



THE
FORTY
DAYS
of LENT



RETURN
to the
LORD
YOUR
GOD

Keeping a Holy Lent

St Anne's Brondesbury 2022

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 one of the regular weekday services. You may also like to speak to Mo C about prayer, the spiritual journey and how we grow in faith. On this journey we are invited to spend time praying, reflecting and being charitable.

Above all we would like you to be joyful, to remember that as members of the Church God calls us into a relationship with our Creator which is fresh and full of life and hope. Wishing you a happy and holy Lent.

Opportunities During Lent 2022

Ash Wednesday 2nd March

Is the start of Lent and in one of the most important days in the church calendar. Traditionally Ash Wednesday has been seen as a Holy Day of Obligation – a day when we make every effort to go to . **At 10.30am** we will a time of reflection with Said mass and imposition of ashes to mark the start of Lent.

7pm Sung Eucharist with Imposition of Ashes.



Personal Reflection – 40 bags in 40 days

There are many ways you might reflect during Lent – one way is to take part in the *40 bags in 40 days challenge*. 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 goal is **one bag a day** but you can have more or less. It doesn't need to just be material things, it could be emails or issues or even concerns. 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.

Start small – bag size may vary. Maybe choose one draw or activity you are going to clear, rather than a whole room. Allow what you choose to inform your prayer life – what does our clutter tell us about our relationship with God? How might God inform our living in the days ahead?

Fasting or Giving Something Up!

The point of fasting or giving something up is about offering to God the devotion that motivated it. The time not spent in preparing and eating can

be used for prayer or spiritual reading. A fast can simply be not eating meat or a fuller fast of leaving out a meal or two.

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 4th 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. ('Fish on Friday').

The point of the tradition of fasting or giving something up is about making space to be more focus on God and to be even more mindful of how we live our lives of faith. As you consider what you give up, (or take up), think about what would help you grow in love for God, and help you to be the person God created you to be!

NB Those over 60 or under 12 have always been excused the need to fast. Older people, people on regular medication and diabetics should think carefully before fasting and would be advised to speak to your GP before doing so.

Confession and Reconciliation

Confession is a spiritual discipline. Individual Confession is meant to compliment and build on the general confession that we share in each week - its very personal assurance of God's continuing love can be a powerful way of addressing spiritual questions. It is a common Lenten practice.

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. We shared the quote below last year from Pope Francis, but it seems apt for every Lent!*

DO YOU WANT TO FAST THIS LENT?

In the words of Pope Francis

- Fast from hurting words and say kind words
- Fast from sadness and be filled with gratitude.
- Fast from anger and be filled with patience.
- Fast from pessimism and be filled with hope
- Fast from worries and have trust in God.
- Fast from complaints and contemplate simplicity.
- Fast from pressures and be prayerful.
- Fast from bitterness and fill your hearts with joy.
- Fast from selfishness and be compassionate to others.
- Fast from grudges and be reconciled.
- Fast from words and be silent so you can listen.

Charity

Charitable giving is also a common practice in Lent. If you do fast you might like to donate what you have saved on food to Charity.

Alternatively, you may just want to focus on your giving in Lent. You may want to continue to give to charities you already support, like **Laurence's Larder** or our special Lent Charity is **Bishop of London's Lent Appeal**. – **which this year is : Cultivating Compassionate Communities Equipping churches to offer safe spaces and promote positive mental and emotional wellbeing** Our collection at special services during Lent, as well as retiring offerings during Holy Week will go to this appeal – OR you can make a donation on the Diocese of London website. For more details see and ways to give see <https://www.london.anglican.org/lent-appeal-2022/>

Lent Study – Monday's in Lent

*Our Lent Study this year will explore themes offer in
Paula Gooder's Book – Women of Holy Week*

Each session will include stories as well as a chance for reflection; and will conclude with Mass. You may like to buy your own copy of the book, but you can also attend if you don't have one. Each session will stand alone, so don't worry if you can't attend every session.

Monday 14th March – 6.30pm

Monday 21st March – 6.30pm

Monday 28th March – 6.30pm

Monday 4th April – 6.30pm

Monday 11th April – 6.30pm

Reclaiming our patterns of faith

The last two years has seen us have to adapt in many ways and create new patterns and habits. Some of these habits have been positive, others more challenging. The pandemic has significantly changed our patterns of worship, during Lent we would like to challenge each other to reclaim the habit of Sunday worship. Can you commit to reclaiming your habit of coming to church on Sunday morning or to our 5pm Zoom service? If each of us committed to attending at least 3 Sunday's or more in Lent, it would have a significant impact on us all! Worshipping together encourages our sense of community and wellbeing.

Stations of the Cross

Is traditionally a series of meditations which follow through the story of the last hours of Jesus life. The 14 stations follow Jesus journey generally focusing on images, as well as listening to the story. Each station ends with a prayer.

This will take place on 4pm Sunday 13th March and 10th April.

Holy Week and Easter

We look forward to our Lenten Journey, and to Holy Week and Easter when we will shall the Eucharist in full again together. Please to prayer for me and each others as we journey together through Lent.

Mother Christine

