

Choose Lenten Resolutions Carefully!

Perhaps it is better to choose something we can definitely carry out!
Better to do *one* thing definitely, than to compromise everything and do nothing!

Perhaps we should concentrate on prayer and our own personal relationship with Our Lord first, since the modern world gives us enough penances as it is!

Our Lord taught us that the first commandment was

'Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul and with all of your mind.' (Matt 22-37)

Prayer

I love Thee Jesus my love above all things; I repent with my whole heart for having offended Thee. Never permit me to separate myself from Thee again. Grant that I may love Thee always and then do with me what Thou wilt.



THE MEANING OF LENT

Jesus said:

'The time has come.

The Kingdom of God is at hand.

Repent and believe in the Gospel.'

(Mark 1:14)

The Season of Lent

The origins of Lent are to be found in the period of fasting and prayer before the feast of Easter, which was originally, and still is, the centre of the Liturgical year. This pre-Easter fast gradually grew from two days a week to its present length of forty days. The custom is extremely ancient. The period of forty days was already established by the time of the Council of Nicea (AD 320). Lent is actually forty weekdays, which is why it starts on Ash Wednesday.

Its Meaning

- It is a spiritual preparation for Holy Week and Easter.
- A time of special meditation on our sinfulness, and on Christ's sufferings and death on the Cross for our Redemption.
- The forty days remind us of Christ's forty days of fasting and prayer in the desert. Moses and Elijah also spent forty days in prayer and Jonah preached a forty day fast for Nineveh. Lent is a period of *collective* prayer and penance. It reminds us that we are a fallen race, subject to both original sin and personal sin. The ashes we receive remind us of this fact, and so, collectively the whole Church has this period of public prayer and penance.

* As God's People, we all stand in need of Christ's mercy and forgiveness.

* Lent has great importance today in view of the spiritual '*black hole*' in our society, and the loss of the very sense of sin itself. We are all in desperate need of repentance, of turning away from sin and back to God.

The Damage Caused By Sin

Sin has damaged us in three ways:

- In our damaged relationships with God.
- In the damaged relationship of soul and body we now have a fallen and sinful human nature, wounded by sin, in need of 'pruning', that it may bear more fruit. There is also the damage we have caused to our physical environment, to the world that God made.
- In our damaged relations with our neighbour, through selfishness and lack of love for each other.



Our Lenten Response

Our response is also seen in three ways:

- A time of Prayer to strengthen our relationship with God.
- A time of Penance to help us to control our weak and sinful nature.
- A time of Almsgiving to remind us of our duties to each other and to those in need

Prayer

- Do we attend Mass every Sunday, the supreme prayer of Christ and His Church?
- Could we go to daily Mass and Holy Communion? Is it possible to visit Our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament each day?
- Do we consider going to Benediction, Stations of the Cross, or other public devotions during Lent?
- Could we follow the Prayer of the Church, the Divine Office, especially Morning, Evening & Night Prayer each day?
- Do we spend time each day in personal prayer to Christ? Do we say our morning and night prayers?
- Do we say other prayers - The Holy Rosary, the Angelus, Grace before and after meals?
- Do we do some regular 'spiritual reading' of the Scriptures, or other spiritual books to raise our minds to God?



Penance

Are we regular in going to the Sacrament of Confession? Are there serious moral faults we should try to conquer, and which separate us from God and prevent Him working in us?

- Do we carry out our Friday penance by fasting or abstinence?
- Are there particular addictions, weaknesses or excesses that we should try to remedy - food, drink, smoking, TV, radio etc.?
- Laziness, impatience with others, being on time?
- Denial of legitimate luxuries for the love of God?

Almsgiving

- The corporal works of mercy - do we give generously to those in need?
- The spiritual works of mercy - do we give time to others - family, friends, neighbours, the sick, the lonely, the bereaved?
- Do we help the Church in our parishes, communities, schools etc. where possible?
- Do we try to love, not only those we like but also those we do not like, or who do not like us, as taught by Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount?

