



THE
FORTY
DAYS
of LENT



RETURN
to the
LORD
YOUR
GOD

Keeping a Holy Lent

St Anne's Brondesbury 2024

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 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.

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 2024

Ash Wednesday 14th February

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 church. You may find a service that is on close to where you work during the day, or join the parish this service:

7pm Sung Eucharist with Imposition of Ashes.

Shaping our spiritual lives

Lent Listening Groups

What are the places where you get to share about your faith journey, both the highlights as well as the struggles?

For Lent 2024, all across London Diocese are invited for a deep dive into the theme of listening as a tool for deepening discipleship. This can be part of an existing small group, or you can ask 2 or 3 friends to join with you. This process will help us explore how listening can help create space to pay attention to what God is doing in our lives. Surrounded by a small group of 3-4 people, we are encouraged to listen, notice, lean into discomfort, discern and respond.

Materials are provided, as well as two online Zoom Sessions; but you will need to commit to spend time listening with 3-4 others.

Due to changes in the parish this Lent, groups will need to be set up by the participants themselves, though all the materials are provided by the Diocese. Once you have found a small group, and agreed to do this together, register at

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/lent-listening-groups-tickets-750204310287?aff=oddtcreator>

The resources you need will then be forwarded to you.

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. As Lent developed as an idea in the 4th Century, fasting came to be a part of the season for all Christians. 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.*

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 **St Anne's**. Or you may want to focus on something different.

Reclaiming Faith – Encouraging Others.

We have experienced a lot of change in recent years, and we hope that Lent is a time that will encourage us all to reclaim our faith and our faith practices. Some of you may like to enjoy in the additional activities provided; OR just focus on cultivating your existing practices. Lent is a good season in which we might like to worship more regularly with our faith community, so that we can support each other in our Lenten journey. **Could you commit to attending Sunday worship each week in Lent?** When we worship together we not only nurture our spirit, but we encourage each other as well.

THIS LENT, INSTEAD OF CHOCOLATE
GIVE UP STUFF



Personal Reflection – 40 bags in 40 days

In 2024, after a break from this tradition for a few years, we are inviting one another, once again, to take part 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 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?

Holy Week and Easter Services



Come Worship With Us!

We look forward to our Lenten Journey, and to Holy Week and Easter when they arrive.

Holy Week Devotion

The Days between Palm Sunday and Easter Day are important days of devotion – please join us!

Sunday 24th March – Palm Sunday

10 am Palm Procession and Eucharist

This Service begins with the Palm Procession and includes the story of Holy Week as told in the Passion of Jesus

Thursday 28th March – Maundy Thursday

10.30am Chrism Mass at St Paul's

7pm Mass of the Last Supper

In this service we re-enact some of the events from Jesus last night, with washing of hands, sharing in communion, and then striping and clearing the church, and making our way to the garden of Gethsemane. Service lasts about 90 minutes.

Friday 29th March – Good Friday

12noon – 3pm Meditation and space for Reflection

Rev Nicki will be in church and will offer spaces for us to reflect on the story of Good Friday. You can come for the 3 hours, or pop in for a little while and pray.

(Feel free to come and go during this time as suits you.)

3pm The Liturgy

This is a slow and sombre service in which sit at the foot of the cross as well as hear the passion story as told by John.

Saturday 30th

The church is cleaned and prepared for our Easter Celebrations. More details from the wardens closer to the time.

Sunday 31st March – Easter Sunday

10 am Festal Mass at St Anne's with Easter Egg Hunt and Celebration after the service.

Please to prayer for me and each other as we journey together through Lent.

Mother Christine
January 2024