



### **Conclusion**

The Disciplines of Lent are designed to encourage and nurture our faith. There are lots of things taking place in the parish that can support you in these disciplines. Another way we are doing this is in **40 bags in 40 days**. It is a process which allows us to reflect on what is necessary in our lives- where we focus on cleaning one area per day. In this one area you challenge yourself to declutter, simplify, decrapify, and get rid of things you don't need. The idea is to remove in a small way each day during Lent those things which distract us from faith and living a whole life.

**Plan how you are going to do this at the beginning of Lent. Make it part of your prayer and devotion.**

For example -

Week 1 – I will clear out one draw in my bedroom each day before I pray.

Week 2 – I will clear 50 emails from my inbox each day and I will pray.

Week 3 – while I pray I will let go of being angry at...

You may like to have a more detailed plan, but link your clearing also to your prayer life and your meditation. Allow your clearing to be part of your Lenten discipleship. *Share your experience with others.*

**However you focus your life this Lent – do it in joyful anticipation. Remember that we are loved by God, and created in God's image, and as such we are people who value life.**

**This Lent, let us pray for the transformation of the world, that all may know they are loved and valuable. Let us pray for a Holy and Blessed Lent, Holy Week and Easter.**



# LENT

## *Keeping it Holy* **2018**

# The meaning of Lent

**Lent is not a time to make yourself miserable.** Often we can be encouraged to think that the season of Lent is all about people giving up their favourite treats with the thought that in doing so we will lose some weight and get a little healthier. For some of us it is also associated with often rather dreary Lent Groups and study, additional services and soul searching. Neither approach really does justice to the wonderful opportunity of the 40 days that run from Ash Wednesday to Easter Eve (Lent begins on Ash Wednesday, and ends on Easter Eve, the forty days comprising the intervening weekdays, as Sundays do not count!)

## So what is it really all about?

Over the last 2000 years, three main elements have gone into the making of Lent. They are:

1. *Preparation for Easter Baptism.* The early Church (especially in Jerusalem, 4th century) came to use the forty days building up to Easter as a time to prepare their new converts for Baptism. For these converts, Lent was a time of great and joyful anticipation.
2. *Time for penance and reconciliation with the Church.* Since early times, Lent has also been used as a time when those who have fallen away from the Church were prepared for re-admission to Holy Communion and full active membership. This often involved confession and penance and in the process forgiveness and restoration brought a deep sense of peace and security.
3. *A fast in preparation for Holy Week and Easter.* This, too, has been popular since earliest times, and normally meant giving up food or some food until the evening of each day. The point was not to punish oneself, but to abstain, in order to both focus the mind in prayer to God, and to appreciate the real value (if any) of what one was depriving oneself. The value of the food uneaten was often offered as a gift to the poor or the Church.

## Lent is Joyful

Lent is therefore about joyful anticipation, about renewed peace and a new focus on prayer and charity. It is a time of hope and happiness as we cleanse and renew ourselves to be ready to celebrate the wonderful news of the resurrection on Easter Day.

If you would like to get more from the season then you might also want to attend one of the additional services of prayer being held or come along to

*men, in order to be seen by them... When you give alms, sound no trumpet before you as the hypocrites do. But when you give alms, do not let your right hand know what your left hand is doing, so that your alms giving may be in secret, and your Father who sees in secret will reward you'. (Matt 6:2-4)*

In the early Church it was the tradition of charity, the sharing of wealth with the poor, which marked the Christian community from other forms of belief. By the time of the conversion of the Emperor Constantine in 314 large numbers of people were being helped by the charitable giving of members of the Church. Such selfless generosity made an enormous impression on the pagan world and led to many accepting the faith that could inspire such love of others.

Lent has always been a time when Christians have been asked to think again about the direction of their spiritual lives and this must necessarily include how we use our income. It is true that not many of us are wealthy, but very few of us are as poor as the woman in the story of the widows mite, and nearly all of us could afford to give some more of our income to help others. Amy Carmichael, the missionary, expressed the heart of almsgiving when she said 'You cannot give without loving, you cannot love without giving'. Christians are called to show God's love to the world, and how we view our cash is a good indicator of where our hearts are fixed.

This Lent, alongside all the other aspects of the spiritual life, you are invited to give some careful thought to how you use your money. Do you give to charity? Do you make regular contributions to our Church? If not, then you should be and you should start doing so this Lent. (We do not apologise for being so direct – being generous with our money is a vital part of a Christian life).

*'Do not lay up for yourself treasure on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourself treasure in heaven. For where your treasure is, there will be your heart also' (Matt 6:19-20)*

**If you would like more information about how to give to the parish – please speak with Michael Lyon or Simon Judge; or collect a form from the information stand.**

**This Lent our parish charity is The Bishop of London's Lent Appeal – Homelessness Appeal.** See display for more details.



certainly we should not receive Holy Communion if we have eaten within an hour of Mass.

In recent years fasting has almost faded away, but fasting is still recommended in the prayer books of the Church of England for Ash Wednesday and Good Friday, and on the traditional Ember Days (Days of special prayer for the Church) designated throughout the year. Special acts of self discipline (unspecified) are also called for on Fridays and during Lent.

The point of fasting is not to lose weight or to save money; it is about offering to God the devotion that motivated it and we are encouraged to offer to charity the money saved. The time not spent in preparing and eating can be used for prayer or spiritual reading and you will be surprised at how much time we do spend over food in a day.

A fast can simply be not eating meat (as on Friday's) or a fuller fast of leaving out a meal or two. You might like to consider if you can omit some or all meals as a fast on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday, and to observe the 'fish on Friday' rule for the rest of the season. We might also like you to set aside some money as an act of charity for the **Bishop's Lent Appeal 2018 – Homelessness Appeal**.

This years full fast days: **February 14th (Ash Wednesday) and March 30th (Good Friday)**. Lesser fasts: **All Fridays in Lent; and 21 , 23 and 24th February (as Ember Days)**.

*NB Those over 60 or under 12 have always been excused the need to fast. Older people and diabetics should think carefully before fasting, and speak to a member of clergy if they are unsure about what to do. If you take any regular medication that is effected by eating please speak to your GP before fasting.*

#### 4. Charitable Giving in Lent

Almsgiving is a central part of the Christian Tradition. Based on the Jewish practice of giving money as a sign of piety and to relieve the suffering of the poor - Christians have followed Jesus' command in the Sermon on the Mount to 'Give to those who ask from you' ( Matthew 6:42). Jesus, however, developed the tradition and tried to ensure that almsgiving would be seen as an act of devotion, rather a public display of piety. He warned his followers to 'Beware of practising your piety before

one of the regular weekday services. Any member of the clergy will also be happy to talk to you about prayer, the spiritual journey and how we grown in faith.

## The four elements of a Holy Lent

### 1. Prayer and the life of the Christian

Since the earliest days of the Christian faith, prayer has been offered to God, through Jesus, in both formal and informal ways. Christians are called to be people of prayer, an experience of our relationship with God that underpins all that we do. Our ancestors in the faith from the very earliest times prayed regularly and every day. As it says in the Gospel of Luke after the resurrection the disciples 'were continually in the Temple blessing God' *Luke 24:53*.

The practise of praying through the day comes originally from our Jewish inheritance. In Psalm 119 we hear of praising God seven times day, and Psalm 134 calls on the servants of the Lord to stand before him at night. All Christians pray daily and for many of us this means finding some time each day, morning or evening or both, to set aside some time to offer praise, to pray for the Church and the world and for particular concerns. Prayer should also involve time given over to silence, without words, simply to rest in the presence and love of our Saviour and to grow in peace and confidence. If you would like to learn more about prayer then please don't hesitate to ask one of the clergy or other members of the congregation about their own lives and how they manage to keep up a disciplined pattern of attention to God. We have much to learn from each other.

In Church, and in more formal than personal and individual prayer, over the years Christians have traditionally punctuated the day with short services sometimes called the Daily Office. We have a duty to pray for the Church and the world, and using a set form of prayers provides a simple way to fulfil this duty.

The basic elements of an Office are psalms, readings from scripture, canticles and prayers. Sometimes there is a hymn or a responsive form of prayer. Through joining in with the Church's continual offering of prayer we find ourselves caught up in a much greater work of the Spirit. When it is difficult to find the right words to pray, the Office offers us an opportunity to listen to the Word of God, to reflect upon it, and sometimes to be taken beyond words to a place of silent contemplation and adoration, through the action of the Holy Spirit within us.



**The Daily Office** are offered most days in our parish – **Morning Prayer** is said at **8.30am** Sunday – Friday and **Evening Prayer** is said at **6pm** on Tuesday – Thursday, both in Trinity Chapel, on the ground floor of St Anne’s and St Andrew’s. You are invited to come along to these services at any time, and perhaps particularly during this coming Lent. The Daily office is also available on line, and can be downloaded at [www.churchofengland.org/prayer-worship/join-us-in-daily-prayer](http://www.churchofengland.org/prayer-worship/join-us-in-daily-prayer).

Alternatively you may pray your way through the psalms or use other resources that are available. You may also like to try <http://www.pray-as-you-go.org>

**There are also Lent prayer booklets available at the back of church.**

## **2. Confession and the life of the Christian**

Confession, as a spiritual discipline, is often thought that it is something that Roman Catholics do, or those in the ‘High’ Church. But Confession is a part of all our spiritual lives: at each service we start with a general Confession in which we ask for God’s forgiveness – *‘Almighty God, our heavenly Father, we have sinned against you...’*. In preparation for this weekly Confession at the Mass we are encouraged to think about the way we have lived in the week before, and to be aware of our failings. We then listen for the priest to pronounce God’s forgiveness (the absolution) and sing a hymn of praise thanking God for the refreshment and new life we have received. (The Gloria).

Individual Confession is meant to compliment and build on the general confession that we share in week by week. The New Testament encourages us to *‘Confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed’* (James 5:16) and the famous Protestant theologian Bonhoeffer called Confession the *‘renewal of the joy of baptism’*. As we try to grow as Christians it is inevitable that there will be times when we do things that we are ashamed of, and come to lie heavily in our minds. We may become aware that there are particular failings that we are prone to, and that we struggle with overcoming.

Individual Confession, with its very personal assurance of God’s continuing love can be a powerful way of addressing these spiritual questions. In individual Confession we come before God very much as we are, without the ability to hide behind others or to slide over the things we know we should confess. Individual Confession encourages us to think more deeply about the ways we have failed to honour God, to honour

others and, importantly, to honour ourselves. As Christians we come before God knowing our failings and seeking God’s healing touch:- being able to acknowledge our sins before God, with the gentle guidance of a priest, can be a powerfully healing process.

In the Church of England individual Confession has long been seen as an act of personal devotion that can greatly enrich the spiritual life of the believer. *The rule has always been ‘All may, none must and some should’.* *All of us may make our individual confession, though none of us has to, but equally there are some of us who should.*

Confession is to be recommended to any who are developing their spiritual lives. It is a powerful aid for the Christian who wants to grow in holiness with God. If this is a practice that would be helpful for you, please speak with one of the clergy, and they can make a time to see you. Alternatively there are a number of other churches close by, and in the city who offer regular confession. If you have a Spiritual Director it is also something you should speak about with them.

*Do think seriously about making your Confession this Lent.*

## **3. Fasting during Lent**

Abstaining from food as a religious exercise is an ancient tradition in Christianity. It is seen as an expression of sorrow for sin; as an offering of humility for a particular prayer intention for oneself or for another. It can be a very helpful way of focusing the mind for prayer. In recent years the idea of fasting as a healthy way of cleansing the body has begun to gain popularity, recognising the clear state of mental alertness that it can bring about.

In the early Church fasting meant not eating until the main meal of the day, usually in mid-afternoon and was widely practised before the Easter celebration and by people preparing to be baptised. As Lent developed as an idea in the 4<sup>th</sup> Century, fasting came to be a part of the season for all Christians, particularly on Ash Wednesday, all Fridays and Good Friday itself. A less intense form of fast, not eating meat or dairy products, was the norm on all Fridays and continued in the Church of England almost till the present day, and is still practised by many of the devout. (*‘Fish on Friday’*).

The rule of not eating before Communion, as a spiritual exercise, is also still encouraged with the recommendation that we should not eat before we go to Church for Holy Communion. Ideally we should fast for three hours but

