

IDEAS for Lent 2015



THESE ARE SOME OF 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; ... So WHEN YOU GIVE ALMS, do not have it trumpeted before you ...”*

PRAYER ... *“And 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 ...”*

FASTING ... *“WHEN YOU FAST do not put on a gloomy look ...”*

(Gospel of Matthew, ch. 6)

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.

*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, therefore, completed by seeking the **Sacrament of Reconciliation**.*

I. Fasting

LENT IS A TIME TRADITIONALLY TO 'GIVE SOMETHING UP.' Our fasting as Christians in Lent has a deep and focussed meaning. 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 from meat: days of Penance, to start and end our Lenten season.
2. **Every Friday throughout the year** (unless a solemn feast-day) is also a day of Abstinence, on which we must eat no meat. But in Lent we might want to think of going without meat on *another day of the week too*, e.g. Wednesday.
3. In Lent we will each have **different ways of 'giving up'** which might be alcohol, or a favourite food or drink. Other possibilities might be giving up some TV, or internet, the cinema, the iPod, the Xbox ... 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. We will not be having a final hymn at Sunday Mass, in Lent, so as to lead into this 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. It also gives us the chance to stay and make 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. For example ...

1. Make an effort to get to **daily Mass** in the week, as well as on Sundays, as it means offering the best possible prayer. Saturday morning 10am Mass, and the First-Friday evening Mass (7.30pm on March 6th etc.) are good opportunities even for those who work regular 'office hours.'
2. **Adoration of Jesus present in the Blessed Sacrament** is another of the most perfect forms of prayer: (i) morning adoration, Mon-Wed/Thurs 8.15-9am; (ii) monthly Sunday Holy Hour (15th March,

5pm); (iii) Friday Adoration and Benediction 11am–12noon; (iv) First-Friday evening Holy Hour (8pm on March 6th).

3. The **Stations of the Cross** are a fitting devotion for Lent, moving us to be united to the Passion of the Lord in His suffering and death. Each Friday 12.30pm, after Mass; each Saturday 9.30am, before Mass, the ‘Way of the Cross’ is followed: each week a different set of meditations is 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. And ‘**Lent Extra**’ has reflections for each day of Lent.
5. ‘**Saints’ DVD series**, every Wednesday of Lent, 25th Feb to 1st April, 10.15 in the crypt after coffee. These DVDs will let us enter into the lives of saints Thérèse of Lisieux, Benedict, Francis, Patrick, Ignatius, and Catherine of Siena, and show how they speak to our lives today.
6. **Half-day of Recollection on Saturday 28th March** — a short day of recollection (10am Mass till 2pm) for our Readers, Ministers of Communion and any other parishioners who wish to attend.
7. www.holyheroes.com —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 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 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 given to the work of our diocesan *Caritas* Westminster, and there are leaflets in the porch about its work).

2. **CaFOD Fast Day for Lent** will be Friday, 27th February. 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 will be matched, pound for pound, by the UK Government. Lent Fast-Day envelopes will be collected at the end of Masses on 28th Feb/1st 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**', the sites of Our Lord's life, death and resurrection, which are cared for by the most ancient of all Christian peoples, the Catholics of the Holy Land.

IV. Sacrament of Reconciliation (Confession)

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 two **Penitential Services, Monday 30th March**, 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, and I will let you know the times of other parish's Penitential services. 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 ALL EXPERIENCE THIS YEAR A
VERY BLESSED LENT! — Fr Philip**