

DIOCESE OF OSSORY

LENT RESOURCES

Lent and its Meaning



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THE MEANING OF LENT

The season of Lent prepares us for and leads us to the celebration of the Easter Triduum. It is a season which developed over the first six centuries as a combination of the final preparation for catechumens (candidates for baptism) for initiation into the Church, the penitential discipline for reconciling sinners to the Church and the desire of good living Christians to undergo an annual period of conversion. Thus the two elements essential to this season are those of preparation for baptism for the uninitiated and renewal of baptism for the baptized faithful, and penance. Lent therefore has a baptismal and penitential character.

For many adults across the world this Lent marks the final intense phase of preparation for their initiation into the Church at the Easter Vigil. For those of us already baptized it is a time to recall our own baptism and its implication for us as Christians as we prepare to renew our own baptismal promises at Easter. Such preparation naturally leads to examination of one's life and thus to penance. Lent gives us a time in which we can renew our baptism, reawakening its dynamism in our life and allowing ourselves to undergo a change of heart, a conversion.

Thus during Lent we are called to renewal, conversion, a change of heart, a metanoia. Through the liturgical celebrations of the season we are called to repent and turn back to God. Led by Jesus and his Spirit, the pilgrim people of God make their annual journey of renewal, listening to the Word of God, becoming more ardent in prayer and more devoted to works of penance and concern for others. Through the acts of our penance we are given an opportunity to be reconciled with God, with our neighbour and with ourselves.

Some Lenten Actions of Prayer, Fasting, Almsgiving

SIGNING WITH ASHES this can take place during a Service of the Word or within the Celebration of Eucharist

PRAYER AROUND THE CROSS this form of prayer is particularly popular with younger people

EVENING PRAYER on one evening each week in Lent, i.e. Sunday, Friday... *Scripture Sharing Group

STATIONS OF THE CROSS there are many stations to choose from including the traditional, those chosen by John Paul II, progressive stations where over the course of a number of weeks individual parishioners take a station and give a personal reflection on it...

Getting Ready for Lent

As a liturgy group sits down to prepare the parish's celebration of the Season of Lent the group might consider some of the following questions and draw upon the supplementary material that follows:

- When you think of the season of Lent what are the images, themes, colour, mood that comes to mind?
- What is this season about in the Church's Year?
- What are the images and messages coming through this year's Sunday readings? Is there a pattern in the messages of the reading?
- What is this season's relationship to Easter?
- How have you kept Lent as a parish in the past?
- What other Lenten activities/actions/prayer experiences are possible for parishes in Lent?
- What do people need to experience and hear this Lent in your parish?

In light of the above:

- What initiatives around the Lenten actions of prayer, fasting and almsgiving from other years would you like to continue and build upon?
- What new initiatives, if any, would you like to undertake this year?
- How can the Sunday Liturgy itself convey the journey of Lent we are making?
- What are the different resources you will need to draw upon this Lent?
- What preparation steps do you need to put in place and what timeline do you need to follow to carry out your work successfully?
- When will you evaluate this year's parish experience of Lent?

Examination of Conscience

INTRODUCTION

This can be photocopied and used for your parish's reconciliation service. Alternatively, it can be presented to your parishioners as a prayer to be prayed daily during Lent.

STEP 1

GRATITUDE

No matter what I am worrying about... stop!

God is with me – quiet perhaps, but always there. I remember that God has created all things. Everything I have is a gift from God, Is there something I would especially like to give thanks for today?

I give thanks for what I have received this day both pleasant and difficult, for what I have done, for the word of encouragement and the generous gesture, for my family and my work/study, for the time to pray and to laugh and to cry.

STEP 2

PRAYER FOR LIGHT

I ask the Spirit to throw light over the last day/week to show me God working in the things that have happened.

STEP 3

REVIEW THE DAY

Now I look back over the day starting from when I woke up. What has happened to me in my life, my work, my relationships?

- On the whole was it a 'good' or a 'bad' day?
- Was it a normal day or unusual in some way?
- Did anything special happen, someone I met, something I saw on tv, something I was told?
- In all the things that happened how did I feel?
- Was I joyful, sad, angry, fearful, happy?
- What was the cause of those feelings and did the feelings change?

God guides us through our moods and feelings. Normally the way of God is (in a deep sense) peaceful and consoling, if your day was disturbed or if you were uneasy, can you begin to sense where that uneasiness is coming from? A good image is of a sailing ship buffeted by different winds – we are affected by many different feelings.

The ship can remain on course, though, with the aid of a gentle breeze or despite a piercing wind. The better we come to know these swirling breezes, the easier it will be to see the subtle movements of God in our lives and the direction our life is taking.

STEP 4

ASK FOR FORGIVENESS

Did I turn away from God during the day? Maybe I turned a blind eye to my sisters and brothers in their need and pain. Maybe I was too hard on others... on myself.

I ask forgiveness for anything I might have done to ignore or hinder God's love during the day that has passed. I especially ask for the grace of healing and strength.

STEP 5

HOPEFUL RECOMMITMENT

I want and seek to respond to God, aware of my weakness, but confident in God's strength and forgiveness for me. I want to respond generously to the needs of my brothers and sisters, more conscious that God is present in them.

I want to follow more closely the path that God offers to me to be a light for all creation. With this in mind I will look ahead in anticipation to the day(s) ahead and see how I might respond.