

What is Lent, and what does it have to do with Easter?

On Good Friday Jesus lay down his life for our redemption, dying in our place so that we might become reconciled to God; and at Easter he takes up his life again, having accomplished the unthinkable on our behalves. We are now able to become children of God the Father, and to be empowered by God the Holy Spirit, all because the victory won by Jesus Christ, God the Son! This is the essence, the very crux, of the Christian message.

Lent is the six-week period (40 days excluding Sundays) immediately before Easter starting with Ash Wednesday, when we, as Christians, are called to (re)investigate anew Christ's claim on our lives, and when we try to evaluate our relationship with God and with our neighbour. We consider our self and how we fall short of God's love and grandeur. It is intended to be a space and time for us to focus on simplicity, prayer and fasting, and self-examination as we consider the passion of Christ.

Although the Bible does not mention the custom of Lent, the Church has kept the feast since earliest times – initially as a preparation period for Baptism, which often took place at Easter – and it reflects the 40 day period which Jesus spent in the Wilderness after his baptism in the Jordan. (Matthew 4:1-11).

People often speak of 'giving something up for Lent' which is a part of its rich tradition of self-sacrifice and doing without. While there are many aspects of Christian discipleship that do involve a 'turning-away-from' or self-denial, we may also be challenged to 'turn towards' or a 'take up', which might make our Lent more sustainable.

This year we also recall Bishop Allan's call for us to 'Drink from' the wells of the apostles' Teaching, to pray, to share the Eucharist and to indulge in Fellowship with other believers. And so our Lenten discipline will require both the surrender of self, and the enrichment of soul; a 'Giving Up', and a 'Taking Up'. The apex of our journey is the crucifixion of Christ when Jesus gives up his life for us, and Easter morning when we take up new life in Christ's resurrection.

Here's wishing you a soul-enriching Lent.

Fr Andrew