



A journey begins...

On Wednesday, March 6, we begin a ninety day journey starting with **Ash Wednesday** ('turn from sin and remain faithful to the Gospel') and moving through **Palm Sunday** (Jesus' entry into Jerusalem on a donkey), **Maundy Thursday** (the last supper with Jesus and his disciples), **Good Friday** (Jesus' death on the cross) , **Resurrection Sunday** (Jesus' resurrection from the dead), **Ascension Day** (Jesus' return to heaven), and finishing on **Pentecost Sunday** (the coming of the Holy Spirit and the birth of the church).

This ninety day journey is comprised of forty days of Lent and fifty days of Easter celebration.

Ash Wednesday... Ash Wednesday marks the first day of the Season of Lent and its name comes from the practice of marking worshippers' foreheads with ashes in the shape of a cross. This act echoes the ancient tradition of placing ashes over one's head to signify repentance before God. It is also a sign of humility before God—a symbol of mourning and sorrow at the death that sin brings into the world. (Job 42:3-6, Luke 10:13) It is a day in which we are invited to intentionally reflect on what Jesus wants to change in our lives as we follow him.

The season of Lent... Lent is a season of soul-searching and repentance. It is a season for reflection and taking stock. Lent originated in the very earliest days of the Church as a preparatory time for Easter. It was a time when Christians rededicated themselves to their declaration to follow Christ and where new converts to Christianity were instructed in their faith and prepared themselves for baptism.

Another connection to the season of Lent is in imitating Jesus' withdrawal into the wilderness for forty days to fast. Fasting is a spiritual discipline that forces us to contemplate sacrifice and denial. Quite often our bodily appetites control our actions. One purpose of fasting is to work at making our bodily appetites servants to us rather than masters of us. In this respect fasting does not solely pertain to food.

The idea of 'giving up' something for lent is rooted to fasting. It's about 'giving up' an activity or object in order to create the opportunity to reflect on Christ's sacrifice, to revisit Christ's call to deny one's self, to take inventory of our hearts and to confess to God any sin of which we need forgiveness. In the end it's really about intentionally creating space for God to enter into our lives and re-focus our living as we contemplate what it means to 'turn from sin and remain faithful to the gospel.'

The three traditional practices to be taken up with renewed intentionality during Lent are prayer, fasting and almsgiving (giving to the poor and caring for our neighbours).

Help yourself to devotional resources found in the foyer, designed to aid in this journey. Please feel free use them both personally and as a family.



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A Lenten Prayer

Fast from judging others; feast on Christ in them.

Fast from wanting more; feast on being thankful.

Fast from anger; feast on patience.

Fast from worry; feast on trust.

Fast from complaining; feast on enjoyment.

Fast from negatives; feast on positives.

Fast from stress; feast on prayer.

Fast from anger; feast on forgiveness.

Fast from self-concern; feast on compassion for others.

Fast from fear; feast on truth.

Fast from discouragement; feast on hope

Fast from gossip; feast on silence.

Fast from fighting; feast on peace.

Amen

William Arthur Ward

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