

THE SHAPE OF LENT

at Prince of Peace Taylors 2015

At Prince of Peace this year we hope to recapture the communal nature of Lenten practice as a parish family.

This booklet provides a description and schedule of what we will do together during this holy time: a penance for each week and a plan for Scripture readings. Suggestions for additional Lenten reading may be found at the end of the booklet.



*We're in this together!
It can very hard to keep
Lent, with all the good will
in the world. But as a
parish family, we can come
together and observe Lent
together, and support each
other by offering together
the same penances and
Scripture readings for
meditation during this holy
season of 40 days of
opportunity!*

INTRODUCTION

Rededicating Ourselves

This introduction and other parts of this booklet are taken from the booklet "The Shape of Lent at Church of the Advent 2014"

Lent, the forty-day period between Ash Wednesday and Easter (Sundays are excepted), was historically a period of preparation for "catechumens," those persons seeking baptism into the life of the church at Easter. Quite soon, however, it became and it continues to be a time of self-examination, penitence and special devotion for all Christians as they prepare for the celebration of the Resurrection of Jesus.

Lent is more than just a season of fasting and abstinence; it is a positive opportunity for significant spiritual growth. The Orthodox theologian, Alexander Schmemmann, describes Lent as "the school of repentance which alone will make it possible to receive Easter not as mere permission to eat, to drink, and to relax, but indeed as the end of the 'old' in us, as our entrance into the 'new' life we have in Jesus."

Lent, then, is rooted in an essential aspect of what it is to be a Christian: repentance, *metanoia* in Greek, turning one's life around, putting off the old self and putting on of the new self, which is made real by the resurrection of Jesus. It is an intensification of that movement which should be the spiritual rhythm of our lives: a continuous turning away from sin and reorientation toward God. Lent is about conversion.

While we typically think of Lent as a time of fasting and self-denial, we should also approach it as an opportunity for the renewal of those

things which form us as believers and strengthen our faith. When we become Christians, we assume a variety of spiritual disciplines so that we will better follow Jesus - we go to Mass, say our prayers, study the Bible and other spiritual classics, make a regular confession, and devote ourselves to good works and reaching out to serve others.

During Lent, we should re-dedicate ourselves to these disciplines and make them a bit more stringent as a means to restore vibrancy, life, and passion in our relationship with God. In short, we are hoping to make our hearts and souls bigger, to create more space for God in our lives.

In Lent, we follow Jesus into the wilderness where he was tempted, and we attempt through spiritual discipline to resist temptation ourselves. We pray and proceed with Jesus on the way to Jerusalem and to his Cross on Good Friday. Throughout Lent we focus also on our own wilderness of temptation while keeping an eye toward the Resurrection. Again from Fr. Schmemmann, Lent is a time of "bright sadness." Sadness, because we focus on the passion and death of Jesus and on the sins of us all which brought him to the cross. And bright, for the promise of Lent is the glory and joy of the Lord's Resurrection at Easter.

One aspect of Lent which is rarely mentioned nowadays is the communal. In earlier times, Lent was a discipline taken on by the entirety of a community or even a society. It was something which everyone did together, and the rhythm of life in society was adjusted to

support this common discipline. Everyone supported everyone else in the Lenten discipline, and society was so ordered as to make this mutual support possible. One might think of this as a kind of spiritual teamwork, and like anything done as a team it bound people together and helped create community.

In the 21st century world in which we live, this has been completely lost. Christianity, since the Reformation, has become a plurality of "christianities," not bound by common belief or practice. Society has become almost entirely secular, and the rhythm of contemporary life is most often counter to spiritual practice. The communal aspect of Lent has, again, been entirely lost. We hope to recapture this at our church.



THE SHAPE OF OUR LENT

weekly fasts

Fasting is linked with repentance throughout the



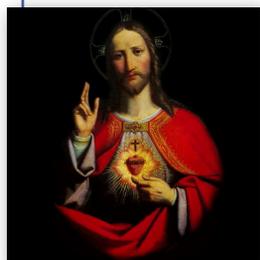
Scriptures. When we fast we are reminded spiritually and even physically of our weakness, our finitude, and our need for God. Each week, we will fast from a particular pleasure. All Sundays are “feast” days when, in celebration of

the Resurrection, we break our fasts. You may choose to do each of the suggested communal fasts for one week only; or you may let them build on each other, so that by the end of Lent you are doing all six weekly fasts at the same time.

daily readings

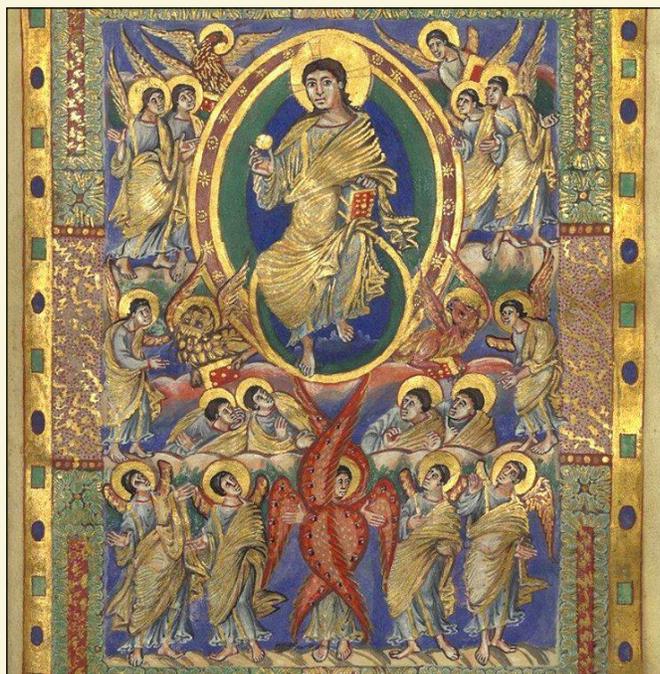
During Lent we will be reading a common set of Scriptures together. On each day we will read about twenty to forty verses; the equivalent of two to three pages in a novel. Our readings will take us through

salvation history, beginning with creation and moving towards the climax of God’s redemption and the beginning of the new creation through Jesus’ death and resurrection.



Ignorance of the Scriptures is ignorance of Christ!

St Jerome

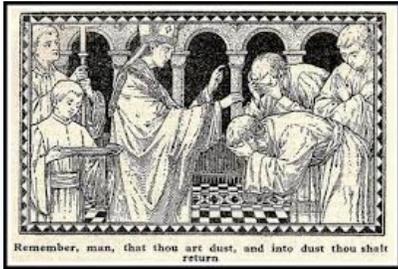


easter vigil

Our Lenten journey together will culminate in the celebration of Jesus’ Resurrection at the Great Vigil of Easter at 8:30 in the evening on Holy Saturday, April 5.



A GOOD BEGINNING



Almighty and everlasting God, you hate nothing you have made and forgive the sins of all who are penitent: Create and make in us new and contrite hearts, that we, worthily lamenting our sins and acknowledging our wretchedness, may obtain of you, the God of all mercy, perfect remission and forgiveness.



The Ashes

Lent begins with the imposition of ashes as a sign of our mortality and penitence for our sins. As we receive the ashes, we hear the words “Remember, O man, that thou art dust, and unto dust thou shalt return” (Genesis 3.19). The ashes are imposed in the form of a cross, pointing to our great hope in the grace of God through the Cross of Christ which grants us a sharing in the power of his Resurrection.

Ash Wednesday Fast

Traditionally, the church has fasted from all food on Ash Wednesday to remind us that our physical hunger for food points to our greater spiritual hunger for God. All of those between 18 and 60 are bound to fast on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday, by having no meat and no more than one full meal. Fasting makes us hunger for God.



Scripture Readings Today:
Psalms 51, 103, 38, 78

OUR LENTEN JOURNEY TOGETHER IN 2015

Week	Penance	Scripture Readings
First Week of Lent	Sweets and Treats	Creation and Fall
Second Week of Lent	Unnecessary Spending	Patriarchs and Exodus
Third Week of Lent	Careless Talk and Profanity	The Kings
Fourth Week of Lent	Coffee or Alcohol	Prophets and Exile
Fifth Week of Lent	Entertainment and Technology	Life and Teachings of Jesus
Holy Week	Food or Meals	The Passion of Jesus

WEEK BY WEEK

WEEK ONE

22-28 February

Fast: Sweets & Treats

This week, resolve to deny yourself any type of sweets or dessert. This could mean a latte in the morning or chocolate in the evening. As you do so, notice what happens inside when you are denied something you've become accustomed to or something you really want - even something as inconsequential as dessert or candy.

Reading: Creation & Fall

In the opening chapters of the Bible, we quickly move from a world where humanity and God walk harmoniously in close relationship, to a fallen world of rebellion, sin, pain, shame, and competition with God. As we make our way through this first week, note how God interacts with his creation and how we respond.

Genesis 1.1-2.3; Genesis 2.4-25;
Genesis 3; Genesis 4.1-16,
25-26; Genesis 6.1-8; 7;
Genesis 9.8-17; Genesis 11.1-9

WEEK TWO

1-7 March

Fast: Unnecessary Spending

This week, resolve to spend nothing on yourself except what is absolutely necessary. Buy no new clothes or gadgets, books or music. Resist the impulse buying which is so easy and instant on the internet. Eat cheaply and save money. Practice living simply and consider giving the money you save away.

Reading: Patriarchs & Exodus

As we saw in the story of the Tower of Babel, the world through pride has become divided. But God has not forsaken his creation. He has begun a rescue mission, a way of putting the world back to the way it ought to be. This began with the call of Abraham and the people of Israel. Focus this week on God's faithfulness to his people.

Psalm 136
Genesis 12.1-3; 15; 22.1-19
Genesis 37.12-28; 41.37-56; 50.15-21
Exodus 1.8-2.10; 3
Exodus 7.1-13; 12; 14.10-31 Exodus
19.4-6; 20.1-21; 33.1-6 Numbers
13.17-14.11, 26-35 Deuteronomy
30.11-20

WEEK THREE

8-14 March

Fast: Careless Talk and Profanity

If any one thinks he is religious, and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his heart, this man's religion is vain.

James 1.26

This week abstain from carelessness in your speech. How easy it is to repeat gossip, to delight in malicious talk, to speak out in anger and wound others with our words, to take the Lord's name in vain. Try to become aware of how habitual this kind of talk can become and resolve to curb it.

Reading: The Kings

As we continue the narrative of salvation history, we see that the people God has called to participate in his rescue mission are themselves a broken people. Israel calls a king, and we read the spectacular promises God makes to David. But as we see the failures of the kings, we ask "Whatever became of those promises?" It appears we need a different kind of king.

Psalm 72; Joshua 1.1-9; 6; 24; 1 Samuel 8;
10.17-27; 15; 1 Samuel 16.1-13; 17; 2 Samuel
7; 1 Kings 3.1-15; 8.22-26, 46-61; 2 Kings
22.1-2; 23.1-26; 2 Kings 17.6-23; 24.10-17

WEEK BY WEEK

WEEK FOUR

15-21 March

Fast: Alcohol or Coffee

Choose either coffee or alcohol (or both) and refrain from drinking it this week. If neither is something you regularly enjoy, choose another “staple” in your diet. Pay attention to what happens when you thirst for something you routinely enjoy. Try to pray when you have the desire for the thing from which you are abstaining.

Reading: The Prophets & The Exile

As a result of their idolatry and social injustice, Israel has been sent into exile. They are in a foreign land not as tourists, but as an oppressed people. Listen to the prophets as they declare the sins of God’s people. Are we guilty of some of those same sins? Listen also to the hope given by a gracious God who forgives sin and remembers his promise to rescue the world.

Psalm 2; Luke 2.1-21; Mark 1.1-15; Mark 4.1-20; Mark 5.1-20; Mark 8.27-9.13; Mark 9.43-50; Mark 10.17-45

WEEK FIVE

22-28 March

Fast: Entertainment & Technology

This week, forego your usual entertainments. Turn off the TV, drive without the radio, leave your iPod at home. Log off Facebook, Twitter and blogs. Do your best to check and respond only to necessary work emails. What does it feel like to increase the silence in your life? Ask yourself what silence does for you, and spend the time listening for God’s voice.

Reading: The Life & Teachings of Jesus

There is a tangible tension building throughout our readings. Israel is a broken nation. They have gone through the ups and downs of slavery, exodus, monarchy, exile and, finally, return to the land of Israel, although under Roman rule. Israel’s ups and downs mirror the ups and downs of the entire human race. But God’s rescue plan now takes a huge step forward as the Messiah is born.

Psalm 22; John 12.1-8, 12-26; John 12.27-50; John 13.1-30; 16.16-24; John 14; John 17; John 18.1-19.30; John 19.31-42

HOLY WEEK

29 March-4 April

Fast: Food or Meals

Pick a type of food (like meat or carbs or even all “solids”) and fast from it for the week, or pick a meal to skip entirely on a daily basis. If you skip meals, spend the time you would have spent preparing and eating food to pray, read the bible or some spiritual classic, or serve others.

Reading: The Life & Teachings of Jesus

Our journey through the narrative of salvation history slows to a crawl as we walk through the last week of Jesus’ life. In Holy Week, we experience the most solemn moments of the liturgical year, but our solemnity is transformed into jubilee as we enter into the fifty-day season of Easter. Take time to refocus and examine your life this week. Be fully present in this final week as salvation history reaches its culmination and fulfillment.





A COLLECT FOR LENT

Almighty and everlasting God, who hatest nothing that thou hast made and dost forgive the sins of all those who are penitent: Create and make in us new and contrite hearts, that we, worthily lamenting our sins and acknowledging our wretchedness, may obtain of thee, the God of all mercy, perfect remission and forgiveness; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

RECOMMENDED READING FOR LENT

Pope Benedict XVI, *Jesus of Nazareth, vol. 2 Holy Week*

Stanley Hauerwas, *Cross-Shattered Christ: Meditations on the Seven Last Words.*

Alexander Schmemmann, *Great Lent: Journey to Pascha.*

St Francis de Sales, *The Sermons of St Francis de Sales for Lent.*

PLEDGE

I, _____, pledge to join with fellow parishioners in taking upon myself the Corporate Lenten Discipline described in Lent at POP 2015. This involves fasting and abstinence, daily worship, meditation, and the study of Holy Scripture. I pray that the Grace of God will enable me and those others who have taken on this discipline to grow spiritually and to be bound closer to one another in fellowship of Christ's Body at Prince of Peace.