

The Presbytery, Mallard Close, Dartford, Kent, DA1 5HU UK

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PARISH PRIEST:

Fr Patrick Zammit

Tel: 01322 279955

PARISH PRIEST EMERITUS (Retired):

Fr Michael Leach

PERMANENT DEACON:

Rev Michael Dale

PARISH SCHOOL – St Anselm's

Headteacher – Mrs Laura White

Tel: 01322 225173

23 February - 3 March 2019

Saturday	23 Feb	6.30pm	FIRST MASS OF SUNDAY: Margaret & Kenneth Jackson, John & Teresa & Terence Lynch RIP - Lynch/Jackson family	
Sunday	24 Feb	9.00am	Frederick Atkins - Elizabeth Nightingale	<u>7TH SUNDAY OF THE YEAR (C)</u>
		11.00am	Phyllis & Ernie Williams RIP - Williams Family	
		3.00pm	Baptism: Joseph Harry & Ketra Bridget Pearce	
		5.00pm	FOR THE PEOPLE OF THE PARISH	
Monday	25 Feb	9.00am	Ann Vigar RIP - Enda Blacker	
		2.00pm	- 3.00pm: MEDUGORJE PRAYER GROUP	
Tuesday	26 Feb	9.00am	Maureen & John Kelleher RIP (Ann.)	
Wednesday	27 Feb	9.00am	Graham Doyle RIP (Ann.)	
		2.30pm	SENIOR PARISHIONER'S TEA PARTY	
		6.30pm	- 7.30pm Children's Choir Practise	
Thursday	28 Feb	9.00am	Katie Hughes RIP - Mary Kelly (G/End)	
Friday	1 Mar	8.15am	Darent Valley Hosp.: MASS - Nora & Doug Whiffin RIP (Ann.)	ST DAVID
		9.00am	Ann Maughan RIP - John Maughan	(PATRON OF WALES)
		3.45pm	- 7.00pm JUNIOR CLUB (Quasar Lazer - must be booked in advance)	
Saturday	2 Mar	10.00am	Fr Peter McPolin RIP (Ann.)	OUR LADY
		6.30pm	FIRST MASS OF SUNDAY: Martin Quinn RIP - Kieron & Hazel Dolan	
Sunday	3 Mar	9.00am	Mary & James McGrath RIP- Budaly Family	<u>8TH SUNDAY OF THE YEAR (C)</u>
		11.00am	FOR THE PEOPLE OF THE PARISH	
		2.30pm	Baptism: Luke William Page	
		5.00pm	Mary Birbeck RIP - Anne McGloin	

SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION: Every Sat from 10.30am -11.00am and 5.45pm - 6.15pm

DAILY EXPOSITION: Mon to Fri 8.30am - 9.00am, Sat 9.30-10am **TEA ROTA:** check your new rota

CLEANING TEAMS: 23.02.19 Team'E' (E Ranson), 02.03.19 Team'F'(G Rabino, C Elazagui, D Teves, J Fe, A K Galang)

LENT: The Season of Lent is fast approaching. Wednesday the 6th March is Ash Wednesday. Traditionally the season of Lent was a time for serious reflection and prayers. It is a time for conversion. A time to turn away from the Spirit of the World to be guided by the gracious voice of God. In imitation of Christ we are called to seek for a short period of time the solitude of the desert. The benefit of this is our spiritual and temporal well being. In the harshness of the desert Christ sought to maintain his intimacy with the heavenly Father through penance as a prelude to the passion and resurrection. In most Catholic countries the practice of "Lenten Exercises" is a time of self renewal and discovery. The duration of each talks is an hour. These talks are from Monday to Friday with provision for the Sacrament of reconciliation in preparation for Easter. Many seek this practice in the hope of a renewed union with Christ in his mysteries. In our parish for this Lent one can avail oneself of the following practices, the twice weekly devotion of the Stations of the Cross and six workshops on 'PRAYER' during Lent (LENTEN TALKS). There is also literature for sale such as the 'LENTEN EXTRA' (which I highly recommend) and 'Day by Day' LENT 2019. Children too can benefit from the 'Day by Day'. There is a Junior AND an Infant edition. Finally attached to the newsletter two short articles on Ash Wednesday and Lent are provided.

COLLECTION for POOR PARISHES: (2nd Collection) This collection is formally known as the Collection for the Needs of the Diocese. This collection enables the Archbishop to make grants to some of the poorer parishes in the diocese. It takes place this weekend at the end of each Mass.

EXPLORATION OF THE FAITH: The exploration of the faith is where people explore the teaching of the Catholic Church that has lasted over two thousand years. At present two people have started on this journey. Three others are about to embark on the same journey. If you wish to join them you are most welcome. All you have to do is simply contact me to make the necessary arrangements.

CONFIRMATION 2019: Now we have a date for the Sacrament of Confirmation. The Archbishop will administer the Sacrament of Confirmation on Saturday 12th October 2019 at 12 noon. The date for enrollment for the Sacrament of Confirmation is Sunday 3rd March 2019 at the 11.00am Mass. All candidates who attended the preliminary meeting will be notified by email. There is still a chance for others to join. On the day of the enrollment a copy of the programme will be provided.

BIBLE CLUB: The Bible Club is **for Group B** and will start on **Thursday 7th March 2019**. The meeting will take place at the Presbytery from 5.00pm till 6.00pm. A copy of the programme will be given out.

Last Week's Offertory: 17.02.19 - £880.60

Second Collection: £105.40 (Justice & Peace)

WHAT ARE THE ORIGINS OF ASH WEDNESDAY AND THE USE OF ASHES?

The liturgical use of ashes originated in the Old Testament times. Ashes symbolized mourning, mortality, and penance. For instance, in the Book of Esther, Mordecai put on sackcloth and ashes when he heard of the decree of King Ahasuerus (or Xerxes, 485-464 B.C.) of Persia to kill all of the Jewish people in the Persian Empire (Esther 4:1). Job (whose story was written between the 7th and 5th centuries B.C.) repented in sackcloth and ashes (Job 42:6). Prophesying the Babylonian captivity of Jerusalem, Daniel (c. 550 B.C.) wrote, "I turned to the Lord God, pleading in earnest prayer, with fasting, sackcloth, and ashes" (Daniel 9:3). In the 5th century B.C., after Jonah's preaching of conversion and repentance, the town of Nineveh proclaimed a fast and put on sackcloth, and the king covered himself with sackcloth and sat in the ashes (Jonah 3:5-6). These Old Testament examples evidence both a recognized practice of using ashes and a common understanding of their symbolism.

Jesus Himself also made reference to ashes: Referring to towns that refused to repent of sin although they had witnessed the miracles and heard the gospel, our Lord said, "If the miracles worked in you had taken place in Tyre and Sidon, they would have reformed in sackcloth and ashes long ago" (Matthew 11:21).

The early Church continued the usage of ashes for the same symbolic reasons. In his book, De Poenitentia, Tertullian (c. 160-220) prescribed that the penitent must "live without joy in the roughness of sackcloth and the squalor of ashes." Eusebius (260-340), the famous early Church historian, recounted in his The History of the Church how an apostate named Natalis came to Pope Zephyrinus clothed in sackcloth and ashes begging forgiveness. Also during this time, for those who were required to do public penance, the priest sprinkled ashes on the head of the person leaving confession.

In the Middle Ages (at least by the time of the eighth century), those who were about to die were laid on the ground on top of sackcloth sprinkled with ashes. The priest would bless the dying person with holy water, saying, "Remember that thou art dust and to dust thou shalt return." After the sprinkling, the priest asked, "Art thou content with sackcloth and ashes in testimony of thy penance before the Lord in the day of judgment?" To which the dying person replied, "I am content." In all of these examples, the symbolism of mourning, mortality, and penance is clear.

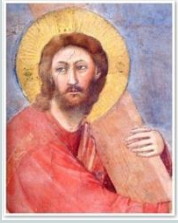
Eventually, the use of ashes was adapted to mark the beginning of Lent, the 40-day preparation period (not including Sundays) for Easter. The ritual for the "Day of Ashes" is found in the earliest editions of the Gregorian Sacramentary which dates at least to the 8th century. About the year 1000, an Anglo-Saxon priest named Aelfric preached, "We read in the books both in the Old Law and in the New that the men who repented of their sins bestrewed themselves with ashes and clothed their bodies with sackcloth. Now let us do this little at the beginning of our Lent that we strew ashes upon our heads to signify that we ought to repent of our sins during the Lenten fast." As an aside, Aelfric reinforced his point by then telling of a man who refused to go to Church on Ash Wednesday and receive ashes; the man was killed a few days later in a boar hunt. Since the Middle Ages, the Church has used ashes to mark the beginning of the penitential season of Lent, when we remember our mortality and mourn for our sins.

In our present liturgy for Ash Wednesday, we use ashes made from the burned palm branches distributed on the Palm Sunday of the previous year. The priest blesses the ashes and imposes them on the foreheads of the faithful, making the sign of the cross and saying, "Remember, man you are dust and to dust you shall return," or "Turn away from sin and be faithful to the Gospel." When we begin the holy season of Lent in preparation for Easter, we must remember the significance of the ashes we have received: We mourn and do penance for our sins. We again convert our hearts to the Lord, who suffered, died, and rose for our salvation. We renew the promises made at our baptism, when we died to an old life and rose to a new life with Christ. Finally, mindful that the kingdom of this world passes away, we strive to live the kingdom of God now and look forward to its fulfilment in heaven.

History of Lent

FR. WILLIAM SAUNDERS

What are the origins of Lent? Did the Church always have this time before Easter?



Lent is a special time of prayer, penance, sacrifice and good works in preparation of the celebration of Easter. In the desire to renew the liturgical practices of the Church, *The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy* of Vatican Council II stated, "The two elements which are especially characteristic of Lent — the recalling of baptism or the preparation for it, and penance — should be given greater emphasis in the liturgy and in liturgical catechesis. It is by means of them that the Church prepares the faithful for the celebration of Easter, while they hear God's word more frequently and devote more time to prayer" (no. 109). The word *Lent* itself is derived from the Anglo-Saxon words *lencten*, meaning "Spring," and *lenctentid*, which literally means not only "Springtide" but also was the word for "March," the month in which the majority of Lent falls.

Since the earliest times of the Church, there is evidence of some kind of Lenten preparation for Easter. For instance, St. Irenaeus (d. 203) wrote to Pope St. Victor I, commenting on the celebration of Easter and the differences between practices in the East and the West: "The dispute is not only about the day, but also about the actual character of the fast. Some think that they ought to fast for one day, some for two, others for still more; some make their 'day' last 40 hours on end. Such variation in the observance did not originate in our own day, but very much earlier, in the time of our forefathers" (Eusebius, *History of the Church*, V, 24). When Rufinus translated this passage from Greek into Latin, the punctuation made between "40" and "hours" made the meaning to appear to be "40 days, twenty-four hours a day." The importance of the passage, nevertheless, remains that since the time of "our forefathers" — always an expression for the apostles — a 40-day period of Lenten preparation existed. However, the actual practices and duration of Lent were still not homogenous throughout the Church.

Lent becomes more regularized after the legalization of Christianity in A.D. 313. The Council of Nicea (325), in its disciplinary canons, noted that two provincial synods should be held each year, "one before the 40 days of Lent." St. Athanasius (d. 373) in this "Festal Letters" implored his congregation to make a 40-day fast prior to the more intense fasting of Holy Week. St. Cyril of Jerusalem (d. 386) in his *Catechetical Lectures*, which are the paradigm for our current RCIA programs, had 18 pre-baptismal instructions given to the catechumens during Lent. St. Cyril of Alexandria (d. 444) in his series of "Festal Letters" also noted the practices and duration of Lent, emphasizing the 40-day period of fasting. Finally, Pope St. Leo (d. 461) preached that the faithful must "fulfill with their fasts the Apostolic institution of the 40 days," again noting the apostolic origins of Lent. One can safely conclude that by the end of the fourth century, the 40-day period of Easter preparation known as Lent existed, and that prayer and fasting constituted its primary spiritual exercises.

Of course, the number "40" has always had special spiritual significance regarding preparation. On Mount Sinai, preparing to receive the Ten Commandments, "Moses stayed there with the Lord for 40 days and 40 nights, without eating any food or drinking any water" (Ex 34:28). Elijah walked "40 days and 40 nights" to the mountain of the Lord, Mount Horeb (another name for Sinai) (1 Kgs 19:8). Most importantly, Jesus fasted and prayed for "40 days and 40 nights" in the desert before He began His public ministry (Mt 4:2).

Once the 40 days of Lent were established, the next development concerned how much fasting was to be done. In Jerusalem, for instance, people fasted for 40 days, Monday through Friday, but not on Saturday or Sunday, thereby making Lent last for eight weeks. In Rome and in the West, people fasted for six weeks, Monday through Saturday, thereby making Lent last for six weeks. Eventually, the practice prevailed of fasting for six days a week over the course of six weeks, and Ash Wednesday was instituted to bring the number of fast days before Easter to 40. The rules of fasting varied. First, some areas of the Church abstained from all forms of meat and animal products, while others made exceptions for food like fish. For example, Pope St. Gregory (d. 604), writing to St. Augustine of Canterbury, issued the following rule: "We abstain from flesh, meat, and from all things that come from flesh, as milk, cheese and eggs."

Nevertheless, I was always taught, "If you gave something up for the Lord, tough it out. Don't act like a Pharisee looking for a loophole."

Second, the general rule was for a person to have one meal a day, in the evening or at 3 p.m.

These Lenten fasting rules also evolved. Eventually, a smaller repast was allowed during the day to keep up one's strength from manual labor. Eating fish was allowed, and later eating meat was also allowed through the week except on Ash Wednesday and Friday. Dispensations were given for eating dairy products if a pious work was performed, and eventually this rule was relaxed totally. (However, the abstinence from even dairy products led to the practice of blessing Easter eggs and eating pancakes on Shrove Tuesday, the day before Ash Wednesday.)

Over the years, modifications have been made to the Lenten observances, making our practices not only simple but also easy. Ash Wednesday still marks the beginning of Lent, which lasts for 40 days, not including Sundays. The present fasting and abstinence laws are very simple: On Ash Wednesday and Good Friday, the faithful fast (having only one full meal a day and smaller snacks to keep up one's strength) and abstain from meat; on the other Fridays of Lent, the faithful abstain from meat. People are still encouraged "to give up something" for Lent as a sacrifice. (An interesting note is that technically on Sundays and solemnities like St. Joseph's Day (March 19) and the Annunciation (March 25), one is exempt and can partake of whatever has been offered up for Lent.

Nevertheless, I was always taught, "If you gave something up for the Lord, tough it out. Don't act like a Pharisee looking for a loophole." Moreover, an emphasis must be placed on performing spiritual works, like attending the Stations of the Cross, attending Mass, making a weekly holy hour before the Blessed Sacrament, taking time for personal prayer and spiritual reading and most especially making a good confession and receiving sacramental absolution. Although the practices may have evolved over the centuries, the focus remains the same: to repent of sin, to renew our faith and to prepare to celebrate joyfully the mysteries of our salvation.