

## March Magazine

As I write this, I am preparing for the arrival of Ash Wednesday, Lent, then Easter. It is period of variation in mood and themes, from the penitentiary season of Lent to the joyous celebration of Easter.

Such is our journey of faith; we constantly flow between the quiet and reflective to the joyous and celebratory. Lent is meant to be a time of repentance. These forty days are to praise and worship the Lord: to read the Bible more, and to pray more often. The forty days of Lent involve fasting, prayer, and almsgiving to connect deeper with God. Commonly observed by Roman Catholic, Eastern, and Protestant churches, many use the period of Lent as a time of personal reflection to prepare your heart and mind for Good Friday and Easter.

The origin of the word Lent comes from the “Old English *lencten springtime, spring*” and “from West Germanic ‘*langitinaz*’ meaning *long-days* or *lengthening of the day.*” Shrove Tuesday is the day before Ash Wednesday which traditionally, is a time for confession, repentance, and feasting before the fasting season. The name “Shrove” comes from the Old English word *shriven*, meaning to confess sins and receive absolution.

Lent starts with Ash Wednesday, the day when you might see people with a cross of ashes, made from burning the previous year’s palm crosses, on their foreheads. These ashes are a reminder of our need for repentance and the reality of our human frailty. The ash marks symbolize sorrow and mourning over sin. The three main ways people engage in Lent are through fasting (abstaining from

something to focus on God), prayer, and almsgiving (giving to charity).

During Lent, intentionally setting aside time with God is critical. Quiet and solitude enable a time to listen to the Spirit and discern answers to prayer.

To explore this, I am commencing a Lent Course, which will take place at 7.00 p.m. the Vicarage on the four Sunday evenings after Ash Wednesday, which will look at the practise of 'Lectio Divina', which literally means "sacred reading," It is a spiritual discipline in which Scripture is read slowly and prayerfully, not for academic study but to encounter God personally and allow His Word to transform the heart and mind. The practice emphasizes listening to God through the text, reflecting on its meaning, responding in prayer, and resting in His presence, fostering a deeper relationship with Christ. Traditionally, *Lectio Divina* has four separate steps: read; meditate; pray; contemplate. First a passage of Scripture is read, then its meaning is reflected upon. This is followed by prayer and contemplation on the Word of God.

If you would like to join me for the course, please get in touch or come to the Vicarage on the Monday evenings.

Every peace to you.

Rev James

