

## A Message from Sr. Ellen Rose...



Recently I read a reflection on the rhythm of the seasons. Spring is the season of expectation. Summer is the season of warmth and comfort. Autumn invites us to lean back, relax and enjoy the fruits of our labor. Commenting on winter, the reflection continues, "There is a winter in all of our lives, a chill and darkness that makes us yearn for days that have gone or put our hope in days yet to be."

During winter in our hemisphere, the liturgical season of Lent begins. This year it is early with Ash Wednesday on February 14. When I think about winter some words come to mind: wind and whiteouts, ice and isolation, darkness and loneliness, snow thaws and barren earth. Do these have a spiritual meaning that can help as we move toward Lent? I think so.

The short days of light and the long hours of night and darkness remind us of the darkness that can envelop our lives. Perhaps it is the darkness of tepid and lackadaisical efforts at prayer, regular attendance at Mass and reception of the sacraments or the darkness of broken relationships, clutching hurts and anger that hinder forgiveness and compassion.

Wind and whiteouts impair our vision causing us to lose our way and momentarily stop our travel. The journey of life and faith requires keen eyesight – the unclouded vision of faith that "sees" the deep mysteries of our faith, accepting and living them. Faith "sees" what is unseen to the naked eye. It takes us beyond material realities. Wind and whiteouts remind us that as important a physical sight is, "we fix our eyes not on

**Department of Education**

**Newsletter**

**Winter 2024**

what is seen but on what is unseen; for what is seen is transitory, but what is unseen is eternal" (2Cor 4: 18).

Winter loneliness and isolation is a gift. They can encourage us to form relationships that enlarge our hearts to love, urge us to appreciate the beauty of others and draw nearer to God. The solitude of loneliness allows space for us to recognize God working in our lives.

Winter temperatures that thaw the snow and ice and expose the barren earth are hope-filled signs that winter moves on and spring is soon to come.

"So we do not focus on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal."

2 Corinthians 4:18

Lent is derived from the Anglo-Saxon words *lencten*, meaning "Spring" and *lenctentid*, which means not only "Springtide" but also "March," the month in which most Lent falls. The year almost the entire Lenten season occurs in the winter season. It may not look or feel like spring. Yet, as we journey through this season, we will

experience the longer days of sunlight and signs of new life. We will hear the crows and watch for the arrival of the first brave crocus. Nature's signs of spring enkindle hope. For us, the full bloom of spring at the conclusion of Lent will be more than the flowering of nature's spring. It will be the spring of the renewed life of grace filling our hearts and minds once again with the gift of new life, renewed hope, and lasting joy.

May we slow down a bit and embrace Lent's invitation to renewal. On Ash Wednesday we will hear, "Now is the acceptable time" (2Cor 6:2). Lent is the time to return to the Lord with our whole heart. Now is the time to fix our gaze on Christ, savor His love for us and rededicate ourselves to the path of discipleship.



## A Message from Karen Donahue...

Dear Colleagues,

My guess is right about now you are wishing, hoping, and/or seeking ways to keep things running smoothly in your classroom. It's winter, we're inside more, and kids still have huge amounts of energy to burn. The following article is shared from our "Friendly" project. If you have already glanced at it, please reread. These strategies could replace classroom chaos with calmness and inspiration.

*Karen Donahue*

Find more Teacher Tips here: [Friendly Resource Portal \(mykajabi.com\)](http://mykajabi.com)



### **Reclaiming Your Class Time**

**Written by:** Holly Winchell | Director of Innovation

#### **Teacher Tips**

Come December, chronic classroom disruptions might have had you feeling ready to reclaim your class time by any means necessary. I am guilty as charged for thinking to myself "We'll just try again next year" more than once in the week leading up to winter break.

While a classroom free of disruptions may be an idyllic vision right there with sugar-plums dancing in our heads, the toll of classroom disruptions can really add up. Studies show that a teacher experiencing an average amount of classroom disruptions will go on to lose 10-20 whole school days of instructional time over the course of a year (Kraft, M. A., & Monty-Nussbaum, M., 2020). Yikes!

Beyond losing class time, disruptions left unaddressed can really put a strain on relationships in the classroom. Your most astute students may start to feel fatigued and frustrated by the derailment of learning time and students frequently disrupting critical class time may be doing so because of similarly unmet needs - both resulting in an erosion of hard-earned relational real-estate.

If the cycle of classroom disruptions is feeling relentless this year, we come bearing gifts.

Check out these relationally centered strategies for before, during, and after classroom disruptions and add a classroom management reset to your New Year's resolution list!

**READ ALOUD & PUPPET**

**TEAMWORK**

**DREAM BOARD**

**COMPLIMENT CARDS**

## Before the Bell

You know the drill - if you fail to plan, you are planning to fail. That Benjamin Franklin quote may warrant an eye roll, but it is true nonetheless! Here are a few strategies and resources to consider preparing as a classroom reset in the new year:

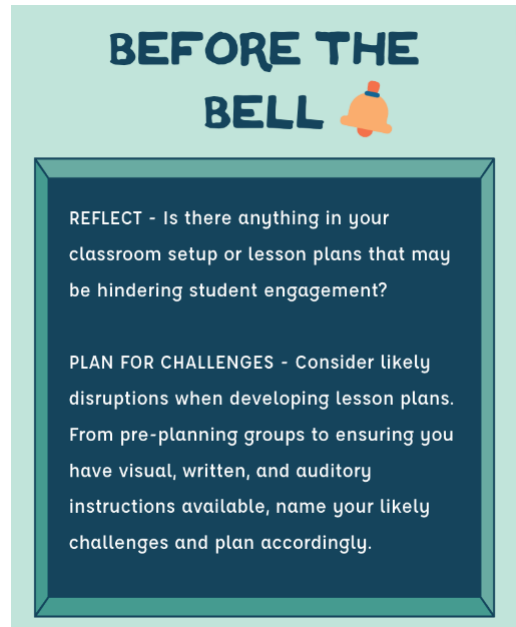
**Reflect:** From classroom setup to curriculum, there is so much we do in teaching simply because it is what we were taught. Take some time to intentionally think through how various routines, teaching styles, and seating arrangements might affect student behavior and engagement. Use this **classroom inventory** as a starting point to think through if there is anything in your classroom actively hindering student engagement, leading to more disruptions.

If you've used this inventory before, the new year is an excellent time to review again and make note of growth or new areas of focus!

**Plan for Challenges:** Imagine being asked to make an origami frog with only text instructions. No pictures and definitely no origami experience. Just you, a green square piece of paper (no extras for mess ups either), and a room full of other origami building students who seem to be having no issues at all. Might you find yourself resorting to a much easier paper airplane to pass the time, or dare I say.... Find yourself disrupting others and complaining about how *impossible* the task you've been assigned is to finish?!

A student who doesn't have their learning needs met will likely be the first student to start making waves during carefully prepared lectures and lessons. At the (nearly) half-way point in the school year, you've likely picked up on many of the specific learning needs of your students - don't forget to put that knowledge into play when lesson planning to help you in avoiding the most common disruption pitfalls!

Take five minutes during lesson planning to imagine each of your students completing the work. Where might they get hung up on? If you can answer that question, you might be able to stop disruptions before they start. From pre planning groups to ensuring you have visual, written, and auditory instructions available, name your likely challenges and plan accordingly.



One of my favorite “tricks” during long explicit teaching, when I just know focus will be wearing thin, is allowing students to doodle! Whether it's the Friendly doodle page in their workbook, or just a blank piece of paper and some shared markers, doodling keeps hands busy and keeps minds from wandering. (Cloud, J., 2009). Planning brain breaks after challenging lessons is another go-to for ensuring students have the best chance of showing up ready to engage during each section of the class day. Try out a **Warm Welcome** as a brain break this week!



## During Class Time

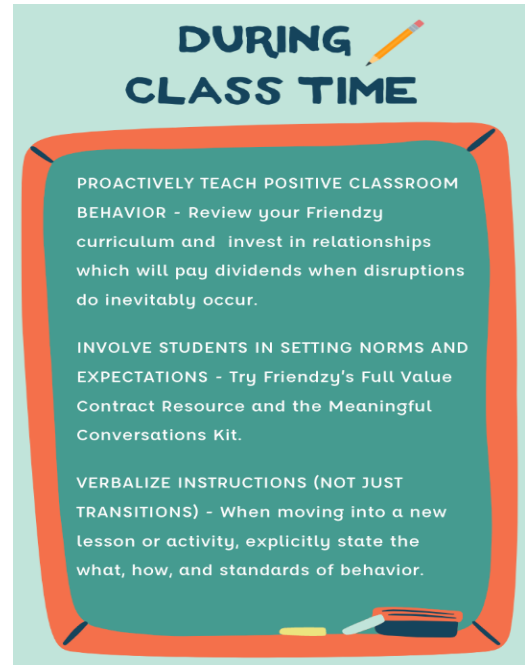
**Proactively Teach Positive Classroom Behavior:** Just because someone has been a passenger on a plane dozens of times doesn't mean they're equipped to land the aircraft, should things go awry. The same can be said for our students - hours upon hours in the classroom does not mean our students just innately know how to act in every situation! Review your Friendly curriculum and be sure to make time to proactively teach key self-management skills and invest in relationships which will pay dividends when disruptions do inevitably occur. And never underestimate the power of a good visual reinforcement from your online resource portal!

P.S. Our School Care knows your Friendly volume backwards and forwards, so don't hesitate to knock on our door when you need some support identifying which lessons from current and previous volumes key in on the skills and competencies you'd like to emphasize.

### Involve Students in Setting Norms and Expectations:

Thanks to your proactive Friendly lessons (wink wink), your students are well primed to be active participants in re-establishing classroom norms and expectations. I love using the **Friendly Full Value Contract** for establishing classroom norms. In addition, I think implementing **Friendly's Meaningful Conversations Kit** (nonverbal hand signals and conversation stems) is well worth the implementation time. Both of these resources are designed to give students ownership in the structure that they live within for 6 hours a day. After a while you may just notice students holding each other accountable instead of you having to jump in!

**Verbalize Instructions (Not Just Transitions):** I'm going to lean on Brene Brown who coined one of my all time favorite sayings for this one: "Clear is Kind." Many teachers are pros at framing transition times - clearly defining the what, when, and how long to get from one activity to the next.



I find it just as important to frame classroom time *after* transitions with that same explicit energy naming the what, the how, and most importantly the standards of behavior. Ben Johnson in his Edutopia article on ***The Five Priorities of Classroom Management*** has a script example that I love! And bonus, it's appropriate for just about every grade.

*"You have 15 minutes, and you will be working with your partner on designing a structure out of newspaper that will reach the ceiling. You may use inside voices to quietly discuss your plans with your partner. If you have questions, please put the red cup on your desk, and I will come and help you as soon as possible. Meanwhile, keep working on other things until I get there."*



## After the Dust Settles

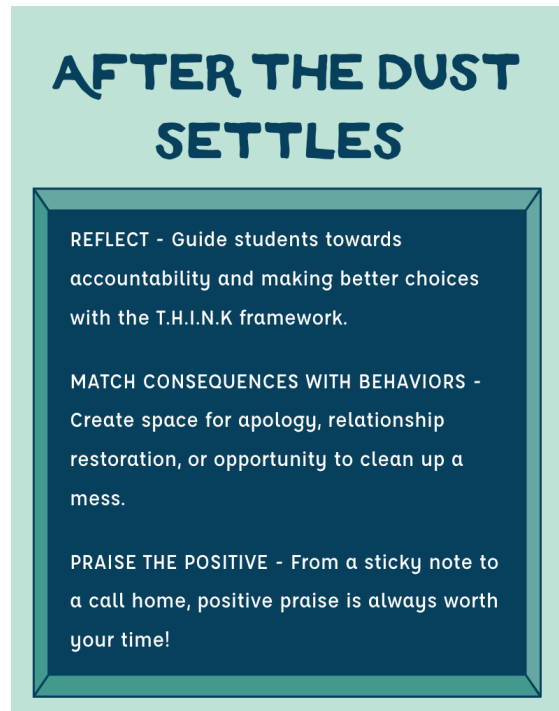
You did everything right and disruptions still happened today!?! Join the club! And when I say club, I mean join the 100% of other teachers that are in the same boat. Strength in numbers, right?

Here are a few strategies to consider post-disruption to help interrupt the cycle:

**Reflect:** Back to good ol' reflection, only this time - it's our students we want to guide towards taking accountability and making better choices. Use a tool like the T.H.I.N.K acrostic from Unit 5 of *Friendzy* Volume 1 and/or the S.O.R.T framework from *Friendzy* Unit 7 of *Friendzy* Volume 3 to guide students in reflecting on how their actions impacted themselves and those around them. Both of these can be used in written form or to guide one on one conversation. Not sure where to find these tools? Leave a comment below or reach out to support@friendzy.co and we will make sure you get access!

**Match Consequences with Behaviors:** Reflection is an excellent first step for students, but there may be some amends to make as a second step in accountability. If a student's disruption was particularly impactful to another student, create space for an apology to help restore that relationship. *Friendzy* Volume 1 Unit 6, *Friends Forgive*, has some great language students can use in asking for forgiveness. If the collateral damage of a disruption is your classroom floor covered in glitter, helping you vacuum or sweep might be the more appropriate consequence.

**Praise the Positive:** From a sticky note of praise to classroom prize dollars and even a call home, positive praise is *always* worth your time. Pouring into relationships by encouraging our students and calling out their exemplary work, behavior, and character strengthens the relational bridges necessary for students to reach their full academic, social and emotional potential.



Trust me, you don't want to be walking across a run-down rickety old bridge when the moment comes where you have to re-direct or address disruptive behavior! Above all, our students need to know that we care about them and have their best interests in mind and heart. Through strong and sturdy relationships, any hurdle can be overcome.

Of course, this list is not exhaustive, but I hope it's a good start to get your creative and personalized classroom management strategies in motion!

Have a trick that has worked wonders in your classroom? Share in the comments! There may be a teacher out here in this *Friendzy* family that could really use your guidance and expertise.

## A Message from Cathy...

In the bureau in my bedroom, I have a bottom drawer full of lots of stuff. Truthfully, it is a junk drawer. It is the place where I put all the things I don't want to throw away, all the things I don't want to deal with and all the things there is no other place for. If I ever was brave enough to deal with the drawer and clean it out, it would take more effort than I am willing to put in. Since I have been reading Juliann Stanz's book entitled BRAVING THE THIN PLACES, I have been thinking about that junk drawer a lot!

Julianne suggests we have a "junk drawer" in our hearts too, a place we store up hurts, shame, guilt or feelings we just don't want to deal with. Like the bedroom junk drawer, the stuff in the junk drawer is out of sight and out of mind. But really is it out of sight and out of mind?



This spring, I plan to tackle my bedroom junk drawer. I know I have some mementos in that drawer that might bring some tears or pain. But it needs to be done. How about the heart's junk drawer? What better season than Lent to spend some time going through that drawer, facing the hurts, the shame, the guilt. Maybe taking them all to the sacrament of Reconciliation, maybe seeking out a friend to talk with, maybe facing a hurt in the family, maybe making room for other things to have a more prominent place.

Imagine how happy we could be with the junk drawers cleaned up and taken care of!

There will be room to fill the drawers with positive things!

This spring, *the Office of Faith Formation* is offering many opportunities for renewal and learning. I ask you to to commit yourself to participating. Learn how to promote vocations, take a workshop to improve your spiritual lives and catechist skills, give yourself the gift of a day of reflection. Mark your calendars now and make these wonderful opportunities a priority.

I am pretty confident you all have your own junk drawers. Let me know how cleaning them up goes!



March 3 – “Incorporating Evangelization Into Children’s Faith Formation

March 9 – Creating a Culture of Vocations in the Parish

March 23 – “What are you looking for? Day of Reflection”

April 7 – “Sacred Scripture: The Big Picture”

April 10 – The Vocation of the Catechist – Virtual

April 11 – Child Methodologies & Learning Styles – Part 1

April 14 – “Catholic School Teachings”

April 27 – Using “Chosen” as a tool for Catechists

May 4 -Fostering Holiness in Children

May 8 – Fostering Holiness in Children – Virtual

<https://www.rcdony.org/certworkshops>

<https://www.rcdony.org/creatingculture>

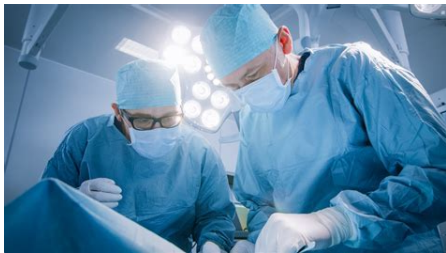
<https://www.rcdony.org/dayofreflection>

<https://www.rcdony.org/Chosen1>



## A Message from Anita...

**The wonder of creation!** Three days after Christmas, I had minor surgery which was performed laparoscopically. It was an outpatient procedure, so I was home by 3:00 in the afternoon. The healing process moved along just as my doctor described. There were no surprises.



After a few days of recovery, I went to Google and searched everything I could find about the procedure.

(This can be a good or bad thing for some people 😊.) I found it to be a good thing, as I like to know how and why things work as they do. I even found a YouTube video of the procedure. I was fascinated that this could be done! We know medicine has come a long way over the centuries with new innovations happening all the time, but it reinforced for me that **only God** could give man the ability to figure this out!

As my body healed, I thought about what I learned online about the *physical* healing process. Again, I was amazed. I reflected on how God created us in such a perfect way. When you investigate how the body works, all the systems that must work in harmony to keep us alive and healthy, it is astounding!

We take so many things for granted – even just breathing. We don't have to consciously think "breathe", or "walk", or "swallow", we just do it. But, when faced with a physical challenge that could impair our ability to do anything we "normally" do without thinking about it, it changes our perspective. We may face a challenge or difficulty that requires a different set of muscles to be used, or any number of changes that require conscious effort and thought until we get used to a new way of moving, and our body adapts. Isn't it similar with our spiritual lives?

We can become very comfortable with where we are spiritually, and maybe we take things for granted in that way too? We don't "think" about it. We go about life, we go to mass, we receive the sacraments, and perhaps

we don't give it much "conscious" thought, until we are faced with some great difficulty or tragedy in our life or the life of someone close to us.



Suddenly, we are asking for prayer; we reach out for all the help we can get. We are faced with a bump in the road and forced to change our path, but God is always there waiting for us.

### Lent 2024

The church in her infinite wisdom gives us the season of Lent, to stop and reflect on how we live our lives. The season of Lent for me is the time of year to "consciously" stop and take an inventory of "where am I spiritually?" Am I just "going through the motions" or am I consciously engaged in Mass when I attend? Am I "zoning out" or am I really praying with my heart and soul engaged? Am I kind and generous, or do I fall short in charity? There are so many things to think about during Lent, and it's a great way every year to give ourselves a "spiritual tune-up".



Ash Wednesday is February 14<sup>th</sup> this year, so it's right around the corner. We are in the middle of snow and ice season here in the North Country, and Lent will



begin right in the middle of it! I encourage you to take advantage of programs offered in your local parish, as well as what the Diocesan Faith Formation office has scheduled. Many parishes offer the opportunity to pray the Stations of the Cross during Lent as well as additional mass and confession times. Eucharistic Adoration may be also be added. Adjust your schedule, make a sacrifice of time to spend more time in prayer and reflection. Take stock of your life. Take steps to eliminate bad habits that separate you from God and put into practice good habits that bring you closer to God and your community. Reflect on the life of Jesus and all that he did for you. Reflecting on God's great love for us is something we can all focus on any time of year, but especially during Lent as we look forward to the joy of the Resurrection.

### Catechist Certification Workshops

The Eastern Region office has scheduled four CI workshop opportunities for the spring: two Virtual sessions and two in person sessions. See the *LEAD* brochure for details on the Diocesan website, Faith Formation page. These workshops offer an opportunity for spiritual growth and development, not "just" catechetical knowledge. Our faith lives are important. The thirst for knowledge and spiritual growth never stops. Each new thing we learn or discover about ourselves helps us be more effective in teaching our youth. Please make every effort to start or complete your certification status this spring. Please contact me with any questions.

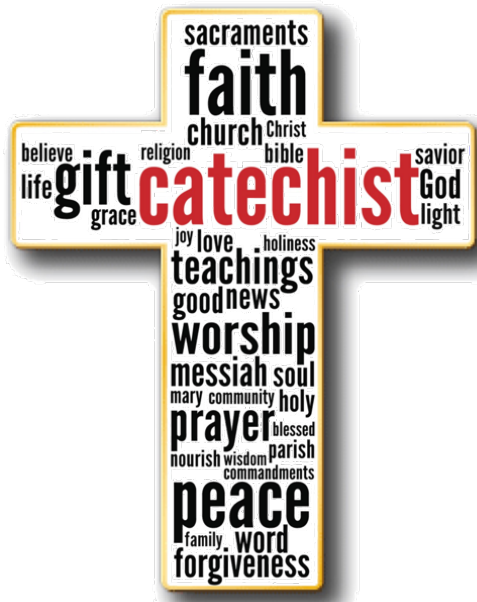


- April 10 - The Vocation of the Catechist – Virtual
- April 11 - Child Methodologies & Learning Styles - Part 1 - Plattsburgh
- May 4 - Fostering Holiness in Children – Plattsburgh
- May 8 - Fostering Holiness in Children – Virtual
- May 31 - **Catechist Appreciation Dinner - East Region**  
**Newman Center, Plattsburgh**  
**5:30 - 8:00pm**



Register Here:

<https://www.rcdony.org/certworkshops>





Fear not! Even though it feels like it's been winter forever, the days are getting longer, and summer will be here in the blink of an eye, and that means: **Summer Camp Guggenheim registration is now open!** We had such a great season last year; we are looking forward to a repeat in 2024!



Because of the July 4<sup>th</sup> Holiday, we are starting a little early this year for week 1, which will again be a shorter session for 11 - 13 year-olds. Many of our first-time campers last year from week 1 returned for a 2<sup>nd</sup> full week! We wanted to give new younger campers the same opportunity this year with one exception: they will start camp on Sunday evening and depart Wednesday afternoon, which gives them one extra full day at camp. Registration links can be found on our website on the Guggenheim page as well as the Youth Office page, or go to:

[www.rcdony.org/youth/camp](http://www.rcdony.org/youth/camp)

Many of last year's counselors will be returning, so we hope to see you soon. Get your spot NOW – and invite a friend!

**Choose your week:**

1. June 30 – July 3 (11 – 13 yrs old)  
(3 days)
2. July 7 – July 12 (12-15 yrs old)
3. July 14 – July 19 (12-15 yrs old)
4. July 21 – July 26 (12-15 yrs old)
5. July 28 – Aug 2 (12-15 yrs old)
6. Aug 4 – Aug 9 (16-18 yrs old)



Fees are the same as last year: \$200 for week 1 and \$425 for all other weeks.

I want to thank the many supporters that helped fund a young person's attendance last year. Pastors and Parishes stepped up to the plate and made camp happen for many who attended. Their camp experience will stay with them for a lifetime! Thank you!

If you know a past counselor or a college age student who has camp experience and is interested in being on staff this year, please direct them to the Employment page, Guggenheim Page, or the Youth Dept page of the diocesan website to apply or go to: [www.rcdony.org/youth/camp](http://www.rcdony.org/youth/camp) and scroll to the bottom of the page to apply. If you'd like to **volunteer for a day or more**, please complete the volunteer application as well. Thank you! We look forward to another great summer season at your "home away from home"!



**Youth Rally – SAVE THE DATE**

*Saturday April 20, 2024 at Trinity Catholic School, Massena 10:00 am – 5:00 pm*



## *New Name – Same Great Works*

Dear Friends of the Missions,

Thank you to everyone for your hard work and prayers this year in support of the missions. We hope the school year 2023-2024 is progressing smoothly. Thank you for your hard work and to all the students in school and parish religious programs. MCA is about inspiring our students to come to the forefront with their God-given talents so they can inspire and prayerfully educate themselves and others.

Included is a Lenten activity from the National Office. We hope you can share it with your children and students to help instill in them the importance of prayer, fasting, and acts of kindness throughout the Lenten Season.

God bless,

*Sr. Mary Ellen*

Sister Mary Ellen Brett, SSJ

Diocesan Director



# L E N T

PRAY

FAST

DO ACTS OF  
KINDNESS

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Fold up along this horizontal line, then staple along the vertical line to create pockets for each category. When finished, decorate however you would like!

Every time you pray, fast, or do an act of kindness during the Season of Lent, place a little note in the pocket saying what you did.

**At the end of the Lenten Season, count how many notes you have, and give that many quarters to the Missions!**

***Some examples of things you can do during Lent:*** Pray one Hail Mary for Missionaries on the five continental areas of the world (Asia, Africa, the Americas, Europe, and Oceania) or fast from one of your favorite foods. You can even include take a shorter shower to help others as saving water helps children in Mission lands! Lastly, you can give your time to someone who may need your help or offer up your allowance for a good cause! All of these ideas, or others you can think of, help you to embrace your Missionary Discipleship during this season of Lent!



# Dates to Remember

## *February*

21 FFM Boston College Course Begins (Sacraments)

## *March*

9 Creating a Culture of Vocations in the Parish – Norfolk

22 Principals' Meeting – Virtual

23 FFM Day of Reflection

26 FFM Boston College Course Wrap-up Week Begins (Sacraments)

## *April*

10 FFM Boston College Course Begins (Mapping Your Inner Landscape)

13 FFM Workshop – TBA

20 Youth Rally – Trinity Catholic School, Massena

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