

Chaplain's Newsletter

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LENT AND THE EASTER CYCLE SOME LITURGICAL NOTES

In its origins, Lent saw its purpose as a time of preparation for the celebration of the Easter mysteries; in particular, the rites of initiation, which accompanied the Paschal celebrations.

For those who are already baptized, it is a time of preparation for the renewal of those baptismal promises. Though the whole of the Christian life should be marked with a spirit of prayer, fasting and almsgiving, the Lenten season highlights these realities in a heightened manner. In short, the whole season is about conversion. On page 5 of this newsletter, we have suggested an "Examen" for use with your students.

In the West, Lent begins with Ash Wednesday and is completed before the Eucharistic Celebration of Holy Thursday. Once Sundays are removed, there are 40 days, which can be counted. The number forty, as we have seen time and time again throughout scripture, is a time of preparation, expectation, purification and longing. You may want to look at the story of The Ark or The Exodus or Jesus' own journey into the desert as a way of readying yourself for Easter.

Holy Thursday – Easter Sunday

At different points in our history, the morning of Holy Thursday, in particular, took on varying tones. It was a time of reconciling sinners, of blessing chrism and to celebrate the Lord's Supper. Now, the oils used for the sacraments can be blessed at either Holy Thursday, or at another time where it is more feasible to gather the bishop and his presbyters. It is at this celebration that there is also a renewal of the ordinations vows. The Eucharist is not celebrated exclusively in the evening. This is the one-day where it is clearly stated in the rubrics that private masses should not be celebrated.

There is a certain note of anticipation with this liturgy. White vestments are worn, the Gloria is sung, and the bells ring and then all these things go away again until after the Easter Vigil.

This is also the date during the church's year where we celebrate "the mandatum" (from where we get the title MAUNDY THURSDAY) – the call to wash feet. At the conclusion of the celebration, the altar and church are stripped – symbolic of the fast, which will be undertaken until the Eucharist is celebrated again at the Vigil. After the celebration of the Eucharist is complete, the Eucharistic Food is taken to a chapel or to another place of reposition. This food will be used on Good Friday for communion. A time of prayer and adoration continues until midnight.

Friday begins the two-day Paschal fast that leads up to the Easter Vigil. Around 3:00 pm on Friday afternoon, the church celebrates a prolonged liturgy of the word in which those present consume the sacrament, reserved from the day before. The service begins in silence; the scripture readings are concluded with a homily and with the traditional formula for the intercessions. The veneration of the cross comes to us from the church in Jerusalem, this rite was being celebrated since at least the fourth century.

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The Paschal fast continues in the morning as God's people continue their period of waiting and preparation.

The Easter Vigil

There are four stages to the Easter Vigil, which takes place at night. It is important to note that the symbolism of this liturgy only makes sense in the context of darkness.

Service of Light: A fire is blessed, the Easter candle is lighted, and then is carried in procession into the darkened church. Christ is acclaimed the light of the world and all in the assembly light their candles from the Paschal candle. The Exultet is sung in honour of the one who has saved us by his death and resurrection.

Liturgy of the Word: Besides the responsorial psalm and the gospel, nine readings are provided which trace salvation history and the Old Testament precursors to baptism. The intercessions are replaced by the litany.

Liturgy of Baptism: The litany of saints is sung, and then the priest blesses the baptismal water. The catechumens renounce sin and profess their faith. They are then baptized, clothed with a white garment and confirmed. The rest of the assembly renews their promises and are sprinkled with blessed water.

Eucharistic Liturgy: The first mass of Easter continues as normal.

The celebration of the resurrection continues the following morning. Those present are given the opportunity to renew the promises of their baptism.

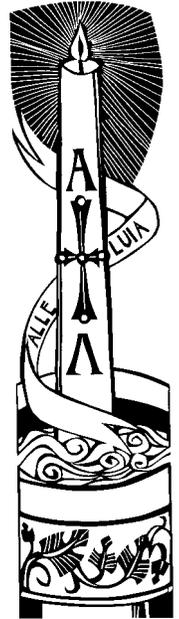
The Easter Season is seven weeks in length. It begins with the Easter Vigil and continues until Pentecost. It is opportunity for the church, to celebrate in a prolonged manner, the gift and mystery of the resurrection. The season moves through the Ascension and concludes with Evening Prayer at Pentecost.

The Christian Feast of Pentecost is clearly wrapped up with the Jewish feast of the same name. While the Jewish feast celebrates the giving of the Law to Moses on Mount Sinai, the Christian celebration commemorates the sending of the Holy Spirit upon those gathered in the upper room and to those to whom they preached. At some point it finally dawned on me that the apostles were not in the Upper Room waiting for the Holy Spirit to arrive but that they were already there thanking God for the gift of the law.

Pentecost, of course, comes from the word meaning fifty. Pentecost takes place 50 days after the celebration of Easter.

Each movement in this cycle is rich with meaning. I encourage you to encourage your students to celebrate the rites in their parishes. For many, it will likely be their first experience with celebrating the Vigil.

Michael Béchard was ordained a presbyter for the Diocese of London in 1995 and has been the priest-chaplain at King's University College since 2000. He holds a graduate degree in Liturgical Studies from the University of Notre Dame and is slowly plugging away at courses here and there. This past summer Michael had the opportunity to look at Celtic Liturgy and Spirituality at Drew University, New Jersey.



PRAYERS FOR THE SEASON OF LENT

Prayer for Ash Wednesday

Merciful God of infinite compassion,
 Whose creating power called us forth
 From the dust of the earth
 And whose redeeming love fashioned us anew
 In your divine image,
 In this, the acceptable time,
 Lead us inward to be at peace with you,
 Impel us outward to be reconciled with our neighbor,
 That we may embrace the sacred discipline of Lent
 With broken, humbled hearts
 And so come to the blessed joy of your Paschal feast
 Cleansed and renewed.
 We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
 Who lives and reigns with you
 In the unity of the Holy Spirit,
 God for ever and ever.
 Amen.

The Heart of Compassion

Compassionate God,
 your generous presence
 is always attuned to hurting ones.
 Your listening ear is bent
 toward the cries of the wounded
 Your heart of love
 fills with tears for the suffering.
 Turn my inward eye to see
 that I am not alone.
 I am a part of all of life.
 Each one's joy and sorrow
 is my joy and sorrow,
 and mine is theirs.
 May I draw strength
 from this inner communion.
 May it daily recommit me
 to be a compassionate presence
 for all who struggle with life's pain.
 - Joyce Rupp

Penitential Prayer of St. Augustine

O Lord,
 The house of my soul is narrow;
 enlarge it that you may enter in.
 It is ruinous, O repair it!
 It displeases Your sight.
 I confess it, I know.
 But who shall cleanse it,
 to whom shall I cry but to you?
 Cleanse me from my secret faults, O Lord,
 and spare Your servant from strange sins.
 -St. Augustine of Hippo (AD 354-430)

SAINTS FOR THE SEASON OF LENT

During the Season of Lent Saints' memorials are not celebrated although solemnities and feasts are celebrated as usual. When celebrating solemnities and feasts, the weekday Lenten readings are always used and the colour is always violet.

Here is a short list of some saints whose commemorations come during Lent this year:

St. Casimir (Mar. 4): Prince of Poland, born in 1484, was particularly noted for his strong sense of justice and his commitment to chastity. Declared a saint by virtue of the many miracles attested to him, it is said that even as a young boy he preferred prayer and charity to the luxuries of the royal court. His devotion to Christ was so profound, he would often kneel for hours at night before the locked doors of churches, regardless of the time or the weather.

St. Patrick (Mar. 17): Born circa 387, St. Patrick is best known as Patron Saint of Ireland. St. Patrick, not Irish by birth, was taken to Ireland as a slave, where he further developed a deep commitment to God. St. Patrick's life was guided by faith and all of his actions belied his absolute trust that God would provide. The saying 'Turn in good faith and with all your heart to the Lord my God to whom nothing is impossible.' is attributed to St. Patrick and expresses the simple faith which ordered his every action.

St. Isidore (Apr. 4): Patron saint of laborers, when Isidore of Seville was a little boy he noticed that water constantly dripping on a rock had the power to chip away at the hard stone. It taught him that persistence was required to both learn and to influence the hearts of other people. As a Doctor of the Church, St. Isidore is a model of Christian patience and perseverance.



LENT

Part of Catholic Lenten Culture previously focused on “giving up” something. In more recent years there seems to be a recognition that sacrifice can be about “doing something” as a way of improving our own lives or the larger community. It is important to give students the opportunity to see sacrifice in this light. Within the context of prayer/liturgy have them think about the commitment they are prepared to make during this Lenten season. You may wish to designate a different colour for each of the four target areas such as blue for Personal, green for Home, yellow for School, and pink for the Larger Community. Hand a small square of each colour paper (cut 8 x 11 papers into 4). Students can then write what they are going to do during lent anonymously on piece of paper that corresponds to their Lenten sacrifice, ie. “Help out around the house” would be written on a green piece of paper.

During a liturgical celebration students can bring their piece of paper forward and place it in a basket as a sign of their offering to God. At the table have ready four other baskets each containing beads and string, or simple wool strings large enough to fit a students wrist, in the corresponding four colours. After students has left their offerings in the basket they can pick up the beads, or wool, in the colour of their paper. Have them make their bracelet with beads or just tie the wool around their wrist. This is a concrete reminder of their Lenten offering that they can wear until Easter.

The written offerings (if they are anonymous) can be glued to a poster board put up in the classroom or glued into a book and given a prominent place in the classroom so everyone can see the many things that they, as a class, are doing to improve the world.

Development and Peace has their *THINK-FAST* program readily available for download at their website <http://www.youth.devp.org>.

This package contains an outline for a 25-hour fast which provides a wonderful opportunity for students to raise money to assist people in the developing countries. If your school is not sponsoring a *THINK-FAST* encourage students to participate in or volunteer to assist local Churches that may be sponsoring it. If you are unable to participate in the full *THINK-FAST* program the activities and liturgies may still be used on their own to help students explore and understand issues in the developing countries in the global south.

The resources Development and Peace provides go beyond *THINK-FAST*. Their website <http://www.devp.org/devpme/eng/sharelent/organizers-eng.html> provides numerous resources for their Share lent campaign including lifestyle calendars that are available for download, written documentation that shows how the money raised from their Share Lent campaign directly effects peoples lives (see Partners in action 2009.Cambodia and Partners in action 2008.NMJD of Sierra Leone) and information about Solidarity Sunday including symbols and prayers that relate to people who live in the developing global south countries.

During the Lenten Season the Stations of the Cross are a means by which we reflect on our own lives in relationship to Jesus. Churches and some schools have fixed stations within their buildings. “Freeze-Action” stations can also be a powerful way for students to enter into the experience of Holy Week whether they be participating in the dramatic tableau themselves or witnessing it. Assistance in visioning these dramatic depictions of the stations can be found in *Faithways* book II put out by the Center for Ministry and Development in the “With Jesus on the Road to Calvary” program. Development and Peace provide a Stations of the Cross with a social justice focus at <http://www.devp.org/devpme/documents/eng/pdf/SolidarityResourceBook.pdf>.



AWARENESS EXAMEN

The Awareness Examen emerges out of the Ignatian Tradition. It invites us to review and examine the day's thoughts, feelings, and actions in terms of how God seemed to be present and how we responded to that presence. It may also be used to review and examine a particular event or experience such as a meeting or gathering to notice more intentionally how God's Spirit was present and active.

1. In order to practice the awareness Examen, select a time and place (usually at the end of the day) that is peaceful and in which you may be alert and prayerfully attentive. Take a few minutes to dispose yourself for this prayer in whatever way is natural for you. This may be spoken prayer to God to open you more fully to the Spirit's leading, a gentle relaxation process that focuses on breathing, singing or chanting, or simply a few minutes of silence to empty yourself of thoughts, images and emotions.
2. In quiet prayer, we begin to simply look over our day from the beginning to the present moment. We begin by attending to the moments where we were most grateful and then to those moments where we were least grateful.
3. There are many other ways to ask the same questions:
 - At what moments did I give and receive the most love today? At what moments did I give and receive the least love today?
 - At what moment did I feel most alive today? At what moment did I feel least alive today?
 - What were today's high points? What were today's low points?

At the end of your prayer, take time to thank God for the gift of this day and God's presence in all that was given.

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STATIONS OF THE CROSS (VIA CRUCIS)

There is something in us that moves us to visit the scene where an important event occurred. Visitors flock to the Ford Theater to stand where President Lincoln was assassinated; mourners visit the site of the Oklahoma City bombing; Elvis admirers tour Graceland. So it was for early Christians who greatly desired to journey to Jerusalem and to see with their own eyes the places where Jesus lived, suffered and died. The traditional sites of the Lord's passion soon became popular stopping places; even today the Via Dolorosa is included in most pilgrims' itineraries.

Because not everyone was able to visit Jerusalem, pilgrims brought back stories and images of what they had seen for those who remained at home. Eventually shrines that focused on the passion and death of the Lord appeared all over Europe. In the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, increased emphasis on the suffering of the Messiah, coupled with the fervor of the Franciscan friars, led to the widespread acceptance of this devotion that traced the footsteps of Jesus from his trial to his tomb.

But it was more than curiosity that caused this devotion to flourish. Prayers that emphasized Jesus' obedience until death, sorrow for sin, and God's abiding love and mercy were at the heart of it. Although the reforms of the Second Vatican Council placed greater emphasis on baptismal renewal and penitential acts.

Essential to this devotion, whether prayed by an individual or a group, is meditation on the passion of the Lord in spoken and sung prayer, and movement from one station to the next. Ideally, everyone walks in procession to each station, uniting ourselves in our bodies to the Lord's passion and death.

The number of stations has varied widely over the centuries. Recent revisions have omitted stations not included in the scriptures, and added stations that are, such as Jesus praying in the Garden of Olives, the denial of Jesus by Peter and Jesus' promise to the good thief. Frequently, a fifteenth station depicting the Resurrection of Jesus is added to illustrate the fullness of the paschal mystery.



SCRIPTURE PASSAGES FOR THE SEASON OF LENT

Readings on prayer, fasting, almsgiving and forgiveness

Prayer

One of the three cornerstones of the Lenten season, prayer is an essential part of the Church's life throughout the entire liturgical year as it serves as the foundation of our relationship with Jesus and God. Through private and public prayer we constantly orient ourselves to God and it is in prayer that we find the source and sustenance for the entire Christian life.

"If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land. Now mine eyes shall be open, and mine ears attend unto the prayer that is made in this place"

2 Chronicles 7:14-15

Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus

Philippians 4:6-7

Other passages: *2 Chronicles 34:27; Job 22:21-28; Jonah; Joel 2:12-14; Matthew 6:5-13; Matthew 7:7-8; John 14:13-14; Romans 8:26; 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18; Ephesians 6:18; James 4:7-12; James 5:15-18; 1 John 5:14-15; 1 Timothy 2:1-10.*

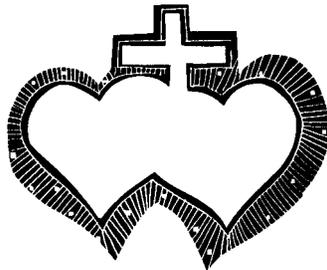
Fasting

Fasting is also one of the three cornerstones of the Lenten season, but is unlike prayer and almsgiving in that it is not an everyday part of the Church's life outside of Lent. When we fast, our physical hunger serves as a sign and reminder of that for which we truly hunger and works to renew and purify the body.

"Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. He fasted forty days and forty nights, and afterwards he was hungry. The tempter came and said to him, 'If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread.' But he answered, 'It is written, 'One does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.'"

Matthew 4:1-4

Other passages: *Exodus 34:28; Deuteronomy 9:9-18; 2 Samuel 12:16-23; 1 Kings 19:8; Ezra 8:21-23; Isaiah 58:3-9; Joel 2:12; Matthew 6:16-21; Mark 1:12-15; John 4:34; Acts 13:2-3; 1 Corinthians 7:5; 2 Corinthians 6:5*



Almsgiving

The last of the three cornerstones of the Lenten season, almsgiving is like prayer in that it is also part of the Church's everyday life but is also different because it forms the foundation of Christian good works, rather than of the liturgical life. Almsgiving is expressed by the universal Church in the preferential option for the poor and is an expression of universal solidarity of all people.

"As water extinguishes a blazing fire, so almsgiving atones for sin. Those who repay favors give thought to the future; when they fall they will find support. My child, do not cheat the poor of their living, and do not keep needy eyes waiting. Do not grieve the hungry, or anger one in need. Do not add to the troubles of the desperate or delay giving to the needy. Do not reject a supplicant in distress, or turn your face from the poor."

Sirach 3:30-4:4

Other passages: *Deuteronomy 15:7-11; Tobit 4:6-11; Matthew 6:1-4; Luke 11:41; Romans 15; Romans 25-27; 2 Corinthians 8-9*

Forgiveness

Is truly at the heart of the entire Christian life - our faith is built on the trust that God forgives us for our shortcomings, for our mistakes and our sins and that this forgiveness was won for us by Jesus on the cross. The Lenten focus on repentance is incomplete without a parallel focus on forgiveness; both God's forgiveness of our sins and our forgiveness of others'.

"For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you; but if you do not forgive others, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses."

Matthew 6:14-15

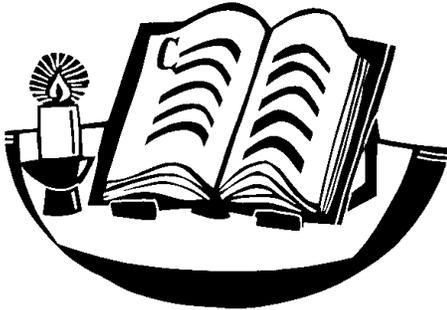
"'Have faith in God,' Jesus answered. 'I tell you the truth, if anyone says to this mountain, 'Go, throw yourself into the sea,' and does not doubt in his heart but believes that what he says will happen, it will be done for him. Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours. And when you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive him, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins'"

Mark 11:22-25

Other passages: *Genesis 33:4-15; 2 Samuel 19: 18-23; Isaiah 1:18; Isaiah 43:25-26; Matthew 11:28; Matthew 5:39-46; Matthew 18:21-22; Luke 6:35-37; Luke 17:3-4; Luke 23:34; Romans 12:19-21; 2 Corinthians 2:5-10; Colossians 1:18-23; James 5:15-16; Hebrews 4:16; 1 John 1:9*

PRAYING WITH SCRIPTURE THROUGH LENT - *LECTIO DIVINA*

"Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. He *fasted* for forty days and forty nights, and afterwards he was hungry" (Mt 4,1-2).



Lent is a season of penance in the Church; a time when Christians are called in an especial way to prayer, almsgiving and fasting as a sign of our own repentance for our sinfulness and our desire to be better, holier people. In his 2009 Lenten Message (11 December 2008), Pope Benedict XVI expressed his hope that "every family and Christian community use this time of Lent...in order to cast aside all that distracts the spirit and grow in whatever nourishes the soul, moving it to love of God and neighbour. I am thinking especially of a greater commitment to prayer, *lectio divina*."

Lectio divina or 'divine readings' is described in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* as "where the Word of God is so read and meditated that it becomes prayer" (1177).

It can be practiced in private or by a group of people and can follow any number of patterns; some people begin with Genesis and read through to Revelation, while others follow the schedule of liturgical readings or the daily readings in the Liturgy of the Hours, while still others read the bible thematically. During the season of Lent, it seems helpful to focus, as Pope Benedict did in his Lenten Message, on thematic passages related to the foci of the season: prayer, fasting, almsgiving, repentance, humility, forgiveness, mercy.

For private meditation, begin by reading a passage aloud. Focus on a single word or phrase that catches your eye and meditate on its meaning for as long as you need. Then, read the passage aloud a second time. Instead of focusing on a single word or phrase, begin to meditate on an idea that the word or phrase brings to mind; continue to meditate on the idea for as long as you need. Proceed to reading the passage aloud a third time then focus on how that idea and the Scripture passage speak to something that you are experiencing in your life, whether it be a worry or an anxiety, a hope or an expectation. Ask yourself:

1. How does the idea from the passage of Scripture speak to your life?
2. How might it shed light upon something that has been worrying you or causing you anxiety?
3. Why might God be calling to you and what is he saying this Lenten season?
4. Are you ready to accept his love and his mercy? If not, what is holding you back in your relationship with Him and with others?

In a group environment, *lectio divina* also provides a wonderful opportunity for led, focused prayer that can help students enter into Scripture and develop a personal relationship with it. If students are uncomfortable sharing their thoughts aloud, they can be invited to journal their thoughts and reactions.

SOME SUGGESTIONS ON HOW TO 'GIVE ALMS' THIS LENT

- Volunteer to help at a local soup kitchen, mission, shelter, retirement home, etc.
- Shovel a neighbour's sidewalk or laneway
- Spend an extra \$10 on non-perishable foods when grocery shopping and donate it to a local food bank
- Become involved in campaigns or initiatives like Development and Peace's Share Lent Campaign and help to achieve social justice and human rights
- Donate gently used clothing and linens to a local shelter or the St. Vincent de Paul Society
- Spend more quality time with loved ones



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LENT HYMN SUGGESTIONS

CBW = Catholic Book of Worship III (1994);

G = Gather, 2nd Edition (1994); GP = Glory & Praise (1984)

To aid in your selection of music, reflect on some of the words found in Scripture readings for Lent: return, mercy, reconciliation, fasting, prayer, giving, covenant, test, light, kindness. The music of the season should express a penitential stance, while at the same time giving voice to our hope and confidence in the God whose will is always to save, redeem and reconcile.

Gathering/Recessional Songs:

Again We Keep This Solemn Feast - CBW352

All That We Have - GP82

Come and Journey With a Savior - CBW476

Glory and Praise to Our God - G380, GP17

Lead Me, Guide Me - G400

Lift High the Cross - CBW435

May We Praise You - G392, GP220

O Lord, Throughout These Forty Days - CBW367

O Sun of Justice, Fill Our Hearts - CBW371

Praise to You, O Christ Our Savior - CBW442, G360

Tree of Life—CBW373, G288

Suggested Seasonal Responsorial Psalms:

51 (Be Merciful, O Lord) – CBW41, CBW44, G53

91 (Be With Me) – CBW42, CBW46, G79

130 (With the Lord There is Mercy) – CBW56, G113

Preparation of the Gifts/Meditative Songs:

Abba! Father! – GPI

Ashes - G643, GP84

Deep Within - G290

Dust and Ashes - G280

Hosea - G282, GP262

Jesus, Remember Me - CBW380, G293

Jesus, the Lord - CBW432, G304, GP210

Only This I Want - CBW516, G499, GP224

Peace Prayer - GP40

Remember Your Love - G641, GP134

Return to God - G283

Salvator Mundi - CBW370

Seek the Lord - GP46

Take, Lord, Receive - GP53

With Our God - CBW374, G113

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WEB SITE LINKS FOR TEACHERS

http://www.sacredspace.ie/retreat/retreat200502_index.htm

<http://www.cccb.ca/site/content/view/2566/1062/lang,eng/>

Please forward any comments or suggestions for this newsletter to kings@uwo.ca. We value and encourage your participation in the development of the Chaplains Newsletter

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