



# GREAT ENDEAVORS MINED & SHARED

*from an International Adult Faith Formation Best Practices Study*

#229 - January 2025

## A Best Practice: A Lenten Journal for Everyone

In the archdiocese of Detroit, parishes are grouped together in a “Family of Parishes.” The parishes within a “Family” are always searching for ways to bring the people together, to meet the needs of all the parishioners together.

This **GEMS** issue relates a project/opportunity (a Lenten Journal) that was designed by the Family of Parishes of St. Isidore Parish, Macomb Township, St. Francis-St. Maximillian Kolbe Parish, Ray, St. Therese of Lisieux Parish, Shelby Township, and Austin High School (<https://disciplesunleashed.org/>).

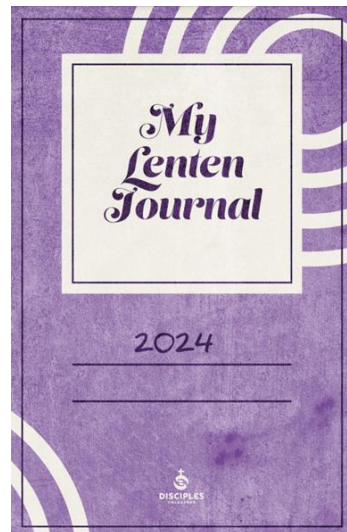
## The Origin of a Lenten Journal

The idea of the Journal came from the Family of Parishes (FOP) Council which is made up of parishioners from each of the three parishes within the FOP.

When this Council was brainstorming ways in which they could engage the four communities (the three parishes and the high school) together, the idea of the Lenten Journal was born. The Council was searching for something that would help people take a moment to pause, reflect, and connect with God and experience being connected to the community.

The connection among the four communities resulted from the knowledge/awareness that every day each parishioner/high school student was reflecting on the same questions and quotes as thousands of other parishioners and students were likewise including in their prayer.

There were also occasional updates on their social media channels to check in with those who were using the journal.



## The Process of Designing the Journal

After the concept of designing and offering a journal to the parishioners was decided upon by the Family of Parishes Leadership Team (pastors and staffs and principal of Austin High School), they went back to the FOP council to brainstorm questions and quotes to be used. Their goal was to make each prompt as accessible and relatable as possible so that each person felt encouraged to respond to the prompts regardless of where they were on their spiritual journeys.

The Family of Parishes Council and parish staffs described their role of designing the journal as a labor of love. They wanted to ensure that every element, from the quotes that line the pages, to the reflection prompts, to the delightful mood trackers, were thoughtfully chosen to enrich the Lenten journeys of all who would use it.

## The Journal

Each day of Lent included:

- a specific, simple reflection question
- quotes from various sources
- four recurring prompts on every page:
  - How do you feel?
  - What are you thankful for?
  - What are you praying for?
  - The best thing that happened today

The Journal also included:

- Welcome and Tips for Using the Journal
- A Summary of the Meaning of Lent
- Schedule of the Lenten Liturgies and Prayer Experiences in the three parishes
- Sunday Challenges

The Journal was published in English and Spanish. The committee worked with a local printer (who was a parishioner) to print them..

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WEDNESDAY      **ASH WEDNESDAY**      FEBRUARY 14

● DAILY PROMPT  
Reflect on a time you forgave someone or were forgiven.

● HOW DO YOU FEEL?      ● WHAT ARE YOU THANKFUL FOR?

😊 😐 😞 😡 😢     

● WHAT ARE YOU PRAYING FOR?      ● THE BEST THING THAT HAPPENED TODAY

*In my worst moments, like awful, most painful moments, I never stopped falling to my knees wanting and needing only His love.*

SELENA GOMEZ

## Some of the reflection questions throughout the 40 days

- Write about three small blessings you experienced this week.
- Describe a recent act of kindness you gave or received.
- Think of a person you admire the most right now and write about the qualities you admire in that person.
- Write about a habit that you wish were easier to break.
- Reflect on a situation where you found it difficult to forgive. How did you handle it and what could you learn from it?
- Take a digital detox today (staying away from screens and social media as much as possible) and write about the impact on your mood.
- List three people who you lean on for support in your faith life.
- Write about a piece of nature that inspires you and tell why.
- If given one extra hour time today, how would you spend it?
- Share a burden that has been weighing on you and then give it up to God in prayer today.
- Share a recent moment that gives you hope.
- Identify and write about one of your greatest strengths.
- Make an effort to put a smile on someone's face today and then share how that made you feel.
- Reflect on a recent situation where you had to be patient. How did you handle it and what did you learn?
- Find an opportunity to do a favor for someone and write about that experience.
- Reflect on how your parents brought you up. Write about one quality that they instilled in you that you carry on today.
- Describe a place where you find solace or solitude. How does this environment affect your spiritual reflections?
- Write about ways you can or do use technology to promote kindness, positivity, and spiritual well-being.
- Write about the Stations of the Cross. Which station do you feel the most connected to?

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## SUNDAY CHALLENGE

### Prayer, Fasting Almsgiving

The fundamental pillars of Lent are prayer, fasting, and almsgiving. Intentionally journeying Lent should include growth in all three areas. When many of us were younger, Lent always started with the question, "What am I giving up for Lent?" A modern interpretation is, "What am I doing for Lent?" Here are some ideas from each of the three pillars.

**Prayer:** Attend Mass more. If you attend Mass weekly, try attending a daily Mass; it is a simpler, shorter, and often more profound experience. If you attend Mass most weeks, make a concerted effort to...



READ MORE ABOUT THE CHALLENGE

- HOW ARE YOU GOING TO INCREASE YOUR PRAYER LIFE?
- WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO FAST FROM?
- WHERE WILL YOU INCREASE YOUR ALMSGIVING?

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## CONNECTING POINT

What do I need to do to clear my conscience?



READ THIS WEEK'S REFLECTION

FEB 25, 2024

## CONNECTING POINT

What is God calling me to sacrifice?



READ THIS WEEK'S REFLECTION

FEB 25, 2024

## SUNDAY CHALLENGE

### Your Family and the Church

Many individuals find a sense of purpose and meaning through their involvement in a church. This shared sense of purpose can unite family members in common goals and aspirations. Engaging with a church can contribute to the growth of families in several ways:

**Community Support:** Being a part of our church provides families with a supportive community. This support network can celebrate achievements and offer assistance during challenging times, fostering a sense of belonging.

**Shared Values:** Our churches emphasize values that align with family principles. Involvement in our community allows families to...



READ MORE ABOUT THE CHALLENGE

- WHICH MASSES AND EVENTS WILL YOU ATTEND THIS LENT TO STRENGTHEN YOUR FAMILY?

## LENT QUEST

Join our Lent Quest for a family journey through interactive Stations of the Cross and fun, educational activities on fasting, prayer, and almsgiving!



[DISCIPLESUNLEASHED.ORG/LENT-QUEST](https://disciplesunleashed.org/len-quest)

# GREAT ENDEAVORS MINED & SHARED

## Some of the Quotes that Appeared on the Pages

- If anyone wishes to come after me, they must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me. (Luke 9:23)
- Seek a relationship when you pray, not answers. You don't always find answers, but you will always find Jesus. (Fr. Mike Schmitz)
- It always helps to have a bit of prayer in your back pocket. (Actor Pierce Brosnan)
- Teach us to give and not count the cost. (St. Ignatius Loyola)
- If you forgive, you may not change the past but you begin to change the future. (Bernard Meltzen)
- All the darkness in the world cannot extinguish the light of a single candle. (St. Francis)
- Great occasions for serving God come seldom, but little ones surround us daily. (St. Francis de Sales)
- Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge God and God will make straight your paths. (Proverbs 3: 5-6)
- The only disability in life is a bad attitude. (Scott Hamilton)
- Never let the fear of striking out keep you from playing the game. (Babe Ruth)
- For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future of hope. (Jeremiah 29: 11)
- Before speaking, consider – is it true, is it kind, is it necessary. (Socrates)
- Be kind whenever possible. It is always possible. (Dalai Lama)

## Evaluation of the Project

During Lent, parishioners continually shared that they felt that the journal was helping both their mental and spiritual health. The team felt that this was because each page of the journal was prayerfully designed to guide users

through personal reflections and to foster deeper connections within their Family of Parishes.

When Lent concluded, at the end of the journal a link was included for parishioners to share their feedback on how they used the journal, what they liked about it, and what they'd like to see in potential future versions of it. The feedback was spread evenly across age ranges and home parishes.

Some findings from the questions included:

- 100% rated the overall experience as good or excellent.
- 70% found the journal extremely relevant and useful with another 25% finding it somewhat relevant and useful.
- 95% rated the design and layout as either good or excellent.
- 100% said that the journal moderately or significantly contributed to their personal and/or spiritual growth during Lent.
- 84% said that they felt the journal helped them feel more connected to the church community.
- 100% said that they would love to see the journal brought back and would recommend it to friends and family.



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