

# RETURN TO ME!



Joel 2:12-18 | 2 Corinthians 5:20—6:2 | Matthew 6:1-6, 16-18

Ash Wednesday marks the beginning of Lent. This is a special time of repentance, which means turning away from sin and toward God. We call today Ash Wednesday because when we go to church, we receive ashes on our foreheads in the shape of a cross. These ashes are special. They come from burning the dried palm branches we used at last year's Palm Sunday Mass. Burning the old branches is a way of showing that we are starting a new chapter in our walk with God.

As the priest marks our foreheads, he might say, "Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return." This reminds us that our life on Earth is a temporary gift and that we belong to God. He may also say, "Repent, and believe in the Gospel," which is an invitation to turn away from sin and follow Jesus' teachings more closely in our everyday lives.

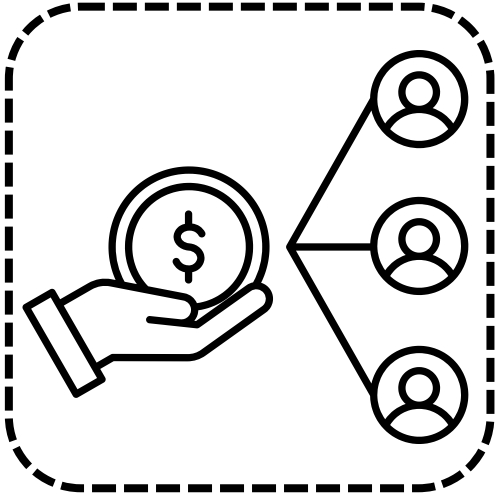
To turn our hearts toward God, we practice the three pillars of Lent: prayer, fasting, and almsgiving. This means talking to God more often, giving up something we enjoy as a sacrifice, and being extra generous toward those in need. For example, we might choose to give up playing video games or eating sweets, offering that time or effort to God as a way of saying "I love You." We can donate food or money to those in need, smile at people who are homeless, and visit the elderly. During Lent, it's also a great idea to go to confession to ask for God's forgiveness and a fresh start.



This journey of Lent isn't one we walk alone! Ash Wednesday brings our community together as one family. When we see others with the same cross on their foreheads, we remember that we are all traveling toward Jesus together. Let this day be a beautiful opportunity to say sorry for our sins, open our hearts, and get ready for the great joy of Easter!

# ALPHABET

Draw a line from each picture to the letter it starts with. For example: A - apple. Hint: the objects are things from today's Gospel (fasting, almsgiving, prayer). Then, color in the pictures.



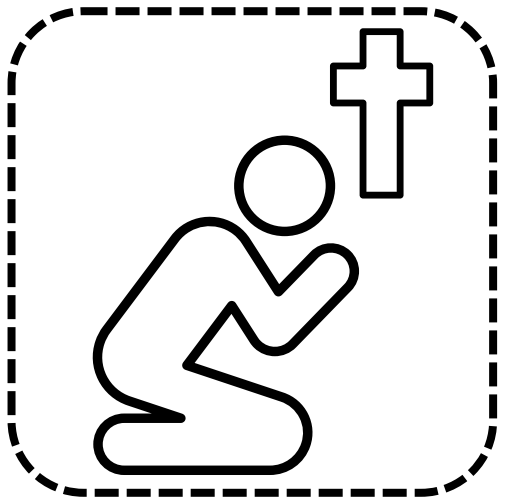
A



F

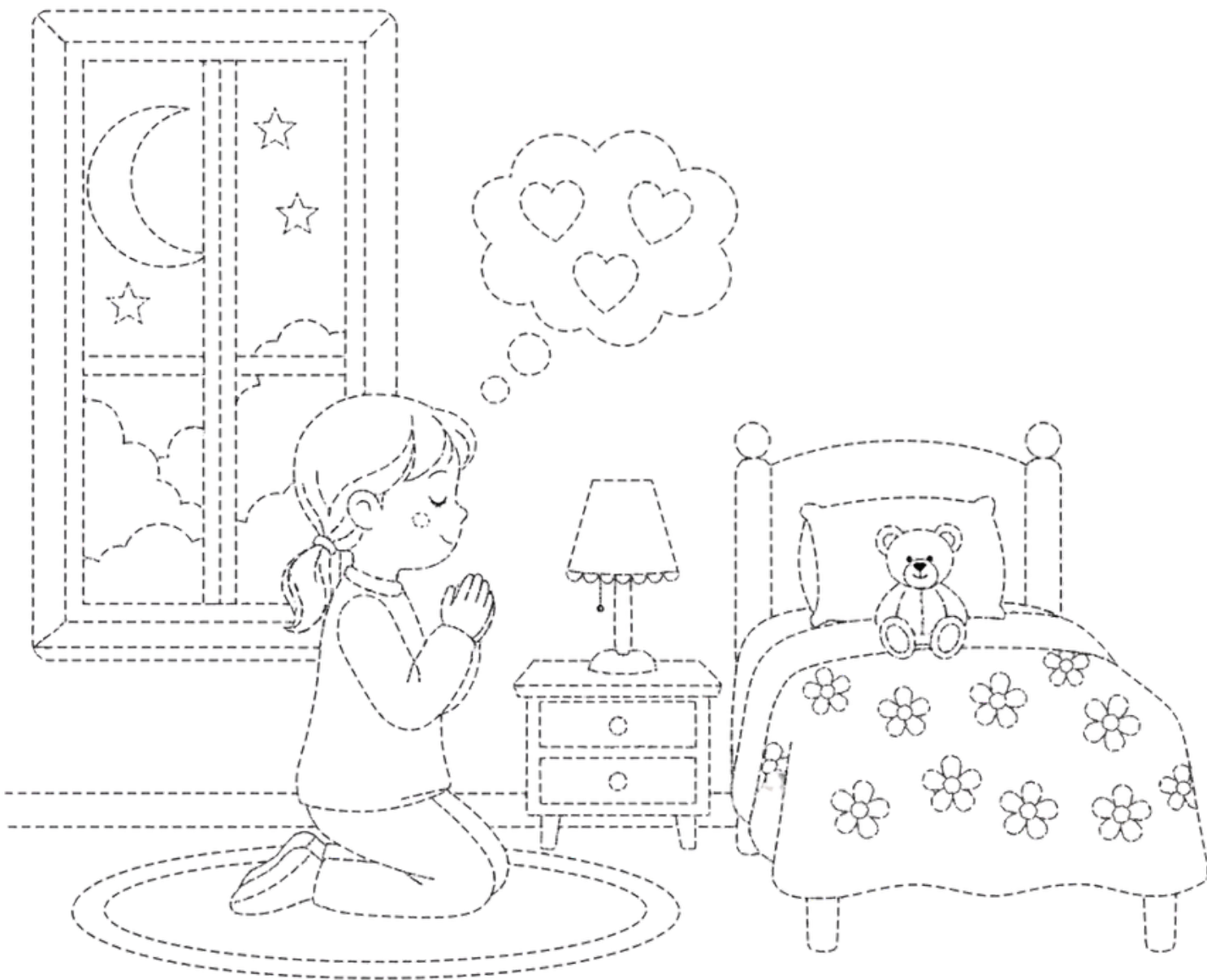


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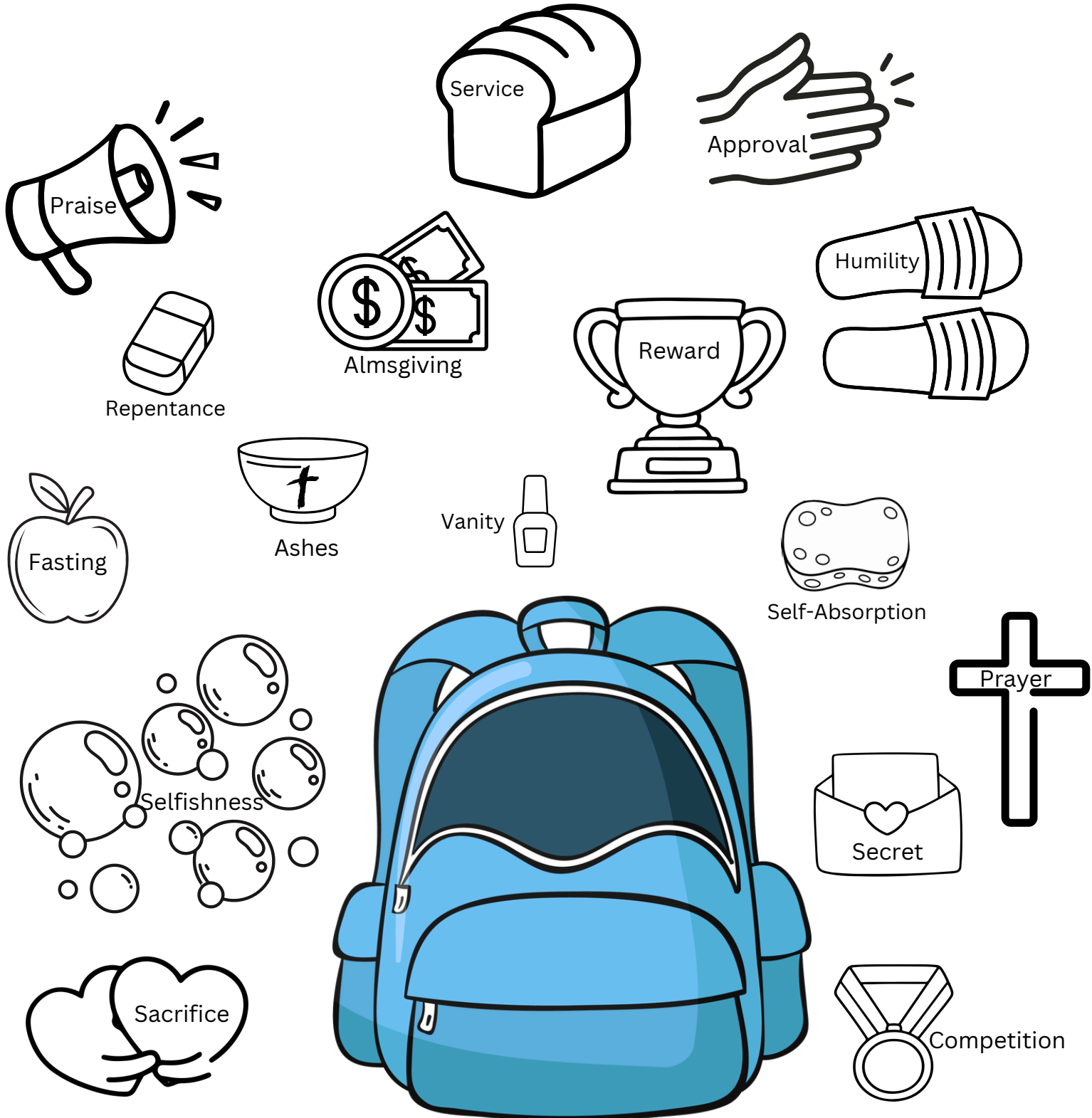
Complete the picture by tracing the dotted line and coloring it in.

MY QUIET PRAYER TIME



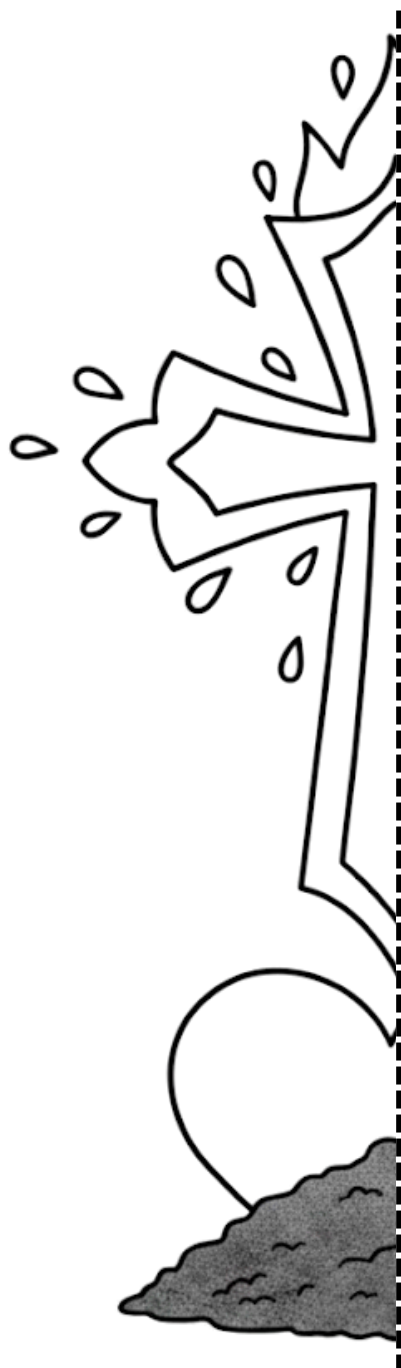
# PACK YOUR BAG

Color in the objects and actions that show how we live according to Jesus' teachings during Ash Wednesday and Lent.



# MIRROR IMAGE

Complete the missing half of the picture and color it in. After, decorate the phrase at the bottom of the page.



*"REMEMBER THAT YOU ARE DUST,  
AND TO DUST YOU SHALL RETURN"*

## CHILD CHALLENGE

Offer up a small sacrifice with a smile, so that only God knows you're doing it!



## FAMILY CHALLENGE

Create a "Quiet Corner", a small prayer space in your home this week. Decorate it with a cross, a candle, a picture of Jesus, etc. Each family member can slip away for two minutes to talk to God alone. Keep your conversation with God a secret just for Him!



## SAINT OF THE WEEK!

### Saint Francis of Assisi

Saint Francis was born in Italy in 1182 to a wealthy family. Though he was small, he had a big personality and dreamed of being a famous soldier. However, after the war, he realized that serving God was the greatest adventure of all.

Francis gave away his riches to live simply and help the poor. He started a group of friars (the Franciscan Order) and created the very first Christmas Nativity scene to celebrate Jesus. He lived with a joyful heart, showing everyone that loving God is the most valuable treasure in the world.

