

CHILDREN'S STORY HOUR

True Fasting

By Janaan Manternach
NC News Service

The prophet stood in the temple watching the people. It was a time for fasting and penance.

Men and women walked back and forth praying. They wore rough clothes made of sackcloth. Some had poured ashes all over their heads and clothes.

The prophet didn't like what he saw. He knew the people were not ready to change their lives. But they thought if they just put on the ashes and sackcloth and fasted everything would be all right.

The prophet became angry. He knew that wasn't what God wanted the people to do. He felt God wanted him to speak out. So he climbed up where people could see and hear him.

"Listen to me!" he shouted.

People stopped. They looked up at him. "It is that fool," an older man said.

"He thinks he's a prophet sent by God," a woman added.

"Do you call what you are doing real fasting?" the prophet ask-

ed them all. "Is it just a matter of ashes and rough clothes?"

The crowded temple was silent. Everyone was listening to God's prophet. He spoke now in God's name.

"This is the kind of fasting I want: Free those who are chained by injustice. Set the oppressed free. Share your bread with the hungry. Open your homes to the homeless poor. Give clothes to those who have nothing to wear. Don't turn your back on your fellow human beings."

The people were astonished by the words. The prophet was calling them to something much harder than wearing sackcloth and ashes. Some people became angry at the prophet. Others felt sad. Some were glad to hear his strong words. They knew it was God's word they heard in his words.

"Then my love will shine on you like the morning sun," the prophet continued, speaking in God's name. "Your wounds will then be healed. I will be with you and protect you. You shall cry for help to the Lord. The Lord will say, 'I am here!'"



The prophet's words brought hope to many in the crowd. They felt less threatened. They sensed how much they needed God's love.

The prophet spelled out God's promise still more. "If you put an end to all oppression and stop lying; and if you give food to the hungry and reach out to those in need, then my light will rise for you. The darkness that surrounds you will be turned into the brightness of noon. I, the Lord, will always guide you and give you good things. I will make you strong. I, the Lord, have spoken."

The prophet looked at the people for a moment. Then he climbed down. The people moved slowly out of the temple.

"I never knew that before," a man said to his wife as they walked home. "To fast and do penance also means to act with justice and love toward everyone."

(This story is based on Isaiah 58)

(Ms. Manternach is the author of catechetical works, scripture stories and original stories for children.)

Hidden Words

Find the words hidden in the puzzle below. They may be vertical, horizontal or diagonal. All the words are in this week's children's story.

B	S	F	J	N	G	U	Q	G	I
A	D	A	A	T	E	M	P	L	E
S	K	Y	C	M	R	F	T	M	L
H	O	E	P	K	S	E	X	B	I
A	R	H	C	I	C	Q	U	H	S
R	B	U	E	N	S	L	F	J	A
E	V	O	A	E	R	I	O	S	I
C	I	N	H	J	N	G	G	T	A
H	E	S	C	D	E	H	W	D	H
P	A	L	P	S	Z	T	K	K	T

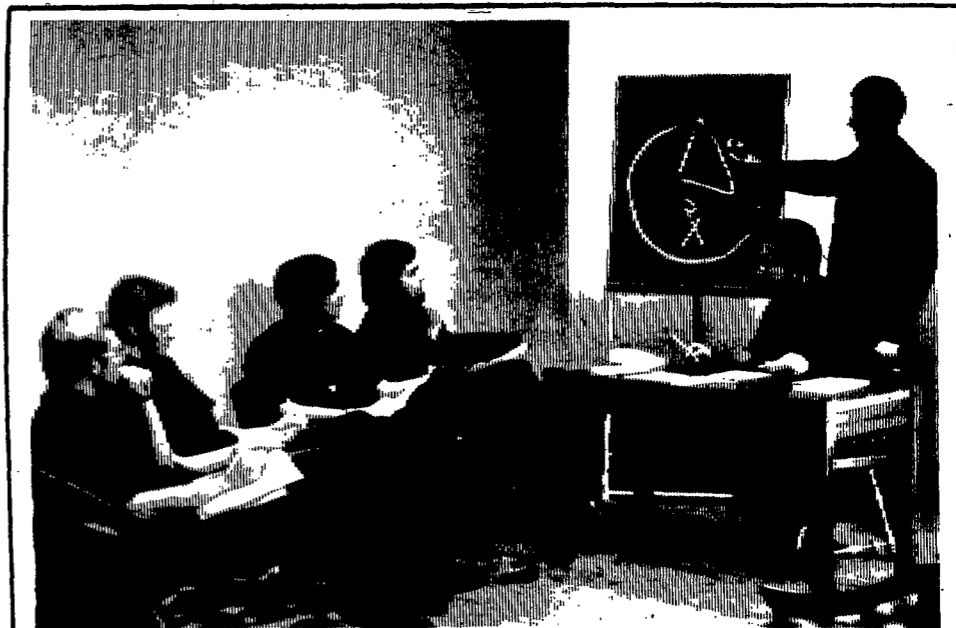
ASHES, SACKCLOTH, PENANCE, SHARE, LIGHT, TEMPLE, ISAIAH

HOW ABOUT YOU?

Lent is a special time when people think about growing and changing and becoming better Christians. Name one thing you might actually do to become a better Christian this Lent.

Children's Reading Corner

"Cassie Binigar" is a story by Patricia MacLachlan. Children and adults might enjoy reading it aloud together. In Cassie's new home there is no special place for her to be alone, as there was in her old home. Gradually through the help of a friend and her family, especially her grandmother, Cassie learns about inner space. She tells what this means in a poem to her grandmother: "But my very favorite space, Behind my nose, Behind my face...Where I sort out my thoughts and sighs...That is where I like to be, Because I know that's really me." (Harper and Row Inc., 10 East 53rd St., New York, N.Y. 10022. Hardback, \$8.90.)



Frontier

There is a frontier ruggedness about young men studying for the priesthood in Alaska. They have to be tough. After ordination, planes, boats and snowmobiles will take them to remote missions in Eskimo villages, logging camps and outposts in the Aleutian Islands.

With funding from the Catholic Church Extension Society, they are now able to pursue the priesthood with intense missionary zeal. They are part of a team that brings God's Word to isolated people here in the United States. But that team can't do

the job alone. It needs new members. It needs you.

Join us. Become a member of the Extension team. Although you won't be present in the home missions personally, your impact will be felt in this holy effort. Together we will bring Christ to those living in remote home mission areas.

Write for a free subscription to Extension magazine today and discover the difference you can make. Together, and with God's grace, we can achieve His missionary goals here in our own beloved country.



The Catholic Church
EXTENSION Society

35 East Wacker Drive, Room 400F • Chicago, Illinois 60601