham the impossible. What are some big prayers you've asked God for lately?
2. Who is someone you know that has faith like Abraham? How can you learn from them?
3. Some of the big prayers children in Malawi have are for things we take for granted, like clean water, a new house or a chance to go to school. How can you practice gratitude for what God has given you this week?



Take Action: Learn About Germs

On pages 10-11 of "Angel's Story", we will hear how the women walking with Angel are worried about the possibility of the water making their families sick. This is a very real challenge facing families in African countries like



Malawi because unclean water spreads germs, bacteria or parasites. To understand the spread of germs and the power of hygiene, scan the QR code and complete the black pepper activity found on our website.



Week 3 | March 23-29

Sunday Mass Readings

Exodus 3:1-8a, 13-15 • Psalm 103:1-4, 6-8 and 11 • 1 Corinthians 10:1-6, 10-12 • Luke 13:1-9

What Is Mercy?

“The Lord is kind and merciful.”

What goes through your mind when you hear this Sunday’s psalm? Maybe you are grateful for the reminder or feel at peace hearing that the Lord is kind. But what do we mean when we say the Lord is merciful?

A person is merciful when they show compassion or forgiveness to someone they have the power to hurt or punish. For example, you are being merciful when your friend or sibling takes your toy and, instead of getting mad at them, you choose to share.

Mercy is a big part of what it means to be a follower of Jesus, because he is merciful. How do we know he is merciful? Because even though we sin, Jesus chose to die on a cross instead of choosing to punish us. Isn’t that amazing?

To help us learn how to be merciful, the Church gave us the Corporal Works of Mercy, a list of merciful acts we can do for those in need. The works of mercy include things like feeding the hungry, giving drink to the thirsty, sheltering the homeless, clothing the naked, visiting the sick and imprisoned, and burying the dead.

When your family joins Cross Catholic Outreach’s mission to help African families this Lent, you extend mercy to people needing food, water and medicine. [Continue following Angel’s story \(pages 12-13\) to learn more.](#)



Vitafood is an important resource for families that don’t have regular work or that lose their crops during the dry season. Children like the siblings pictured here need the nutrients Vitafood offers to grow big and strong.



Week 4 | March 30-April 5

Sunday Mass Readings

Joshua 5:9-12 • Psalm 34:2-7 • 2 Corinthians 5:17-21 • Luke 15:1-3, 11-32

How To Be an Ambassador

Remember learning about what it means to be an ambassador on Ash Wednesday? This Sunday, St. Paul tells us again, “We are ambassadors for Christ.” Now that we are halfway to Easter, it’s a good time to review your vision board and any resolutions you set at the beginning of Lent.

In the second reading, St. Paul also tells us that Christ will make us new creations — do you see new habits forming as you practice prayer, fasting and almsgiving this Lent? Do you need to recommit to some of the resolutions again? As ambassadors, we are other Christs to the world around us. Take time to reflect on these questions with your family and ask how you can be another Christ in the world today.



Anganile plays a game with her friends. Now that she doesn’t spend an hour each day collecting water, she has more time to enjoy her childhood.



Family Discussion

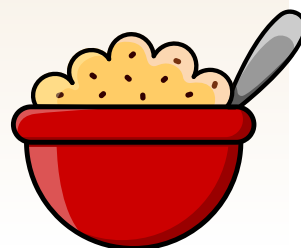
1. Brainstorm some examples of how you can practice mercy with your family and friends today.
2. What are some other examples of God’s mercy in scripture? In the lives of the saints? In your life?
3. Look around your community. Where do you see opportunities to practice the Corporal Works of Mercy?



Take Action: Meat-Free Recipe



Would you like to experience what people taste when they eat Vitafood? Using a few simple ingredients, your family can see how the hungry worldwide are being nourished by this important outreach. Scan the QR code for more information and a comprehensive list of ingredients. Please continue to pray for our brothers and sisters around the world who are waiting for their next meal.



Pray Together

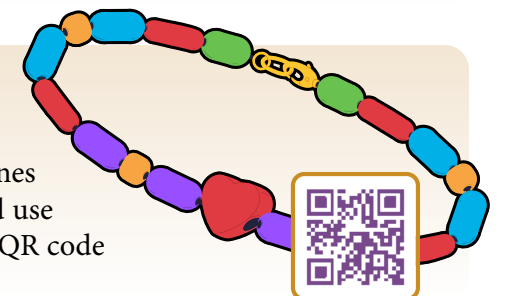
Almighty and ever living God, you invite us deeper into your world, your people, your Lent. May this time be one of outward focus; seeking you in those we often ignore. Help us live a Lent focused on freedom, generosity, and encounter. Give us hearts hungry to serve you and those who need what we have to give. Amen.

~ Author Unknown



Take Action: Magazine Beads

In parts of Africa, many children make beads out of magazines to make simple jewelry. You can make these same beads as a family and use them to make your own necklaces, bracelets or even rosaries! Scan the QR code to learn how to complete this fun and easy activity.





Week 5 | April 6-12

Sunday Mass Readings

Isaiah 43:16-21 • Psalm 126:1-6 • Philippians 3:8-14 • John 8:1-11

We Are Filled With Joy

This week's Responsorial Psalm is "The Lord has done great things for us; we are filled with joy." Throughout the psalm, we hear about all the things God did to free the Israelites from exile and slavery. The people celebrated, knowing that God loves them and cares for them.

We celebrate so many joyous occasions, including birthdays, graduations, baptisms, First Communions, Christmas and Easter. To mark these special days, we throw parties, wear nice clothes, eat good food and enjoy sweet treats.

Though the poor may not have birthday and holiday parties that look like ours, they find ways to joyfully celebrate these special occasions, even if no gifts are involved. That's why when friends like you send **Box of Joy**® gifts to children in developing countries, everyone gathers to rejoice.

In the last part of Angel's story (pages 14-15), she shares her own experience at one of these celebrations.

Box of Joy is a registered trademark of Cross Catholic Outreach.



At the end of Angel's story, she and Stella receive special gifts — a Box of Joy with a rosary inside. Children in Malawi have been receiving Box of Joy gifts for the past two years, and those gifts have inspired them to learn how to pray the rosary!



Take Action: Marian Garden

As we reach the end of Lent and approach the Easter season, we invite you to plant a Marian garden as a family. This garden is a beautiful devotion to Mary, but it is also a lesson to be intentional about what we plant. If you plant flowers in your garden, flowers bloom. If you plant faith, hope and charity in your heart, then trust in God, desire for Heaven and love for the poor bloom in your life.

Scan the QR code to learn more about your garden's possibilities and get tips on preparing, planting and caring for it.



Family Discussion

1. What are some things that bring you joy?
2. How does your family celebrate special occasions?
3. How do you think you'd celebrate if you didn't have cake or gifts for your birthday or Christmas?



Holy Week | April 13-19

Palm Sunday Mass Readings

Isaiah 50:4-7 • Psalm 22:8-9, 17-20, 23-24 • Philippians 2:6-11 • Luke 22:14-23:56

What Is Holy Week?

Beginning on Palm Sunday through Easter Sunday, Catholics celebrate what we consider the most important week of the year: Holy Week. During this week, we remember when Christ entered Jerusalem (Palm Sunday), gave us the Eucharist (Holy Thursday), died on the Cross for us (Good Friday), was laid in a tomb (Holy Saturday) and rose from the dead (Easter).

Isn't it incredible that Jesus loves us so much that he became a man and died for us? And isn't it wonderful that he showed us that death has no power over him when he resurrected? By dying and rising, Jesus gave us a way to Heaven! That's why this week is so important to us.

Jesus showed us the way to the Resurrection is through the Cross. As we enter this last week of Lent, look back on your vision board, on the sacrifices and acts of kindness you planned for this season. What other acts of kindness can you do this week to honor the holiness of it? Can you make an extra sacrifice this week so more spare change can be added to the collection your family will send to children in countries like Kenya and Malawi? By making these little sacrifices, we can make our Easter celebrations all the sweeter.

Like the priest in Angel's story, Father Fabian Hevi (4th from right) travels throughout Kenya offering the sacraments and, thanks to U.S. Catholics, providing water and food to the poor.



Pray Together

Lord, we thank you for this blessed season of Lent. Thank you for your great love for us and for giving us the hope of Heaven through your son, Jesus. We pray for families around the world that might struggle with feeling unloved or hopeless. Help us as your Church to share the life-changing message of Christ's Cross and Resurrection with them. Amen.

Angel's Story

"Angel, it's time to get up." My mother gently shakes me awake with these words. We are up before the sun, just like yesterday and every day before. We need to rise early so we can go collect water. After dressing and rubbing my eyes awake, I grab a bucket and follow my mom out the door.

I've gotten used to these early mornings and the long walks we make to get water for our family. My mother and I are joined by other women and girls from the village walking to the same river that morning. I run to catch up to my friend Stella. As we walk, we imagine what it must be like for kids in other parts of the world.

"Do you think children in the United States also collect water from rivers and streams?" Stella asks.

"Of course," I tell her. "Everyone needs water."

Stella and I chat about everything under the sun as we walk to collect water for that day. It never occurs to us that some kids don't need to walk an hour each morning if they want a cup of water to drink.



While walking to collect water one morning, Stella and I overhear some worried women talking about how the intense sun might dry up the stream.

“Will there be enough water for everyone?” I ask my mom.

“If not, we will have to dig holes in the riverbed to try and find some water,” she says.

That’s exactly what we end up doing. We cannot collect as much water as usual, so we dig holes that water drips into, but the water we manage to collect is very muddy. My mother seems worried that the water will make us sick, but

she says our family will become dehydrated without the water, so we need to drink it anyway.

On the way back, I remembered the past dry seasons. During that time of year, there is not enough water for our crops, and sometimes my family has to skip a meal. My stomach growls a lot on those days, and it’s hard to focus while at school — but I can survive without food longer than I can survive without water.

While the dry season is difficult, my family and I pray and trust that God will provide for us.



There hasn't been a lot of rain lately, so my family lost our crops and we've been hungry. I could hear my parents worrying that there would not be enough food for tomorrow either. I had classmates who also came to school hungry and neighbors who didn't have the energy to play because there wasn't enough food in their homes.

Fortunately, a priest came to town with others who work for the Catholic Church. They brought boxes of things we needed — food for the people whose crops had failed and the Eucharist for people to sick to go to Mass. It was a miracle!

I went with my mom to pick up a box of food from the priest, and we were smiling all the way home. The box was filled with meal packs that had all the nutrients my neighbors, classmates and I needed to grow strong and healthy. My mom and I cooked the food, adding in our favorite spices. It was delicious, and I went to sleep that night without a growling stomach.

Later, I heard my mom tell my dad that the Church also wants to help our village build a water well! If a box of food could make such a big difference, what kind of difference would a new well make?





Now, my village has a new water well — and it has completely changed my life! This new water source doesn't run out during our dry season, and the water that pours out is crystal clear. It's also nearby, so my long morning walks are over. I don't get sick anymore, I have a lot more energy for school, and now I have more free time to play!

Stella and I have been learning lots of new games. My favorite is a jumping game called panda. To play, we draw squares in the dirt and then jump back and forth, trying to copy each other. The priest who visits our village told us that there is a similar game in America called hopscotch.

Everyone in the village is so excited about our clean water — it has made cooking, cleaning, drinking and bathing easier. Now, the people in my village are making and donating bricks to build a wall that will protect our new well so it works perfectly for many years to come.

The priest recently returned to my village — this time in a truck filled with Christmas gifts! He called the packages “Box of Joy gifts,” and all of the kids in my school were given one. Before the gifts were handed out, the whole village gathered at the school to celebrate. We sang, clapped, prayed and even danced. There was so much excitement as my classmates and I received a Box of Joy.

My box contained a pair of sandals, a coloring book and crayons, some hair clips, a booklet called “The Story of Jesus”, and a rosary. When my friend Penny showed me her box, we saw that we had both received rosaries. We decided to learn how to pray the rosary together. It will be our way of thanking God for everything he's done in our village and praying for the friends who made it all possible.





“And whoever gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones in the name of a disciple — truly I tell you, none of these will lose their reward.”

MATTHEW 10:42



Thank You for Helping Children Like Angel!

REMEMBER: Your dedication to prayer, fasting and almsgiving this Lent could help the Church in Africa build wells...



...and by sharing about the need with your family and friends, you can be an ambassador for this mission.

With our fellow Catholics in Africa, we can

share a glass

of clean, refreshing water with these children!





Cross Catholic OUTREACH

Delivering Food, Shelter and Hope to the Poorest of the Poor

Our Mission

We mobilize the global Catholic Church to transform the poor and their communities materially and spiritually for the glory of Jesus Christ.

How We Serve

Rather than create new institutions to distribute aid, we support existing ministries and churches already serving in developing countries. In addition to this being the most cost-effective way of helping our brothers and sisters in need, empowering these existing ministries also allows us to support the Church's spiritual mission and leadership role in poor communities.

Good Stewardship

We consider every gift we receive as a precious resource from God. We direct every donation to its intended project, provide honest and accurate reports to our donors, and keep overhead costs to an industry low. We handle funds with utmost integrity and hold our ministry partners in the field to the same high standards by asking them to document costs and the impact of their outreach.



Our Promise to You!

Donations from this campaign will be used to cover any expenditures for this project incurred through June 30, 2025, the close of our ministry's fiscal year. In the event that more funds are raised than needed to fully fund the project, the excess funds, if any, will be used to meet the most urgent needs of the ministry.

PO Box 273908 • Boca Raton, Florida 33427-3908 • 800-914-2420 ext. 158

CrossCatholic.org/lent-activity-guide

@CrossCatholic @CrossCatholic @CrossCatholic /CrossCatholic

/Company/CrossCatholicOutreach CrossCatholic.org/blogs

Copyright Cross Catholic Outreach. Cost-effectively written and designed in-house. [kh2409]