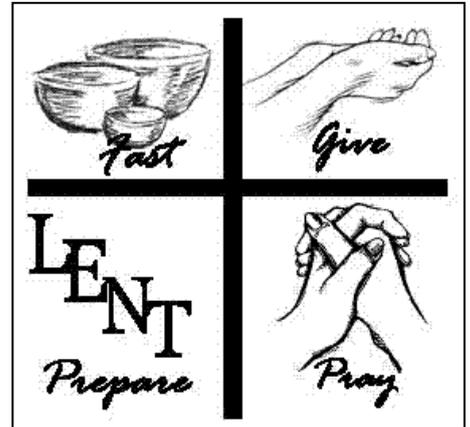


IDEAS for Lent 2014



THESE WERE JESUS'S WORDS to us on Ash Wednesday, setting out our Lenten discipline:

ALMSGIVING ...

*“Be careful not to parade your good deeds before men to attract their notice; by doing this you will lose all reward from your Father in heaven. So **WHEN YOU GIVE ALMS**, do not have it trumpeted before you; this is what the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets to win men's admiration. I tell you solemnly, they have had their reward. But when you give alms, your left hand must not know what your right is doing; your almsgiving must be secret, and your Father who sees all that is done in secret will reward you.*

PRAYER ...

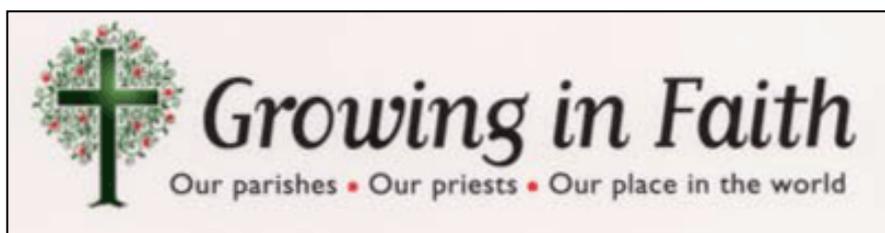
*“And **WHEN YOU PRAY**, do not imitate the hypocrites: they love to say their prayers standing up in the synagogues and at the street corners for people to see them; I tell you solemnly, they have had their reward. But when you pray, go to your private room and, when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who is in that secret place, and your Father who sees all that is done in secret will reward you.*

FASTING ...

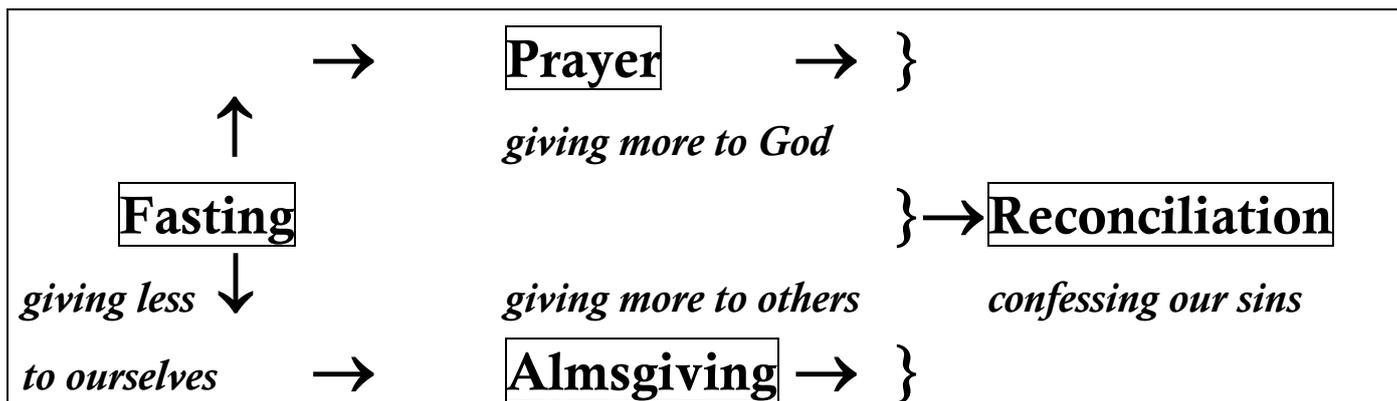
*“**WHEN YOU FAST** do not put on a gloomy look as the hypocrites do: they pull long faces to let men know they are fasting. I tell you solemnly, they have had their reward. But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, so that no one will know you are fasting except your Father who sees all that is done in secret; and your Father who sees all that is done in secret will reward you.”*

(Gospel of Matthew, ch. 6)

In this leaflet I'd like to offer some reflections and ideas for you, for how to keep a good Lent this year, so as to come, refreshed and renewed spiritually, to the great feast of Easter in six weeks' time.



Here's a mental picture of what we're up to in Lent. This, surely, is the vision for Lent, to make our Lenten practices have a 'shape':



When we fast, giving something up, we gain the *time* to give back to God in prayer, and/or we gain some *money* to help others in their needs. This focus on God and on our neighbour also opens up our hearts to our own frailty before God, and our need for forgiveness. Lent is then completed by seeking the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

I. Fasting

LENT IS A TIME TRADITIONALLY TO 'GIVE SOMETHING UP.' Even in secular society people sometimes seem to use this time of year for a bit of dieting and self-help with their intake, be it of high-calorie foods or of alcohol etc. — a bit of a 'detox' so to speak. Our fasting as Christians in Lent has altogether a deeper and more focussed meaning. We began Lent with Ash Wednesday, a day of Fasting and Abstinence from meat. To give up some food and drink, and to give up meat for a day is a sign that we are not dependent on these things: *Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.* So, it is good to give things up. For example ...

1. **Ash Wednesday and Good Friday** are *compulsory* days of Fasting and Abstinence: days of Penance, to start and end our Lenten season.
2. **Every Friday throughout the year** (unless a solemn feastday) is also a day of Abstinence, on which we must eat no meat. But we might also in Lent want to think of going without meat on another day of the week too, maybe Wednesday.
3. In Lent we will each have **different ways of 'giving up'** which might not be from a particular type of favourite food or drink. Other possibilities might be giving up some TV, or internet, the cinema, the iPod ... or even FaceBook!
4. We will make an act of 'fasting' together every weekend, by refraining from talking in Church after Sunday Mass, as has become our parish custom in Lent. This year we will not be having a final hymn at Sunday Mass, in Lent, so as to lead more naturally into a period of silence. Please abide by this, **keeping silence in church**, so as to show our respect for the House of God, and for the Sacred Liturgy just celebrated. This immediately has the benefit of giving us the chance to stay and pray, and making thanksgiving to Jesus in Holy Communion more fully. Chatting after Mass can take place in the porch and crypt.

II. Prayer

NONE OF US CAN EVER SAY WE PRAY ENOUGH! There are always opportunities to pray more often. Here are some ideas:

1. The greatest expression of prayer is the **Holy Mass**, so if one can make an effort to get to **daily Mass** in the week, as well as on Sundays, then one is offering the best possible prayer. Our weekday Mass times admittedly are not so convenient to those working regular 'office hours', but Saturday morning 10am Mass, and the First-Friday evening Mass (7.30pm on April 4th etc.) are good opportunities.
2. **Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament** is another of the most perfect forms of prayer. I encourage you to make use of the times of Adoration already available: (i) monthly Sunday Holy Hour (16th March, 5pm); (ii) Friday Adoration and Benediction 11am–12noon; (iii) First Friday evening Holy Hour (8pm on April 4th); and morning adoration, Mon–Wed/Thurs 8.15am. In Adoration of Jesus present in the Blessed Sacrament we are truly in the presence of the living Lord: we should long for this chance to bask in His healing grace.
3. The **Stations of the Cross** are a beautiful and fitting devotion for Lent, moving our hearts to be united to the Passion of the Lord in His suffering and death. Each Friday at 12.30pm, after Mass, and each Saturday at 9.30am, before Mass, the 'Way of the Cross' is followed: each week a different set of meditations used.
4. In the **CTS racks in the porch**, there is a variety of booklets and pamphlets for **easy Lenten reading on spiritual subjects**: for the Stations of the Cross and other devotions, and for helping you learn about your faith. *If everyone just bought just one booklet and read it in Lent then our parish would have grown in knowledge and love of our faith!* The **Lent Extra** issue this year has daily reflections for each day of Lent, with the Holy Week meditations written by me.
5. **Half-day of Recollection on Saturday 5th or Saturday 12th April** — a short day of recollection (starting with 10am Mass and going on till 2pm) for our Readers, Ministers of Communion and any other parishioners who wish to attend.
6. www.holyheroes.com — this is a fun website which provides Catholic activities for children, and has a 'Lenten Adventure' presented by children. FREE downloads, activities and video messages e-mailed 3 times a week; simply sign up with an e-mail address on the website. No purchases needed!

III. Almsgiving

GIVING CHARITABLY IS THE THIRD 'PILLAR' OF OUR LENTEN PRACTICE AS CHRISTIANS. I'm sure that most of us give regularly to charities through the year, and it might seem hard to reach into one's pocket again come Lent. But we are urged to do so by Our Lord, so that we show care for our neighbour who is in greater need.

1. An easy way to give to charity in Lent is to contribute to the '**Lenten Alms**' box which will be there in front of the lectern, in the sanctuary, from now until

Easter. The Cardinal has decided that this year the proceeds are to be divided between 'Aid to the Church in Need's work in Syria and the **Bakhita Fund** to combat human trafficking (in association with *Caritas Westminster*).

2. **CaFOD Fast Day for Lent** will be Friday, 14th March. The idea is to give something up, so that the money saved can be given to CaFOD for the help of the world's neediest. This year's campaign reminds us of the children caught up in poverty by civil wars and displacement of peoples. Lent Fast Day envelopes will be distributed and collected at the end of Masses on 15th/16th March.
3. **The parish wall-boxes** in the porch allow for donations also to be made at any time to 'The Poor,' and to World Missions (APF) which supports the poorest dioceses in the world to help them in their spread of the Gospel.
4. At the end of Lent, on Good Friday, we will make our annual collection for the '**Holy Places**'. There are great sufferings for many peoples in the Middle East at present, and the Christians of the Middle East are amongst the worst-treated. Our Good-Friday collection is to help support the Holy Places, the sites of Our Lord's life, death and resurrection, which are cared for by the most ancient of all Christian peoples, the Christians of the Holy Land.
5. This year we have a particular focus to our charitable, sacrificial giving: our parish's *Growing in Faith* campaign. Some households in the parish have engaged with this already, with many generous pledges already received. On 12th March, Bishop John Sherrington will come to address the parish, and on 15th/16th March, Fr Philip will speak at all Sundays Masses about how and why we should each consider our contribution to this important fundraising effort.

IV. Reconciliation

Having fasted, prayed, and given alms generously, the Lord should be speaking to our heart also in terms of our consciences. The final part of what we must do this Lent is to go to receive the Lord's forgiveness for our sins in the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Here are some opportunities:

1. **After each Sunday (and Sat. eve) Mass** in Lent I will offer to hear Confessions. Please make use of this opportunity *during* the weeks of Lent, if possible, as I cannot hear all the Confessions in Holy Week!
2. In Holy Week there will be the usual two **Penitential Services: Monday 14th April**, one at 11.30am and another at 7.30pm, when several priests will be available to hear confessions after a brief introductory service.
3. As Easter draws nearer, **other times, especially in Holy Week**, will be advertised in the Newsletter. Also, I will let you know the times of other parish's Penitential services. It doesn't matter where you go, as long as you do go! Every faithful Catholic needs to include Confession in his/her regular practice. The saints teach us that it is a crucial part of our spiritual lives.

MAY YOU EXPERIENCE THIS YEAR A VERY BLESSED LENT! — Fr Philip