



# Formative Parenting

*Cultivating Character in Children*

*A Ministry of the Sisters, Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, Immaculata, Pennsylvania*

## **Create a Liturgical Classroom Environment LENT to PENTECOST**

Many folks recognize that the acronym WWJD represents the question, “What would Jesus do?” It is a wonderful question especially during times of discernment. It cuts straight to the heart of any matter. The Easter Cycle of the liturgical calendar offers a unique time to extend or apply the question: **WWJWMTD: “What would Jesus want me to do?”**

The Easter Cycle of ten weeks includes Lent, the Paschal Triduum, Easter, Ascension, and Pentecost.

### **LENTEN SEASON**

- **Ash Wednesday, Thursday, Friday and Saturday** provide a preface for Lent. The readings call us to prayer, fasting and works of charity. They challenge us to choose life (life-giving behaviors) and, therefore, avoid life-blocking behaviors. They speak of *true fasting*: breaking chains of injustice and relieving burdens, setting free the oppressed, sharing food with the hungry, sheltering the homeless, and clothing the naked.

**WWJWMTD?** Jesus challenges me to be creative in interpreting “poor, hungry, oppressed, homeless, and naked.” After all, one person can have a financially sound bank account but be starving for understanding, acceptance, or forgiveness. Another can dress in the latest fashion but feel emotionally exposed because of gossip or a criminal record.

- **The six Sundays of Lent** focus us on the temptations and priorities of Jesus, the source of his identity, and his challenge to repent and produce good fruits in our lives. Jesus will tell us of the Lost Sheep and about the Father of the Prodigal Son to illustrate the extravagant love that the Father has for each of us. He will teach

us that his mission extends human dignity, love and conversion, not condemnation.

**WWJWMTD?** Jesus calls me to rely on God, to put first things first and let the rest fall where it may; to remember who I am and WHOSE I am and to listen to THAT voice; to recognize that God’s love for me is personal, not merely communal or general; to know that God’s love is merciful and unconditional; to celebrate that God’s love for me does not depend on my love for God; and to avoid judging others.

- **The Paschal Triduum** (Holy Thursday, Good Friday, and Holy Saturday) suggests to me lessons of servanthood, being and receiving Eucharist, experiencing betrayal without bitterness, meaningful silence, integrity, forgiveness, offering unconditional love despite the cost . . .

### **EASTER SEASON**

- Seven weeks of **Easter** teach us that LOVE will have the last word! Forgiveness is offered, doubts are human, and Jesus initiates reconciliation. If we are disciples we hear his voice, we imitate his behaviors, and we wait for the promised Holy Spirit.

- In Luke’s account of the **Ascension** (Lk 24:46-53) Jesus referred to the Scripture, recapped his role as Messiah, challenged the apostles to be witnesses, charged them to wait for the Holy Spirit to visit; blessed them and then returned to his Father.

**WWJWMTD?** Jesus calls me to ponder the Scriptures, to accept him as Savior, to be a faithful witness, to let my life speak my experience of him, to desire and seek the help

of the Holy Spirit, and to remember that he will be with me at all times.

- **Pentecost** puts confusion into perspective, fills in the gaps, and replaces fear with faith. The Spirit empowers us to live the Easter Cycle every day of the year: (1) to **REPENT** whatever frustrates the will of God in our lives; (2) to **REFORM** by choosing whatever facilitates God’s will; (3) to **RENEW**, through prayer, our relationship with God; and (4) to **REMODEL** by shifting our priorities to imitate those of Jesus.

### WHAT WOULD JESUS WANT ME TO DO?

I have shared my “first thought responses” to each of the Gospels of Easter Cycle C. Additional thoughts might emerge given time and inspiration from the Holy Spirit. The same is true of the students that we teach. One Gospel story can evoke as many applications as there are students and any one student may “hear” several messages for a single event, person, or story. Note that I have limited my remarks to the Gospel readings for the ten weeks in the cycle. Consider asking the question WWJWMTD of all of the readings of the day, including the Responsorial Psalm.

- If your students are ready for independent group work, break the class into teams. Assign one Gospel to each team. Hold the group responsible to provide an illustration of the Gospel, perhaps student-drawn. Label it with responses to the question WWJWMTD? Use the content for intercessory prayer or examination of conscience at the end of each class period.

- Like Stations of the Cross, create a “station” for each Sunday of the liturgical season. Mount a diamond-shaped 4” square on a larger 8” square of a different color that is positioned in the “usual” square-view. Within the diamond label prominently the name of the Sunday, i.e., First Sunday of Lent. Use the four corner sections of the background square to represent the four readings (Old Testament, Responsorial Psalm Epistle, and Gospel). List character traits or life messages from the readings. Synthesize the finished product into a prayer paragraph. This activity is appropriate for total class input or small group work.

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