



CRS RICE
CATHOLIC RELIEF SERVICES
BOWL

COMMUNITY
Reflections

Photo by Karen Kasmauski for CRS

encounter LENT

“The Good News is no mere matter of words ... It is about leaving ourselves behind and encountering others.”

—Pope Francis



Photo courtesy of iStock

Encounter ourselves. Encounter our neighbors.

Lent is a time of encounter

THROUGH PRAYER, we encounter Christ, present in the face of every member of our human family.

THROUGH FASTING, we encounter the obstacles that prevent us from loving God and neighbor.

THROUGH ALMSGIVING, we encounter our brothers and sisters around the world, sharing God's gifts with others.

This book of reflections is your guide.

In it, you and your faith-sharing community will encounter Christ in those who are suffering, those who are marginalized and others throughout creation. You will encounter Christ in your own prayer, too. And after the 40 days of Lent, you will be prepared to encounter the risen Christ.

In the pages that follow, you'll find five modules with prayers, activities and questions that will help you unpack the idea of building a culture of encounter—a central theme to Pope Francis' papacy. Use the modules each week, or pick and choose the modules or features that are most helpful to you and your community's Lenten journey.

Find all digital content at crsricebowl.org/community-reflections.

Encounter our God. Encounter Lent.

encounter

CHRIST WITHIN

OPENING REFLECTION

STATION II: JESUS CARRIES THE CROSS



**WATCH
THE VIDEO:**

crsricebowl.org/community-reflections/christ-within

Think of a time when you encountered Christ through service.

- Did the person or community you intended to serve end up serving you?
- How did you meet Christ in that person or community?
- How did you share Christ?



Photo by Daniel Helfer/CRS

Reflections FROM POPE FRANCIS:

“Jesus’ whole life, his way of dealing with the poor, his actions, his integrity, his simple daily acts of generosity, and finally his complete self-giving, is precious and reveals the mystery of his divine life. Whenever we encounter this anew, we become convinced that it is exactly what others need, even though they may not recognize it: ‘What therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you.’ (Acts 17:23) Sometimes we lose our enthusiasm for mission because we forget that the Gospel responds to our deepest needs, since we were created for what the Gospel offers us: friendship with Jesus and love of our brothers and sisters. If we succeed in expressing adequately and with beauty the essential content of the Gospel, surely this message will speak to the deepest yearnings of people’s hearts.”

–Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, section 265



Photo by CRS staff

FOR PRAYERFUL CONSIDERATION: What is Lent? | Prayer



**WATCH
THE VIDEO:**

crsricebowl.org/community-reflections/christ-within

- How do you cultivate your personal prayer life?
- How does your prayer lead you closer to Jesus?
- How might your relationship with Jesus inspire you to share God's love with your neighbors?
- How can your interior life of prayer be a stepping stone towards encountering others through discipleship?

PROCESS: Personal journal

Spend some time journaling—now, and throughout Lent. Where is God at work in your life today? What are those special places in your life where you encounter Christ? How will this Lenten journey be one in which you encounter yourself, your neighbors and your God anew?

CLOSING PRAYER:

*God of all people,
open our eyes that we may
see you at work in our lives.*

Amen

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THE SUFFERING CHRIST

OPENING REFLECTION

STATION III: JESUS FALLS FOR THE FIRST TIME



**WATCH
THE VIDEO:**

crsricebowl.org/community-reflections/christ-suffering

Think of a time when a personal hardship equipped you to better serve your community.

- What did you learn?
- Who helped you through those challenging moments?
- What insight did it give you into the hardships of others, and how have you been moved to live a more compassionate life?
- Where did you encounter Christ?



Photo by Daniel Helfer/CRS



Photo by Nikki Gamer/CRS

Reflections FROM POPE FRANCIS

“We are always capable of going out of ourselves towards the other. Unless we do this, other creatures will not be recognized for their true worth; we are unconcerned about caring for things for the sake of others; we fail to set limits on ourselves in order to avoid the suffering of others or the deterioration of our surroundings. Disinterested concern for others, and the rejection of every form of self-centeredness and self-absorption, are essential if we truly wish to care for our brothers and sisters and for the natural environment. These attitudes also attune us to the moral imperative of assessing the impact of our every action and personal decision on the world around us. If we can overcome individualism, we will truly be able to develop a different lifestyle and bring about significant changes in society.”

-Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'*, section 208

FOR PRAYERFUL CONSIDERATION: Encounter Maria | Mexico



**WATCH
THE VIDEO:**

crsricebowl.org/community-reflections/christ-suffering

- How can you welcome those who suffer into your community more intentionally?
- How might you be responsible for the suffering of others in your community—and in our global human family?
- What themes of community resonated with you from the story from Mexico?

PROCESS: Naming our community

In his address to the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit, Pope Francis reminded us that, “No one loves a concept, no one loves an idea. We love persons.” Bring to mind the names of those individuals in your community who are suffering in some way. Bring to mind the names of those individuals who have helped you in moments of hardship. Say their names aloud and pray for them.

CLOSING PRAYER:

*God of all people,
may we never forget that
we are one human family.*

Amen

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THE MARGINALIZED CHRIST

OPENING REFLECTION

STATION VI: VERONICA WIPES THE FACE OF JESUS



**WATCH
THE VIDEO:**

crsricebowl.org/community-reflections/christ-marginalized

Think of a time when you went out of your way—at some risk to yourself—to encounter a person or a community.

- Why did you do it?
- What did you learn?
- Where did you see Christ?



Photo by Daniel Helfer/CRS



Photo by Nikki Gamer/CRS

Reflections FROM POPE FRANCIS

“The Christian ideal will always be a summons to overcome suspicion, habitual mistrust, fear of losing our privacy, all the defensive attitudes which today’s world imposes on us. Many try to escape from others and take refuge in the comfort of their privacy or in a small circle of close friends, renouncing the realism of the social aspect of the Gospel. For just as some people want a purely spiritual Christ, without flesh and without the cross, they also want their interpersonal relationships provided by sophisticated equipment, by screens and systems which can be turned on and off on command. Meanwhile, the Gospel tells us constantly to run the risk of a face-to-face encounter with others, with their physical presence which challenges us, with their pain and their pleas, with their joy which infects us in our close and continuous interaction. True faith in the incarnate Son of God is inseparable from self-giving, from membership in the community, from service, from reconciliation with others. The Son of God, by becoming flesh, summoned us to the revolution of tenderness.”

–Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*,
section 88

FOR PRAYERFUL CONSIDERATION: CST 101 | Option for the Poor



**WATCH
THE VIDEO:**

csrricebowl.org/community-reflections/christ-marginalized

- Who has been marginalized in your community?
- What role have you played in their marginalization?
- How can you manifest the radical love of Christ in order to break down barriers of injustice?
- What does the marginalized Christ teach you?

PROCESS: Embracing the “other”

Fear, prejudice, ignorance, uncertainty—these are some of the things that keep us from encountering the marginalized Christ.

Reflect on what prevents you from going to the margins. How can you overcome these obstacles?

CLOSING PRAYER:

*God of all people,
inspire us to go to the margins
and struggle with injustice.*

Amen

encounter

CHRIST IN CREATION

OPENING REFLECTION

STATION X: JESUS IS STRIPPED OF HIS GARMENTS



**WATCH
THE VIDEO:**

crsricebowl.org/community-reflections/christ-creation

Think of your daily habits. How do you care for creation in your day-to-day life?

- How might you improve your habits to become more intentional about recognizing God's presence in creation, and to enter into more authentic communion with creation?
- Do you ever consider the communities most affected by careless ecological practices?



Photo by Daniel Helfer/CRS

Reflections FROM POPE FRANCIS

“The external deserts in the world are growing, because the internal deserts have become so vast.’ For this reason, the ecological crisis is also a summons to profound interior conversion. It must be said that some committed and prayerful Christians, with the excuse of realism and pragmatism, tend to ridicule expressions of concern for the environment. Others are passive; they choose not to change their habits and thus become inconsistent. So what they all need is an ‘ecological conversion,’ whereby the effects of their encounter with Jesus Christ become evident in their relationship with the world around them. Living our vocation to be protectors of God’s handiwork is essential to a life of virtue; it is not an optional or a secondary aspect of our Christian experience.”

–Pope Francis, *Laudato Si’*, section 217



Photo by Michael Stulman/CRS

FOR PRAYERFUL CONSIDERATION: The Vanishing Water of Bolivia



**WATCH
THE VIDEO:**

crsricebowl.org/community-reflections/christ-creation

- Where do you find Christ in creation?
- By encountering Christ in creation, do you recognize your responsibility to be in right relationship with the environment?
- How does an encounter with Christ—present in the cries of the Earth and the cries of the poor—fuel an ecological conversion?

PROCESS: Art as creation

Pope Francis reminds us, “When we can see God reflected in all that exists, our hearts are moved to praise the Lord.” Consider creating a piece of artwork—a poem, painting, prayer—that reflects how your heart is moved to an ecological conversion.

CLOSING PRAYER:

*God of all people,
may we be your hands
in caring for all creation.*

Amen

encounter

THE RISEN CHRIST

OPENING REFLECTION

STATION XIV: JESUS' BODY IS PLACED IN A TOMB



**WATCH
THE VIDEO:**

crsricebowl.org/community-reflections/christ-risen

**Think of a time when you failed,
when you thought all was lost.**

- Where was God in that moment?
- Did hope and faith win out?
- How might this Easter perspective influence our work for peace and justice?



Photo by Daniel Helfer/CRS

Reflections FROM POPE FRANCIS

“Christ’s resurrection is not an event of the past; it contains a vital power which has permeated this world. Where all seems to be dead, signs of the resurrection suddenly spring up. It is an irresistible force. Often it seems that God does not exist: all around us we see persistent injustice, evil, indifference and cruelty. But it is also true that in the midst of darkness something new always springs to life and sooner or later produces fruit. On razed land life breaks through, stubbornly yet invincibly. However dark things are, goodness always re-emerges and spreads. Each day in our world beauty is born anew, it rises transformed through the storms of history. Values always tend to reappear under new guises, and human beings have arisen time after time from situations that seemed doomed. Such is the power of the resurrection, and all who evangelize are instruments of that power.”

–Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*,
section 276



FOR PRAYERFUL CONSIDERATION: What is Lent? | Hope



**WATCH
THE VIDEO:**

crsricebowl.org/community-reflections/christ-risen

- How has your journey of Lent prepared you to become an instrument that brings forth “the power of the resurrection?”
- How will this mindset influence your work for, and with, those who are most in need?
- How can the hope of Easter permeate even the most desperate of situations?

PROCESS: Commit to Encounter

Throughout the 40 days of Lent, we have reflected on what it means to encounter ourselves, our neighbors and our God. Now, as we look ahead to Easter, spend time in prayerful discernment considering the individuals and communities you would like to make a special effort to encounter this Easter season. How will you continue your commitment to enacting God’s vision as the person you are called to be?

CLOSING PRAYER:

*God of all people,
awaken in us
a passion for justice.*

Amen

CRS Rice Bowl: CRS Rice Bowl is the Lenten faith-in-action program of Catholic Relief Services, inviting faith communities to live in solidarity with our poorest and most vulnerable brothers and sisters around the world through the three Lenten pillars of prayer, fasting and almsgiving.

@CRSRiceBowl

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