

ENCOURAGEMENT

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The Host Apostolate

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Lent A Time Of Refreshment

The time of 'lent' is now associated with giving things up, a time of penance, fasting and has a sombre feel to it. While all these things do reflect a part of Lent's purpose we are in danger of accentuate the negative and eliminating the positive which is not what is its blessed and special purpose.

Lento (in music) means to go slowly, reflectively, to think about something, make it meaningful. The word 'lent' itself comes from Old English, meaning springtime, when life begins to blossom. We speak of spring-cleaning, getting things cleaned up after the winter months and refreshing our homes. This is a good way to look at lent. The conclusion of lent takes us to an understanding of the purpose of Easter, a time of resurrection and rebirth.

Indeed we renew our Baptismal promises, we are blessed with new water and fired up to live fully our Christian lives.

In order to do this we have to prepare not just our material homes but our spiritual homes, temples of the Holy Spirit. We are called to bear witness to both the death of Jesus on the Cross and the incredible sacrifice he made to save us but also to realise that if we follow Him we will rise again with him and 'live' for he conquered death.

So how should we behave in Lent? We are reminded from Ash Wednesday that we are people of The Word, the Gospel, and that we will

all one day have to give account of ourselves, and that we are mortal. Both are intended to make us view the way we live and reflect on how we fail to live as Christians, our shortcomings and limitations. We are called to think about how we relate to our neighbour, our family, friends and all our relationships and the world in which we live.

All of us have faults and failings that (though we hate to admit it) impact on others and make us fail in our obligation to love and forgive so central to the Gospel. We fail to love God and all those that we have contact with.

Although self-denial has a purpose of self discipline and of itself has a positive aspect, it reminds us that we are weak and that we struggle, its main purpose is to bring us back to God who is our strength.

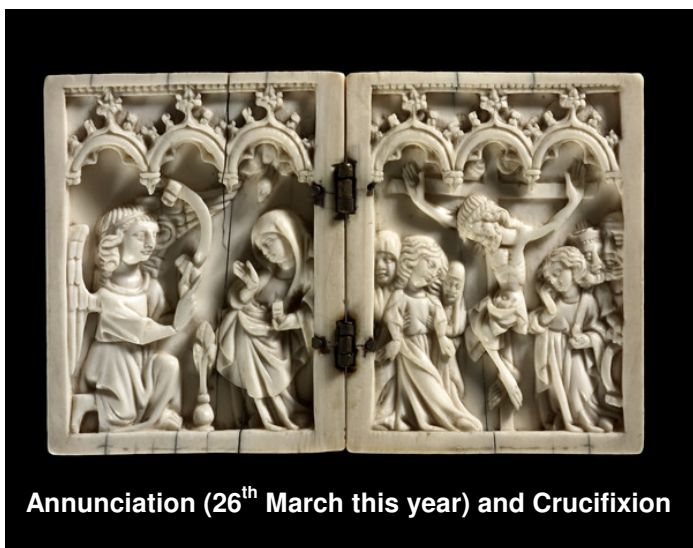
Self-denial, fasting/abstinence however is crucially intended to discipline our senses and inclinations especially those that lead us to sin and temptation to sin. Put another way for a person who does not enjoy alcohol giving it up is hardly a struggle, for an alcoholic it would be heroic and lead to a change of life. So too with failings; A quick tempered person who holds their tongue will have gained a major victory which for the mild mannered will not necessarily gain much and could even be an occasion of sin for not speaking out or feeling self righteous. In other words giving up something that causes us to be less kind, loving and generous leads us to spring clean our lives.



Fasting which again disciplines our desires for good food and satisfaction, has even more meaning if we offer this up for the good of our neighbour. It remind us to pray for a better distribution of resources, or to give generously to help our fellow human beings with alms, things, time and kindness.

Coming back to the words 'reflect' and refreshment we can see that we are called to look back at ourselves and renew, to look again at what we are or have become. Prayer can help us do this as it lifts us up beyond the mundane and quick answer. Lent is a time to realise that we are called to pray ever the more deeply. Lent is a time to re-evaluate, rethink, how we are doing spiritually and maybe find better ways that can sustain us through our lives enabling us to grow in grace and our relationship with Jesus. Of course this requires a deal of true humility and honesty and is never easy, but it is fruitful. Did not Jesus himself spend forty days in the desert before he entered the public arena.

Do we make prayer a priority, not an afterthought in our lives, and think how we say our prayers. Is prayer a Joy, a time of communication, communion with the Lord that leads us to others? Do we try to learn more



Annunciation (26th March this year) and Crucifixion

'If you die before you die
you will not die when you die.'

Little Anchors of Hope... little prayers for every day in Lent.
Available to read online at www.thehostapostolate.org or send for.

Please feel free to copy and distribute unaltered.

Pope Benedict XVI January 2012

"If God speaks to us even in silence, we in turn discover in silence the possibility of speaking with God and about God".

"Word and silence: learning to communicate is learning to listen and contemplate as well as speak."

about our faith, read Scripture? Do we think about the way we had to be redeemed and the price paid?

Are we truly sorry about the way we go wrong and deliberately hurt others. Are we ready to forgive? Are we ready to ask for forgiveness through the sacrament of Confession and Holy Communion?

Lent is a time of encouragement of our spiritual life and a time for change so that we can become true disciples (disciplined) and followers of The Way.

Yes, let's Spring Clean our souls this Lent!!!

Ideas...

- What about attending a Holy hour of Adoration or Stations of the Cross followed by Benediction?
- What about one decade of the Rosary with your children and a few moments of Silence?
- What about making up with someone with a smile?
- What about really listening to the Homily/Sermon and applying it to yourself?