

## THE SEASON OF LENT

The Season of Lent runs from Ash Wednesday until the Easter Triduum Triduum and during this time we try to listen to God's word more intently and to practise the works of mercy.

*'In the corporal works of mercy we touch the flesh of Christ in our brothers and sisters who need to be fed, clothed, sheltered, visited; in the spiritual works of mercy – counsel, instruction, forgiveness, admonishment and prayer – we touch more directly our own sinfulness'.*

*(Pope Francis' Message for Lent 2016 - 4 October 2015)*

The word 'Lent' comes from the old English word for Spring, Lencten, meaning 'to lengthen'. As we progress through the Season of Lent the days of daylight gradually lengthen until the cold days of February and March are transformed into the brighter days of April.

Lent, in many minds, is a season for doing without and giving something up. However, that is just the negative aspect of what should be a very positive time. Just as springtime sees the re-awakening of nature so Lent can be for us a time of re-awakening to the grace of Christ.

Lent is a time when we are called to look at those areas of our life which we have allowed to become wintry and overgrown with the wrong priorities. We can turn again to those values which are of lasting importance.

Traditionally in Lent we are called to do three things – to pray, to fast and to be more charitable. We are called to open our hearts in prayer to the new life of grace which Christ offers. We are called to fast, to look at those areas of our life where we over-indulge, or where we could do with less, so that others can have more.

All this is to one purpose, so that we may be open to the new life which Christ brings. We keep Lent so that when we come to Easter we may be more prepared to receive and be part of the new life of the Resurrected Christ.

There is an old English Lenten Hymn which puts it well :

*'The day has come, the accepted day,  
when grace like nature flowers anew.  
Trained by the Lord the surer way  
rejoice we in our Springtime too'*