

What are the Church Origins of Lent?

By Fr. William Saunders

Lent is a special time of prayer, penance, sacrifice and good works in preparation of the celebration of Easter. In the desire to renew the liturgical practices of the Church, The *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy* of Vatican Council II stated, “The two elements which are especially characteristic of Lent — the recalling of baptism or the preparation for it, and penance — should be given greater emphasis in the liturgy and in liturgical catechesis. It is by means of them that the Church prepares the faithful for the celebration of Easter, while they hear God’s word more frequently and devote more time to prayer” (No. 109).

The word “Lent” itself derives from the Anglo-Saxon words *lencten*, meaning “spring,” and *lenctentid*, which literally means not only “springtide” but also was the word for “March,” the month in which the majority of Lent falls. Since the earliest times of the Church, there is evidence of some kind of Lenten preparation for Easter.

Lent became more regularized after the legalization of Christianity in A.D. 313. The Council of Nicea (325), in its disciplinary Canons, noted that two provincial synods should be held each year, including “one before the forty days of Lent.” St. Athanasius in his “Festal Letters” implored his congregation to make a 40-day fast prior to the more intense fasting of Holy Week. St. Cyril of Jerusalem in his Catechetical Lectures, which are the paradigm for our current RCIA programs, had 18 pre-baptismal instructions given to the catechumens during Lent. St. Cyril of Alexandria in his series of “Festal Letters” also noted the practices and duration of Lent, emphasizing the 40-day period of fasting.

Finally, Pope St. Leo preached that the faithful must “fulfill with their fasts the apostolic institution of the forty days,” again noting the apostolic origins of Lent. One can safely conclude that by the end of the fourth century, the 40-day period of Easter preparation known as Lent existed, and that prayer and fasting constituted its primary spiritual exercises.

Of course, the number “forty” has always had special spiritual significance regarding preparation. On Mount Sinai, preparing to receive the Ten Commandments, “Moses stayed there with the Lord for forty days and forty nights, without eating any food or drinking any water...” (Ex 34:28). Elijah walked “forty days and forty nights” to the mountain of the Lord, Mount Horeb (another name for Sinai)(1 Kgs 19:8). Most importantly, Jesus fasted and prayed for “40 days and 40 nights” in the desert before He began His public ministry (Mt 4:2).

Once the 40 days of Lent were established, the next development concerned how much fasting was to be done. In Jerusalem, for instance, people fasted for 40 days, Monday through Friday, but not on Saturday or Sunday, thereby making Lent last for eight weeks. In Rome and in the West, people fasted for six weeks, Monday through Saturday, thereby making Lent last for six weeks. Eventually, the practice prevailed of fasting for six days a week over the course of six weeks, and Ash Wednesday was instituted to bring the number of fast days before Easter to 40.

The rules of fasting varied. First, some areas of the Church abstained from all forms of meat and animal products, while others made exceptions for food like fish. For example, Pope St. Gregory, writing to St. Augustine of Canterbury, issued the following rule: “We abstain from flesh, meat, and from all things that come from flesh, as milk, cheese, and eggs.”

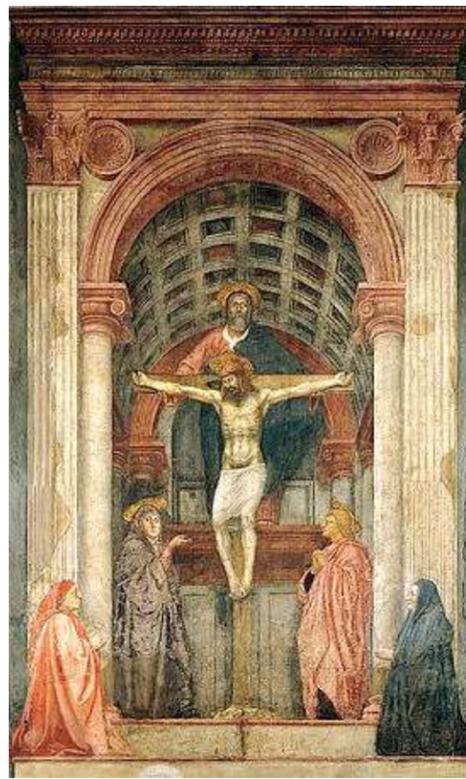
Second, the general rule was for a person to have one meal a day, in the evening or at three in the afternoon. These Lenten fasting rules also evolved. Eventually, a smaller repast was allowed during the day to sustain one’s strength for manual labor. Eating fish was allowed, and later eating meat was also allowed through the week except on Ash Wednesday and Friday. Dispensations were given for eating dairy products if a pious work was performed, and eventually this rule was relaxed totally. However, the abstinence from even dairy products led to the practice of blessing Easter eggs and eating pancakes on Shrove Tuesday, the day before Ash Wednesday.

Over the years, modifications have been made to the Lenten observances, making our practices not only simple but also easy. Ash Wednesday still marks the beginning of Lent which lasts for 40 days, not including Sundays. The present fasting and abstinence laws are very simple: On Ash Wednesday and Good Friday, the faithful fast (having only one full meal a day and smaller snacks to keep up one’s strength) and abstain from meat; on the other Fridays of Lent, the faithful abstain from meat. People are still encouraged “to give up something” for Lent as a sacrifice.

An interesting note is that technically on Sundays and other solemnities like St. Joseph’s Day [March 19] and the Annunciation [March 25], one is exempt and may partake of whatever has been offered up for Lent. Nevertheless, concerning the Sunday exemption, I was always taught, “If you gave something up for the Lord, tough it out. Don’t act like a Pharisee looking for a loophole.” Moreover, an emphasis must be placed on performing spiritual works, like attending the Stations of the Cross, attending daily Mass, making a weekly holy hour before the Blessed Sacrament, taking time for personal prayer and spiritual reading, and most especially making a good confession and receiving sacramental absolution.

Although the practices may have evolved over the centuries, the focus remains the same: to repent of sin, to renew our faith and to prepare to celebrate joyfully the mysteries of our salvation during Holy Week.

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MASSES & SERVICES

Saturday: 5pm
(Anticipated Mass)
Sunday: 9am, 11am & 5pm
Monday – Wednesday 8am
Thursday Mass/Novena:
8am & 7pm
Friday, Saturday, Holidays: 9am
(Fridays in July & August: 8am)
Children’s Mass: 9am 1st
Sunday of the month Oct-June
Children’s Liturgy: 11am
All Sundays except the 1st
Sunday from Sept- June
Reconciliation
Saturday: 4-4:45pm
Adoration
Saturday 9:30-10am
Library Hours
Sunday: 10-10:45am, 4:30-5pm

OFFICE HOURS

Monday-Friday: 9am-4pm

STAFF

Pastor

Babu Mathew, CSsR

Associate Pastor

Joseph Horo, CSsR

In Residence

William Comerford, CSsR

Office Manager

Virginia Fong

Pastoral Coordinator

Bertilla Watanabe

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Corinna Siy

Youth Ministry Coordinator

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March 10, 2019

1st Sunday of Lent

Lent: Kickstart our Spiritual Exercises

Dear Parishioners,

There is nothing like a race to kickstart one’s motivation. I noticed big groups of runners in the neighbourhood and downtown this week. Many of them are probably training for the Sun Run. This run is a big motivation for people to lace up their shoes and hit the pavement.

To help them, quite an extensive network of running programs have sprung up. They cater to people at all levels so that people at all levels can make progress in a gradual and incremental way. The members of the group also become a wonderful source of support and encouragement so that nobody gives up.

Our faith life needs that kind of support. Lent is the training period which leads us to the day of the big race – Easter. It is a time to strengthen our spiritual muscles by starting wherever we are and gradually pushing to a higher or deeper level in our spiritual lives.

The Church recommends three very concrete ways of doing this during Lent - prayer, fasting and almsgiving. Prayer is the act of connecting with our heavenly Father who loves us. Jesus taught us how to pray the Our Father. Prayer is about being thankful to God, feeling a true sense of contrition for our misdeeds and asking the Father to work his will in our lives.

Fasting is so essential in this age of instant gratification. It does not just apply to food. We can fast from all the things which bring us a sense of security without necessarily drawing us closer to God. Taking a break from social media or television and using that time for faith-related reading would be good ideas. Pope Francis last week also suggested that we fast from gossiping. These are things which we often do when we get together with friends.

Almsgiving beyond what we usually do in church offerings is also a good way to help us break out of set patterns of behavior and push ourselves to new levels. St Paul says in his letter to the Romans: “... we also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope.”

May our Blessed Mother help us in our training efforts for a good Easter.

Yours in Christ,
Fr. Babu Mathew, C.Ss.R



Be with me, Lord, when I am in trouble. - Psalm 91

NEWS & NOTICES

Weekly Collection: Sunday Mass Offering Mar 2 & 3: \$6,834.60. BC Catholic: \$5.00. St. Joseph's Society \$45.00. Thank you for your faith-filled generosity.

Church Surveillance System: If you are able to sponsor the installation of security cameras for the safety of users of our hall and basement facilities, we would very much appreciate the financial support of a critical aspect of the safety of our children. Please contact the Parish office for more details.

Church Washrooms: For security reasons, the church washrooms will be locked after weekday Masses until further notice.

Madonna Group: Our next meeting is on Wednesday March 13 at noon. Please contact Monica 604-739-8837 if you are interested in finding out more about this gathering for seniors.

PEC Meeting: The next meeting is on Tuesday March 12 at 7pm in the Madonna Room.

Lenten Prayer Series: Half-hour Lenten Prayer Series on Wednesdays at noon. Soup & bread offered after most gatherings. Mar 6 – VST Epiphany Chapel, 6030 Chancellor Blvd. | Mar 13 – St. Helen's Anglican, 4405 West 8th Ave. | Mar 20 – West Point Grey United Church, 4595 W. 8th Ave. | Mar 27 – St. Anselm's Anglican, 5210 University Blvd. | Apr 3 – Our Lady of Perpetual Help Catholic, 2465 Crown St. | Apr 10 – West Point Grey Baptist Church, 4509 W. 11 Ave.

Parents Confirmation Meeting: If you have a child receiving the sacrament of Confirmation this year, please attend this meeting on Tuesday March 12 at 5pm in the Church.

Share Lent: Our Share Lent Campaign begins this week. Development and Peace members are distributing the Solidarity Calendar at the doors of the church. If you would like to help with this D&P campaign, please contact Deirdre dmswebster@gmail.com.

Restore the Beauty - Women's Conference: This conference is for every woman desiring to experience restoration in her life, the lives of those around her, the Church and the world. This two-day event includes inspiring talks, prayerful moments of encounter with God and Mass with Archbishop Michael Miller. Throughout the weekend you'll experience hope and encouragement, while gaining practical tools to help you restore the beauty in your world, no matter your circumstances. We are excited for our amazing speaking team: Sister Miriam James, Fr. Josh Johnson, Michelle Benzinger, and Heather Khym. Event will be May 3 & May 4. Location: Mary Pattison Chapel located on the Pacific Academy Campus in Surrey, BC just off Hwy 1. Registration opens Feb. 25. www.liferestoration.ca/womensconference

Theology of the Body: Discover human nature as the "Gift of Self" in our relationship with God and one another through Theology of the Body. Using the teachings of Christ on marriage, St. John Paul II reveals our true human nature in the image and likeness of God as a "communion of persons in the sincere gift of self," giving us the authentic meaning of our humanity now and in eternal life. Sessions begin this Spring: April 1-June 24 at St. John the Apostle Parish, Vancouver, and March 26-June 18 at St. Anthony Parish, West Vancouver. Register at rcav.org/tob.



MASS WITH ARCHBISHOP MICHAEL MILLER 9AM SUNDAY MARCH 17, 2019

Join us for a very special celebration at the end of Archbishop Michael Miller's parish visit next Sunday 9am Mass. There will be refreshments in the hall. Take this opportunity to say hello to your bishop!

Stewardship Reflection

"I have now brought you the first fruits of the products of the soil which you, O Lord, have given to me." (Deuteronomy 26:10)

This line from the Old Testament offers two challenges. First, do you give to God from your "first fruits", the best that you have to offer, or do you give from what is leftover? Second, do you recognize that everything you have has been given to you by God? Ask God for a grateful and generous heart, every day, in all circumstances.

Stewardship Office, Archdiocese of St. Louis

CALENDAR

MARCH

Lenten Study



March 15

On Fridays of Lent after the Stations of the Cross, we will be screening Bishop Robert Barron's *Conversion: Following the Call of Christ*. Stations of the Cross start at 7pm. The 20 min video screening will follow soon after.

Lenten Mission

March 11-14

Father Lucien Larre is our Lenten Retreat guest speaker this year. Fr Larre has many roles in his life. Besides being a priest he also worked in psychology and education focusing on helping children. The underlying theme for his work is how to be missionaries of love. He spreads this message in missions, retreats and talks to parishes all over the world.

Sat evening Sun. Masses: March 9/10
Introductory Mission Sermon
The Most Important Decision in Life

Mon. March 11
Rosary 6pm, Mass: 6:30 pm, Mission Talk: 7 pm.
Clinging to Faith in a Godless Society

Tues. March 12
Rosary 6pm, Mass: 6:30 pm, Mission Talk: 7 pm.
Maintaining Hope in Hopeless Situations

Wed. March 13
Rosary 6pm, Mass 6:30 pm, Mission Talk: 7 pm.
(First Class relic of St John Bosco, saint for children and adolescents will be available for veneration.)
Building a Loving Home in a Selfish Society

Thurs. March 14
Rosary 6pm, Mass: 6:30 pm, Mission Talk: 7 pm.
(First Class relic of St Maria Goretti, will be available for veneration.)
Bringing Love to a Violent, Hateful Society

Lent: 5 Tips for Staying the Course

By Annemarie Scobey

Lent is like committing to a long run. We know it will make us healthier and stronger. We know it's good for our heart. We believe that at the finish line—Easter—we will feel satisfied, maybe even triumphant. In the beginning of the run, we feel light and determined. In the middle, our breathing becomes labored, our resolve fades, and we wonder why we thought we could accomplish something so difficult. We are tempted to walk, to renege on our Lenten promise. But if we persevere – keep running, we will end our 40 days with the deep joy offered by the resurrection. Here are some ideas for how to keep yourself engaged this Lent.

Just for today

The wise tenet of Alcoholics Anonymous is applicable to Lent. Don't look at all 40 days at once. Instead, look only at the day in front of you, and focus on your promise for that day only.

"I have a crazy busy schedule, especially in spring," says John, father of three, who works in the tax division of his company. "But I decided for Lent that I need to start my day with 15 minutes of prayer. I downloaded an app on my phone, and first thing in the morning I press it. I always need to tell myself that it's only 15 minutes, that it's okay to sit down and do this today." A "just for today" philosophy also allows space for you to inadvertently fail at your Lenten promise for a day (or a week or two weeks) and recognize a new day is an opportunity to be true to the promise.

Grab on to Mass

If your attendance at Sunday morning Mass had been spotty before Lent, commit to showing up for the six Sundays leading up to Easter. Mass offers an opportunity to recharge. When you're at Mass, be present in such a way that you are open to what God may need you to hear during that Mass. Enter into the songs, and allow them to move you. Listen attentively to the scripture and to the homily, and pull your mind back from the to-do list.

"I used to dread going to Mass because it took a precious hour from my packed weekend," says Kara, who admits to often being exhausted by the work of parenting a special-needs child. "But then I started looking at it differently; When else during my week can I sit down and listen to beautiful music, have someone read me meaningful scripture, and (if it's a really good week) hear something in the homily I can hold on to? Spas are all the rage right now, but I'm starting to think of Mass as a spa for my soul."

Be of service

Prayer, fasting, and almsgiving are the three traditional aspects of Lent, but connected to giving alms is service to the poor and marginalized. A Lent with a service component—whether it is participating as a family in a local meal program, or doing something individually like tutoring students in need—can make your other aspects of Lent more accessible. Service can focus our prayer outside of our own needs, helping us to see our struggles within the context of the larger society. In terms of almsgiving, service with a particular organization can inspire us to make a greater financial commitment, because we now better understand the impact of the organization. Service work can pull us out of our sense of entitlement to an understanding of what true need looks like.

"I gave out mashed potatoes the last time our family went to serve at St. Ben's," says Jack, a senior in high school. "Almost every single person said 'thank you.' As I was putting the potatoes on their plates, I was thinking about what a small thing I was doing yet these people were thanking me. It put things into perspective. I noticed I didn't complain about stuff as much for the week after that."

Don't go it alone

There's a reason you often see runners in pairs; it's harder to run alone. Share your Lenten journey with another person. It can be amazing how spiritually hungry people are. Making a commitment to share a week or two of Lenten focus with another person can be a gift to both of you. "I emailed the parents in my daughter's class to see if anyone wanted to come over to my house for an informal prayer group during Lent," says Shannon, mother of two. "Three moms took me up on it; we met once a week to read the day's scripture and talk about what was going on in our lives. It was so good to go deeper than the conversations we have along the sidelines of our kids' games."

Fast for the right reason, from the right things

If your fasting isn't going so well, stop and consider why you are fasting. Does it have more to do with your spiritual growth than with a desire to reduce your waistline? While fitness can be a welcome byproduct of fasting, the spirit of your decision to fast should be to bring you into a greater solidarity with the suffering of Jesus. Choosing to abstain from certain foods or activities can be another way to help you remove things from your life that separate you from God. If eating between meals is keeping you from fitting into your favorite jeans, but isn't really keeping you from God, consider looking more deeply into your heart for what you may have to give up to make more room for Christ.



TIPS FOR A GOOD LENT

Redemptorist Pilgrimage: May 2-14

As part of our 150th Jubilee Icon of Love celebrations, the Redemptorists all over the world have organized several pilgrimages to visit the actual icon of Our Lady of Perpetual Help, places where St Alphonsus and St Gerard Majella lived and prayed as well as other places of interest in Italy.

The cost of the trip is \$4800. Arrangements can be made for pre-authorized payments as well. For more information about the pilgrimage, please contact Brian or Deon royaleorchid@shaw.ca or call Brian 778-999-4599 / 778-866-8118.



12-DAY ITINERARY

Day 01: May 02 2019 - Canada to Rome / Naples
Day 02 May 03 - Arrive in Rome – Marianella – Naples
Day 03: May 04 - Pompeii – Amalfi Coast
Day 04: May 05 - Excursion to Scala
Day 05: May 06 - Sites of St. Alphonsus and St. Gerard Majella
Day 06: May 07 - Amalfi – Montecassino – Rome
Day 7: May 08 - Papal Audience – Holy Doors of Rome – Relics of Jerusalem
Day 8: May 09 - Rome (Vatican)
Day 9: May 10 - Assisi – Sites of St. Francis and St. Clare
DAY 10: May 11 - Pisa – Padua
DAY 11: May 12 – Venice – St. Mark's Square - Murano Glass Factory
DAY 12: May 13 – Goodbye Italy