

Opening Prayer: Preparing the Fast, Preparing the Table

(30 minutes)

1 of 1

FACE THE FAST

Materials Needed

- Copies of *Preparing the Fast, Preparing the Table* for each participant
- Focus table in a central location
- Crucifix
- Bible
- Bowl of water
- Chocolate candy bar (Fair Trade chocolate, if possible)
- Music

Option: cloth made in or representing a developing country to place on the table before the prayer begins.

Procedure

Ask 11 participants to be readers. Provide readers with a copy of the prayer ahead of time and highlight the part you would like each of them to read. Readers 7-11 will also be bringing forward items. Give them the item they will bring forward and instructions on how to display it.

- Reader 7 brings forward a crucifix, holds it up for all to see, reads the reading, and then places it on the table.
- Reader 8 brings forward a bible, holds it up for all to see, reads the reading, and then places it on the table.
- Reader 9 brings forward a bowl of water, holds it up for all to see, reads the reading, and then places it on the table.
- Reader 10 brings forward a candy bar, holds it up for all to see, reads the reading, and then places it on the table.
- Reader 11 reads from the bible that was placed on the focus table.

Invite participants into the Prayer and Reflection Space and give each person a copy of *Preparing the Fast, Preparing the Table*. Play a CD of soft instrumental music throughout this activity.

Opening Prayer: Preparing the Fast, Preparing the Table

Handout

FACE THE FAST

Preparing the Fast

Leader As we begin our Food Fast, we realize that fasting is important and often guides us towards a deeper spiritual life. “Moses fasted before receiving the Ten Commandments [and] Jesus fasted for 40 days in the desert before beginning his public ministry...Fasting is an invitation to still the noise and listen to the silence.” (Rogers, Carole Garibaldi. “Fasting frees us from attachment” National Catholic Reporter 18 February 2005.)

I invite you now to be still, to listen to the silence and to open your hearts and minds so that we may deepen our relationship with God, with each other and with our global family.

We begin our prayer knowing that God is present: In the name of the Father and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Good and gracious God. As we begin our journey of fasting, we call to mind all those who are hungry in our world. Help us to assist them through our prayers and actions, and guide us as we join our brothers and sisters in solidarity. Grant that we may begin to imagine the world as it could be, a better place for all of your people. Grant that we may work to make that world a reality. Amen.

Reader 1 A reading from the prophet Isaiah. (Isaiah 58: 3-9a)

“Why do we fast, and you do not see it? Afflict ourselves, and you take no note of it?” Lo, on your fast day you carry out your own pursuits, and drive all your laborers.

Yes, your fast ends in quarreling and fighting, striking with wicked claw. Would that today you might fast so as to make your voice heard on high! Is this the manner of fasting I wish, of keeping a day of penance: That a man bow his head like a reed and lie in sackcloth and ashes? Do you call this a fast, a day acceptable to the Lord?

This, rather, is the fasting that I wish: releasing those bound unjustly, untying the thongs of the yoke; Setting free the oppressed, breaking every yoke; Sharing your bread with the hungry, sheltering the oppressed and the homeless; Clothing the naked when you see them, and not turning your back on your own. Then your light shall break forth like the dawn, and your wound shall quickly be healed; Your vindication shall go before you, and the glory of the Lord shall be your rear guard.

Then you shall call, and the Lord will answer, you shall cry for help, and he will say: Here I am!

All **May my fast be acceptable to you, O God**

Reader 2 Lord, make me hungry for your righteousness that I may be filled with your compassion.

All **May my fast be acceptable to you, O God**

Reader 3 Lord, make me hungry for justice that I may be filled with a desire to serve.

All **May my fast be acceptable to you, O God**

Reader 4 Lord, make me hungry for peace that I may work for development of all nations.

All **May my fast be acceptable to you, O God**

Reader 5 Lord, make me hungry for a pure heart that I may see your face in each person.

All **May my fast be acceptable to you, O God**

Opening Prayer: Preparing the Fast, Preparing the Table

Handout

FACE THE FAST

Reader 6 Lord, make me hungry for a deeper relationship with you that I may follow the example of Jesus, your Son.

All **May my fast be acceptable to you, O God**

Preparing the Table

Leader As a symbol of our fast and our journey in solidarity with those who are hungry in our world, we will prepare a table with items representing who we are and what we desire.

Reader 7 A crucifix symbolizes the suffering, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. With Christ as the example, we know that we must sacrifice in order to bring new life.

Reader 8 A bible symbolizes our need to know more about what God desires for us and from us.

Reader 9 A bowl of water symbolizes the simple necessities that all people in our world are entitled to, things that we have in our lives, and that we may at times take for granted. We need and are entitled to: water, food, shelter, clothing, education, health care, and freedom.

Reader 10 A candy bar symbolizes the extras in our lives, the things that we could live without if we had to, yet things that make life more enjoyable for us. Such luxuries include candy and other snacks, iPods, cell phones, and other technologies, our own bedroom, the car we drive or ride in, restaurants, movies, vacations around the country and world, and many other good things.

Reader 11 A reading from Second Letter of St. Paul to the Corinthians (2 Corinthians 9: 7-12)
Each must do as already determined, without sadness or compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. Moreover, God is able to make every grace abundant for you, so that in all things, always having all you need, you may have an abundance for every good work.

As it is written: "He scatters abroad, he gives to the poor; his righteousness endures forever."

The one who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your seed and increase the harvest of your righteousness.

You are being enriched in every way for all generosity, which through us produces thanksgiving to God, for the administration of this public service is not only supplying the needs of the holy ones but is also overflowing in many acts of thanksgiving to God.

Leader Let us take a few moments to reflect on the setting of the table and the readings we just heard. (Pause) I invite you now to share aloud a word or phrase that comes to your mind.

Each person shares a word or phrase.

Let us pray.

Good and gracious God, we thank you for the gift of today. We thank you for the generous gifts that you have given to us, our families, and our country. We ask you to help those of us gathered for this Food Fast to grow closer to you and to have a better understanding of what it means to be in solidarity with all of our brothers and sisters around the world. We ask this prayer through Christ, our Lord. Amen.

All Amen.