
LENT 2018

The Holy Season of Lent begin on February 14th this year with Ash Wednesday. It will then continue for the next five weeks and five Sundays. And everyone knows what it's for; giving up chocolate!

In the Scriptures the number 40 is a repeating idea; the Israelites, for example, were in the wilderness for 40 years after escaping Egypt. After His Baptism by John the Forerunner in the River Jordan Jesus escaped to the wilderness for 40 days and nights. Having heard and seen the Glory of God descend upon Him as he was baptised confirming that He is 'The Son, the Beloved of the Father' Jesus begins His ministry by battling with the tempter after which He turns His face to Jerusalem. The 40 days of Lent are lived by Christians in the same spirit of the 40 days and nights of Christ's time in the wilderness; a battle with the tempter.

Our life as a Christian is lived in union with Christ, so that His life becomes our life; his thoughts and actions become ours. Yet so often the temptations of the attractions of sinfulness dominate our good intentions. During Lent, the Church gives us a time when, with Jesus, we can go into the wilderness and do battle with our tempter, our sinful desires. We can and will take on new ways of living during these 40 days and will always have the three watchwords, **Fasting, Abstinence, Prayer** in the forefront of our minds. There is however a fourth watchword that we must remember, **Intention**. What do we intend this time

to be and what effect do we intend our spiritual and physical actions to effect in our lives?

To put it simply, are we just going to ‘*Go through the new actions*’, that is do them so that we can tick them off, or are we going to allow Jesus to further mould us in His image? That is what is meant by Intention.

Lent begins with Ash Wednesday, and if you have read the first article in this parish magazine you will have read that the ash on our foreheads signifies our desire to put away our sin and sin no more. That is our **Intention** for the whole of Lent. Ash Wednesday marks a break with the old way of living and the beginning of a new way of living. And then, during the 40 days we will **Fast**, that is actually given up significant amounts of food so that we will be like Jesus in the wilderness, “*after which he was hungry*”. (Matt: 3:2) We will **Abstain**, that is stop doing those things that we are aware are hurting our relationship with God. We will **Pray**, that is give real time to entering into the conversation with God that is prayer.

In all of these 40 days like Jesus after His 40 days and nights in the wilderness we will turn our faces to Jerusalem where the True High Priest who is Jesus will confront the powers of selfishness and sin, nailing them to the Cross in His Body and, by dieing so that He might rise, destroy their power of our lives for all time and for eternity.

That is Lent 2018, not just simply giving up of chocolate then!