



The Season of Lent

And already it is upon us... February 17 is Shrove Tuesday, and we will once again be serving pancakes – thanks to the men who organize and do this each year! February 18, then, is Ash Wednesday and the beginning of the season of Lent.

Lent is a season of fasting, that commemorates the 40 days Jesus spent in the desert fasting and praying – after his baptism, and before he began his ministry. This year Lent coincides with the Muslim month of Ramadan, also a time of fasting.

Why do we fast?

Well... there are many possible reasons.

A fast can be a kind of "cleansing," to prepare us for prayer. Hunger, or emptiness, can help to focus our mind and remember that our deepest hunger is for God.

It can also remind us that we can hunger for something and not satisfy that hunger immediately – that we need not be the slave of our hungers and desires.

Fasting can also put us in solidarity, at least symbolically, with those in this world who do not have enough food. Muslims, during Ramadan, do not eat or drink anything from sun up to sun down.

Christians have more of a variety of practices.

No meat on Friday, for instance (which is why our Catholic neighbours do the fish fry Fridays).

Often Christians "give up" something for Lent – desserts, maybe, or chocolate or coffee or... Wanting but not having, feeling empty in some way, can remind us to turn towards God, to remember we are only truly filled by God and God's grace.



In the United Church, “giving up” for Lent is also often accompanied by “taking up” for Lent. We might fast in some way, and also take up a particular spiritual practice. If we don’t do a daily prayer practice, perhaps Lent is a time to try it out. On the back of this letter, there’s a lovingkindness practice and a couple of websites that offer daily devotionals – in case you’d like to try something.

If you’re into counting, and you’re giving something up for Lent, you might notice that there are more than 40 days from Ash Wednesday to Easter. No, it’s not a mistake! It comes out to 40 if you leave out the Sundays. That’s because, like a Jewish Sabbath day, Sundays are feast days and the feast overrides the fast. So if you’re giving something up, and you’d like a break – feel free to take one on a Sunday!

Many of us are feeling a lot of anxiety these days, with politics getting crazier and crazier, the world re-arming for war, and people, it seems, increasingly isolated from each other. If we are to be about blessing all the families of the world, we’ll need to renew our connection with our Blessing God. May the practices of this Lent draw you at least a little bit closer into God’s embrace.

Blessed Be! Dave



LOVINGKINDNESS PRAYER PRACTICE



FIRST WE PRAY FOR OURSELVES...

*May I live in a good way.
May I be safe from harm.
May I be healed.
May I be whole.
May I be happy and at peace.*

NEXT WE PRAY FOR SOMEONE WE KNOW & LOVE

*May you live in a good way.
May you be safe from harm.
May you be healed.
May you be whole.
May you be happy and at peace.*

THEN WE PRAY FOR SOMEONE WE DON'T KNOW

*May you live in a good way.
May you be safe from harm.
May you be healed.
May you be whole.
May you be happy and at peace.*

THEN WE PRAY FOR SOMEONE WE DON'T GET ALONG WITH

*May you live in a good way.
May you be safe from harm.
May you be healed.
May you be whole.
May you be happy and at peace.*

FINALLY, WE PRAY FOR ALL THE EARTH, PEOPLE, PLANTS, ANIMALS...

*May all beings live in a good way.
May all beings be safe from harm.
May all beings be healed.
May all beings be whole.
May all beings be happy and at peace.*

Daily devotionals

Center for Action and Contemplation (Richard Rohr): Daily Meditations –
Center for Action and Contemplation: <https://cac.org/daily-meditations/>

Irish Jesuits: Your daily prayer online – Sacred Space:
<https://sacredspace.com/>