

Second Sunday in Lent

If any of you want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me.—Mark 8:34 NRSV

Explore

tube of refrigerator
bread dough, baking
sheet, oven

Embrace the Cross

Pretzels have a Christian history! They are a type of bread acceptable to many Christian denominations who have a strict observance of Lent. They contain no milk products—an item that many people might give up as a sacrifice during the period of time before Easter. They were once called “Pilgrim tokens” because they reminded people of the way the Pilgrims would cross their arms over their chest when praying. Ask the class to try it. “Put your right hand on your left shoulder and your left hand on your right shoulder.” Invite one of the students to offer an opening prayer for the class.

Provide the class with a tube of refrigerator bread dough. Cut it into one-inch slices. Roll it into a long rope shape, and form pretzels by starting to make a circle with the ends of your rope. Instead, cross them and bring them down to the bottom of the circle.

Place the pretzels on a baking sheet. Sprinkle them with salt. Follow the directions on the side of the tube to complete the pretzels. Some brands may require time for the bread to rise before baking. The baking time may need to be shortened, since you’re not baking the whole loaf of bread. Bake the pretzels while completing the remainder of the class. Let them cool and eat them at the end of class.

Extract

The Message of the Cross

As Jesus continued his journey to Jerusalem, he shared with the disciples what would happen. Read and dramatize Mark 8:31–38 (Mark 8:33–41 IV). Ask the following:

Bible, paper, pens or
pencils

Why did Jesus respond to Peter the way he did?

Mark 8:31–38
(Mark 8:33–41 IV)
Matthew 10:38
(Matthew 10:33 IV)
Matthew 16:24–25
(Matthew 16:25–26
IV)

What did Jesus mean when he said, “take up his cross, and follow me”? (Mark 8:36 IV) How does this read in other versions of the Bible?

I Corinthians 1:18

What did Jesus mean when he said, “But whosoever shall be willing to lose his life for my sake, and the gospel, the same shall save it”? (Mark 8:38 IV)

Read these additional scriptures to reveal a little more about the message of the cross: Matthew 10:38 (Matthew 10:33 IV), Matthew 16:24–25 (Matthew 16:25–26 IV), and I Corinthians 1:18. Discuss the following:

What does the symbol of the cross represent in the Christian faith?

What does the symbol of the cross mean to each class member?

What cross did Jesus have to bear?

What kinds of crosses do people have today? (disabilities, poverty, wealth, debt, family, illnesses, knowledge, experiences, responsibilities)

Ask the students to write about the crosses they personally have to carry—on the paper provided.

Choices

Distribute large sticky-notes. Ask the teens to write on the notes descriptions of how they make choices. Post the sticky-notes on the wall. See if and how their criteria will work for the following situations: selecting a movie, a job, doing homework, visiting Web sites, or choosing to smoke or drink alcohol.

sticky-notes, pens
or pencils

Taking the Cross: A Covenant with God

A covenant is not a legal contract. It is a binding relationship, a promise sealed by faith and trust. As early as Abram's (later Abraham) time, God was making covenants with people. See Genesis 17:1–7, 15–16. In Romans 4:13–25, Paul reminded the Romans of Abraham's covenant with God and that it is because of people's faith, not the law, that a covenant is possible.

Bible
Genesis 17:1–7,
15–16
Romans 4:13–25

Ask for two students to demonstrate making a covenant. Position one in front of the other facing forward. Explain that the one in back must make a promise to catch the other and not let them fall or be injured. Have the front person stand with his or her feet together and legs straight—about one foot in front of the other person. Have the person in front slowly lean back with eyes closed or open, keeping the body straight and trusting the other person to always catch them so they do not lose their balance. Have the two trade positions and repeat this action of faith. When the activity is finished, ask the students to share their thoughts about the experience. Ask if either of the participants considered changing their mind about the promise they made—at any time during the activity.

Next form a small circle. Ask all who are willing to make a covenant (promise) with each other to not let any of its members lose their trust in each other. Have the group select one person to go in the middle. Have the circle stand firm and close to the middle person. The person in the middle should cross their arms across their chest (remember the pretzel). Then have the middle person lean in any direction with his or her body straight, trusting the circle of friends to keep him or her from falling. When confidence is built, have the middle person close their eyes and have the circle gradually widen to some point, but always able to push the middle person back to an upright position. Interview the middle person on their thoughts and feelings. Talk about trust, faith, and covenant. If time allows, ask if another person would like to be in the middle. Discuss the activity when completed.

Expand

A Simple Cross

Pass a simple wooden cross around the room. Invite the students to hold the cross, touch it, run your fingers over it, and look at it. Then ask them to write on the cross one word that comes to mind. When everyone has written their word, pass the cross around the room again. Close with prayer.

wooden cross, pen
or pencils

Lectionary scriptures—Genesis 17:1–12, 21–22 IV/17:1–7, 15–16; Psalm 22:23–31; Romans 4:13–25; Mark 8:33–41 IV/8:31–38