

Newsletter Spring 2022



As we come to the middle of Lent, we can, at last, rejoice in the fact that some sort of 'normality' is returning to our life and our liturgies. It would seem that we are learning to live with Covid and, although we are unable to return to life as it was we can, and should, 'look to the future with confidence' (*Pro 31:25*). The Liturgy Office has produced a series of videos, entitled *A Call to Love*, to encourage us all as we 're-connect' with the Mass, post Covid. To view these, please click on the orange link at the top of the page.

Over the past couple of years it has, at times, seemed as if we were living in a permanent Lenten Season but with a number of restrictions and sacrifices not of our own choosing. For millions of so-called baby boomers, giving up things for Lent once meant giving up such things as chocolate, puddings and, possibly, TV time. Today the sacrifices are more likely to involve alcohol and Social Media. But is this what we should be thinking about? (Many a person has begged his or her spouse 'Never, ever' to give up alcohol for Lent again!). Isaiah spells out what type of fasting is pleasing to the Lord: 'to break unjust fetters... to let the oppressed go free... to share your bread with the hungry and shelter the homeless poor...to clothe the naked and not turn from your own kin' (*Isa 58:6-8*). Fasting, therefore, can take many forms and doesn't necessarily involve food or drink.

Whatever we choose to give up, or take on, for Lent, we keep the three pillars of Prayer, Fasting and Almsgiving at the forefront of our minds. And we shouldn't do things that will only make us miserable; we can look on Lent as a gift as it gives us the opportunity to prepare fully to celebrate the Season of Easter. Last year we gave some suggestions for celebrating Lent as a family and we have reproduced some of those ideas again this year.

One thing that we have learned from Covid is to expect the unexpected! Have you thought what your parish would do if your priest was suddenly taken ill and there was no time to find a supply priest, or there was no priest available? We have suggestions for just such an event on page eight of the current Liturgical Diary which we reproduce below – 'Christ in his Word – celebrating his presence'. You will find a suggestion for such a Liturgy of the Word for Sundays [here](#). If you know in advance that there will be no priest available for Mass on a Sunday (and therefore your priest has ensured that there are sufficient hosts in the tabernacle) Bishop Declan allows a Liturgy of the Word with Communion to be celebrated - but only on a Sunday, not on a weekday. The Bishops' Conference Document *Celebrations of the Word & Communion* is available on the Bishops' Conference website [here](#), but please note that this was published in 2013 when holding a Liturgy of the Word and Communion on a weekday was allowable.

Penitential services led by Bishop Declan

Bishop Declan invites you to join him during this season of Lent to celebrate the abundant mercy of God through the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Join him at one of the venues across our diocese as part of your Lenten Pilgrimage. Each Liturgy starts at 7:00pm.

At the time of writing there are still four Reconciliation Liturgies to be held, each of which begins at 7pm:

17th March – St John, Bath

24th March – St Gregory, Cheltenham

31st March – St John, Trowbridge

7th April – St George, Taunton

Parish Liturgies of Reconciliation

Many parishes will have a Liturgy of Reconciliation during Lent with the opportunity for individual confession. These can be a rich and rewarding experiences when we are helped to remember that we are not alone in our need to say sorry or find healing. We know that when we sin not only our relationship with God is damaged but it hurts others and the community. Preparing for the sacrament in the company of others, by reflecting on readings, singing appropriate music and joining in prayer, strengthens us in our desire to meet God in our sorrow and vulnerability. The joy of unburdening ourselves allows us to continue on our journey to Easter so that when it comes we are ready and able to rejoice with Christ on resurrection day. You will find a couple of different examples of parish Reconciliation Services on the Liturgy Office website [here](#) and [here](#).

If you have not been to the Sacrament of Reconciliation for some time and have, perhaps, forgotten how to approach it or what to say, don't worry – just explain this to the priest who will guide you through it. You will find a trifold explaining the Rite and what to say [here](#)

Celebrating Lent as a family



Prayer, almsgiving and fasting can be very meaningful if done together as a family. We can support each other through our temptations and weaknesses, encourage each other and deepen our faith as a family unit. There are suggestions below for you to choose as a family. Ask everyone in the family to contribute ideas, make suggestions and then decide what you are going to do together. It is probably more significant to choose one thing for praying, almsgiving and fasting and do it well, supporting each other in your daily journey.

Prayer

Decide as a family who you would like to pray for during Lent. Take time each day to gather together and pray. Something visual will often help the children to focus. You could make a special prayer chair for Lent, by placing a coloured piece of material on a chair with a cross or statue. More creative people might like to make a prayer tree and add a leaf every time you pray. Prayer chains are also popular where you write who you are praying for and loop them together to create a decorative chain. You could create a family prayer journal together, recording who you

pray for and include prayers you write yourselves. The children could decorate your prayer journal and make it a special keepsake.

Fasting

Have a family fast together you could refrain from sweets or junk food during the week. With children you could plan in a 'cheat' day on a Sunday, especially Mothering Sunday so the task feels less daunting for them. Everyone in the family could choose different things to fast from and then you all encourage each other. Keep track of the money you are saving to help others. Fasting isn't just about food: giving up screens which would include TV, tablets, phones, games could really make a difference to family life during Lent. Discuss an amount of time that would be manageable for your family, but it should be about 30 minutes to an hour a day for it to make a difference. During this time, you could spiritually reflect or just enjoy time as a family by talking to each other and playing games.

Giving

Giving up doesn't have to involve saving money. If someone gives up technology or screen time, perhaps the time saved could be spent with the family. When your giving does save money, choose a charity you would like to support as a family. This could be an overseas charity or a local one. Create an almsgiving box together and put in money you have saved from fasting. The money can be written on pieces of paper and shared out, so everyone is able to contribute and see how much you raise.

Laetare Sunday & Mothering Sunday



The Fourth Sunday in Lent is often called 'Laetare Sunday' and its theme is one of hope and rejoicing that Easter is drawing near. The Entrance Antiphon for Mass begins with the Latin word 'laetare' meaning 'rejoice' and the vestments worn by the celebrant are often rose-coloured which is traditionally associated with a sense of joy in the middle of a season of penance (you will note that there are no flowers on the sanctuary other than on Laetare Sunday and on Solemnities and Feasts).

We rejoice that our salvation is near at hand. Even as Christ draws closer to his Passion, John's Gospel highlights the paradox that the deeper the darkness, the closer he is to glory, salvation for the whole world. The tradition of Mothering Sunday also falls on the Fourth Sunday of Lent, when those in paid service had leave to visit their mothers or the mother church of the diocese, the Cathedral. We are aware of the demands this last year has placed on mothers (and fathers) and wish them a special blessing on that day. We pray, too, for all our mothers, whether living or departed.

Chrism Mass



Our annual Chrism Mass, when Bishop Declan will bless the Oil of the Sick and the Oil of Catechumens and consecrate the Oil of Chrism - all of which will be used throughout the diocese in the coming year - will take place in our cathedral on Wednesday 13 April at 11am. This is a wonderful experience of the family of the diocese coming together to celebrate Mass just before we begin the Holy Paschal Triduum. If you have never taken part in this celebration before, do consider coming along.

The Sacred Paschal Triduum

The Catechism of the Catholic Church instructs us: "Beginning with the Easter Triduum as its source of light, the new age of the Resurrection fills the whole liturgical year with its brilliance. Gradually, on either side of this source, the year is transfigured by the liturgy. It really is a "year of the Lord's favor." The economy of salvation is at work within the framework of time, but since its fulfillment in the Passover of Jesus and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, the culmination of history is anticipated "as a foretaste," and the kingdom of God enters into our time. Therefore Easter is not simply one feast among others, but the "Feast of feasts," the "Solemnity of solemnities," just as the Eucharist is the "Sacrament of sacraments" (the Great Sacrament). St. Athanasius calls Easter "the Great Sunday" and the Eastern Churches call Holy Week "the Great Week." The mystery of the Resurrection, in which Christ crushed death, permeates with its powerful energy our old time, until all is subjected to him." (CCC #1168, 1169)

At the very heart of the Church's year is the great Three days of the Sacred Triduum - Holy Thursday, Good Friday and the Resurrection of the Lord. Good liturgy is not simply a re-enactment of something that happened over 2000 years ago but a real participation in the events themselves through living faith. The 40-day season of Lent with its practices of prayer, fasting and almsgiving should find us ready on Holy Thursday to enter into this short three-day season.

Lent itself quietly concludes on Holy Thursday, before we begin the evening Liturgy of the Lord's Supper. This, together with the Friday Passion of the Lord (Good Friday) and the Easter Vigil during the night of Holy Saturday/Sunday, forms just one Liturgy – you will notice that there is no dismissal at the end of the Maundy Thursday Mass or the Good Friday Passion. By having only one name for all three days, the church focuses on something important - the fact that only one mystery is being celebrated: the Paschal Mystery. The three days are not separate liturgies. Rather it is one celebration extending over three days.

As we move into the Triduum, the passion is never separated from the full image of the death/resurrection event. It is always the glorious cross, the triumphant cross, the dying and the conquering death that we now know. This does not mean we neglect the suffering of Jesus or of the whole world. We simply embrace its mystery as best we can.

The Masses of Sunday morning begin the 50 days of rejoicing called Eastertime.

These seasons (Lent, the Triduum, and Eastertime) are about initiation and the sacraments involved (baptism, confirmation, Eucharist). Baptism is once-for-all in our Church. We do not prepare for re-baptism. Once we have entered those waters, whether as a child or adult, we never fully emerge from them. All of life is fulfilling those promises. Lent, Triduum, Eastertime only take us deeper into those waters.

CHRIST IN HIS WORD – CELEBRATING HIS PRESENCE

What would you do?

Your priest may well be away on holiday... maybe he's gone down sick. The supply priest hasn't turned up... maybe he's forgotten or got lost en route. There's a church full of people before you. What do you do? Do you just reach for the tabernacle key - after all we've simply come for Communion, haven't we? But wait - if two or three are gathered in his name, surely he is among us anyway as we proclaim and listen to his word? Christ is made present when his word is proclaimed and he is with us, speaking to us through that very word.

Still, we may not be too sure about *how* we go about celebrating a Liturgy of the Word. It's not as complicated or as unfamiliar as we might be tempted to think.

What should we do?

Someone needs to be appointed to lead the community in prayer. It could be one of your parish readers or one of the EMHC. It could be a catechist or it could be someone else who is equipped to lead people in prayer. They don't have to make it up as they go along... this is still about a prayer that holds us together in communion. It's not just a prayer group meeting – this is a Liturgy in which we gather as Christ's Body, his people, to hear his word spoken to us.

The sign of the cross marks the beginning and then a simple greeting: Blessed is God, the Father of tenderness and compassion, who is rich in kindness and faithfulness and who keeps us in his love for all time. Bless the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. We can respond: Blessed be God for ever. It may be that there is space for a Litany of praise, praising God's merciful love and followed by a prayer that gathers us ready to listen. The readings are proclaimed in exactly the same way that we would hear them at Mass – first reading, psalm, second reading, acclamation and Gospel. The leader of the Liturgy might read the Gospel but without the greeting: The Lord be with you. They would simply say: A reading from...

There's a space for silence to allow that word proclaimed just to take root in us. It may be that there is space for a reflection of sorts upon the reading. This in itself needs thought and is not necessarily chance for someone to think of something 'on the spot' or 'off the cuff'. As we would expect our priests and deacons to have spent time in preparation it is a disservice to the word of God just to speak for the sake of speaking. Silence can be very fruitful.

On a Sunday, a Profession of Faith would follow – it could be the Apostles' Creed – and then the General Intercessions that we would have for Mass. You might pray the Our Father at the end of the

Intercessions and then a Concluding Prayer, an Invocation seeking God's blessing and something that graciously sends God's people out.

There is a superb resource produced by the Canadian Bishops' Conference 'Sunday Celebration of the Word and Hours' that fleshes out this framework beautifully and imaginatively and also some resources, drawn from this source, that gives a certain confidence in keeping us praying together in those moments of need. You will also find some resources on Clifton Diocese's Liturgy Office webpages. If in doubt, just contact liturgy@cliftondiocese.com

Art & Architecture

Please remember that the Liturgy Office is responsible for advising the bishop and our parishes on matters of liturgical Art and Architecture – building, re-ordering, alterations and additions and artistic commissions - for the churches of the diocese. The Department seeks to serve and help parishes and other communities to explore how they can make better use of their church buildings and chapels for the celebration of the Sacred Liturgy.

Any proposed changes which affect the liturgical and devotional life of the parish or community will need to be referred to the Liturgy Office for advice and permission where necessary. This may also require diocesan approval and possibly approval from the Historic Churches Committee (in the case of a listed building). For further information please see the Liturgical Diary, pages 157-158, or contact us at the Liturgy Office by email to liturgy@cliftondiocese.com or by telephoning 0117 902 5595.

With best wishes for a very blessed Lent and Easter Season