



40 Ideas for 40 Days

from Joe Paprocki

The Scrutinies

This Lenten activity focuses on the celebration of the rites called the [Scrutinies](#) which are celebrated with the catechumens (those to be baptized on Holy Saturday, now referred to as the Elect) on the 3rd, 4th, and 5th Sundays of Lent.

To scrutinize means to examine something very closely. When we celebrate the Scrutinies at Mass, we are not scrutinizing the Elect. Rather, they are scrutinizing their own lives before God and we are called to do the same along with them. The goal is to be strengthened to overcome the power of sin.



The Scrutinies are most effective when the faith community, together with the Elect, identify concrete issues that they and we need to confront: we name the evils that prevent us from living the Gospel fully. These evils or obstacles then become the focus of the intercessions that are prayed during the Scrutinies.

This activity will be most effective if your parish has an active catechumenate and is celebrating the Scrutinies at Sunday Mass (and even more effective if some children are among the Elect who are preparing for baptism).

- Ask the young people to name their favorite video games that involve avoiding, eliminating, or getting around obstacles.
- Have them describe the various obstacles in these video games.
- Tell the young people that, in life, we also face obstacles that get in the way of us living as God wants us to live.
- Explain that we call these obstacles sin.

The Scrutinies

- Tell the young people that some people are preparing to be baptized on Holy Saturday and that, during Lent, they prepare for baptism by identifying the obstacles that are preventing them from following Jesus more closely. Explain that they do this as part of a ritual at Mass called the Scrutinies (celebrated on the 3rd, 4th, and 5th Sundays of Lent).
- Write the word *Scrutiny* on the board and explain that to put something under scrutiny means to examine it very closely.
- Tell them that during Lent, it is a good idea for all of us to scrutinize our lives and to identify what obstacles are preventing us from following Jesus more closely.
- Arrange the young people in groups of 3 or 4 and have them brainstorm a list of examples of obstacles that get in the way of people their age being more faithful. (examples: indifference, boredom, laziness, drugs, drinking, peer pressure, distractions, money and possessions, and so on).
- Have the groups report and make a list of these obstacles on the board.
- Invite the young people to write these examples on ping-pong balls and then have them imagine that they are in a video game and that their task is to crush these obstacles.
- Set up a “course” – a path from one end of the room to the door - and have the young people take turns walking the path (set a time limit such as 10 seconds) as you roll some ping-pong balls in their path. See who can stamp out the most in the time allotted.

