

Heavenly Father,

As I enter another Lenten journey, guide me to the path that leads to You. Fill my heart with gratitude, patience, strength, and peace as I strive to become the-best-version-of-myself, honestly admitting my shortcomings and sins. As I renew my resolve each day to become a better person, let me hear your voice in the deepest reaches of my heart. Give me rest in You. Help me to accept others, showing them your great love instead of casting judgment. Stay with me through the busy days this week and remind me that when I need comfort, solitude, wisdom, or guidance, I can always turn to you. Help me develop discipline and generosity through fasting and almsgiving and come closer to you through prayer this Lent.

Through our Lord Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with You in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God forever and ever.
Amen

6 EVENINGS OF LENTEN PROGRAMME TALKS

To be held in the Meeting Room on Thursdays

- ◆ 6 March 2025 7pm – Fr Mark Bond - Our call to be a Pilgrim of Hope
- ◆ 13 March 2025 7pm – Mons. David Tonks - Walking the Camino: journeying life in Hope
- ◆ 20 March 2025 7pm – Fr Mark Napa - Prayer on our Journey
- ◆ 27 March 2025 7pm – Fr Mark Bond
- ◆ 3 April 2025 7pm – Mons. David Tonks - Together on the Journey of Hope: Synodality
- ◆ 10 April 2025 7pm – Fr Mark Napa

UPCOMING LENTEN PROGRAMME

- ◆ Extra Mass for Lent every Wednesday evening: 12, 19 & 26 March, 9 & 16 April at 7pm
- ◆ Rite II Reconciliation: Wednesday 2nd April at 7pm
- ◆ Lenten programme talks every Thursday: 6, 13, 20 & 27 March; 3 & 10 April at 7pm
- ◆ Stations of the Cross every Friday: 7, 14, 21, 28 March; 4 & 11 April at 7pm

“I never know what to give up for Lent!”

Lent is more than just “giving something up” and fasting from meat on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday.



Pope Francis challenges us to think about fasting as something more powerful than we normally consider it, describing it as “learning to change our attitude towards others and all of creation, turning away from the temptation to ‘devour’ everything to satisfy our voracity and being ready to suffer for love, which can fill the emptiness of our hearts. At the start of Lent, we should ask ourselves – what pulls me away from loving God, loving others, and loving myself well? How can I incorporate acts of sacrifice, acts of giving, and acts of prayer that will help me love as God loves?”

Giving thought to observing Lent is important. Whether you wait until the last minute to decide or you’ve known your Lenten sacrifice since last Lent, it’s worth spending time to thoughtfully consider how to make the most of your experience this year.

Because observing Lent is so much bigger than what you “give up.”

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SAINT JOSEPHS
ST JOSEPHS CATHOLIC CHURCH TAKAPUNA

LENT MARCH 2025

Let us journey together in hope

Dear brothers and sisters,

We begin our pilgrimage of Lent with the penitential rite of the imposition of ashes. The Church invites us to open our hearts to God’s grace, so that we can celebrate with great joy the paschal victory of Christ the Lord over sin and death. Indeed, Jesus Christ, crucified and risen, is the heart of our faith and the pledge of our hope in the Father’s great promise of life eternal.

This Lent, as we share in the grace of the Jubilee Year, I would like to propose a few reflections on what it means to *journey together in hope*, and on the summons to conversion that God addresses to all of us, as individuals and as a community.

First of all, *to journey*. The Jubilee motto, “Pilgrims of Hope”, evokes the lengthy journey of the people of Israel to the Promised Land. This arduous path from slavery to freedom was willed and guided by the Lord, who loves his people and remains ever faithful to them. It is hard to think of the biblical exodus without also thinking of our brothers and sisters who in our own day are fleeing situations of misery and violence in search of a better life for themselves and their loved ones.

A first call to conversion thus comes from the realisation that all of us are pilgrims in this life; each of us is invited to stop and ask how our lives reflect this fact. Am I really on a journey, or am I standing still, not moving, either immobilized by fear and hopelessness or reluctant to move out of my comfort zone? Am I seeking ways to leave behind the occasions of sin and situations that degrade my dignity? It would be a good Lenten exercise for us to compare our daily life with that of some migrant or foreigner, to learn how to sympathise with their experiences and in this way discover what God is asking of us, so that we can better advance on our journey to the house of the Father. This would be a good “examination of conscience” for all of us wayfarers.

Second, to *journey together*. The Church is called to walk together, to be synodal. Christians are called to walk at the side of others, and never as lone travellers. The Holy Spirit impels us not to remain self-absorbed, but to leave ourselves behind and keep walking towards God and our brothers and sisters. Journeying together means consolidating the unity grounded in our common dignity as children of God. It means walking side-by-side, without shoving or stepping on others, without envy or hypocrisy, without letting anyone be left behind or excluded. Let us all walk in the same direction, tending towards the same goal, attentive to one another in love and patience.

This Lent, God is asking us to examine whether in our lives, in our families, in the places where we work and spend our time, we are capable of walking together with others, listening to them, resisting the temptation to become self-absorbed and to think only of our own needs. Let us ask ourselves before the Lord whether, in the service of the Kingdom of God, we cooperate with others. Whether we show ourselves welcoming, with concrete gestures, to those both near and far. Whether we make others feel a part of the community or keep them at a distance. This, then, is a second call to conversion: a summons to synodality.

Third, let us journey together *in hope*, for we have been given a promise. *May the hope that does not disappoint*, the central message of the Jubilee, be the focus of our Lenten journey towards the victory of Easter. The great hope of Christians rests in this: the resurrection of Christ!

This, then, is the third call to conversion: a call to hope, to trust in God and his great promise of eternal life. Let us ask ourselves: Am I convinced that the Lord forgives my sins? Or do I act as if I can save myself? Do I long for salvation and call upon God's help to attain it? Do I concretely experience the hope that enables me to interpret the events of history and inspires in me a commitment to justice and fraternity, to care for our common home and in such a way that no one feels excluded?

Sisters and brothers, thanks to God's love in Jesus Christ, we are sustained in the hope that does not disappoint. Saint Teresa of Avila prayed: "Hope, O my soul, hope. You know neither the day nor the hour. Watch carefully, for everything passes quickly, even though your impatience makes doubtful what is certain, and turns a very short time into a long one."

May Mary, Mother of Hope, intercede for us and accompany us on our Lenten journey. *Pope Francis*

DO YOU WANT TO FAST THIS LENT?

Fast from hurting words and say kind words
Fast from sadness and be filled with gratitude.
Fast from anger and be filled with patience
Fast from pessimism and be filled with hope.
Fast from worry and have trust in God.
Fast from complaints; contemplate simplicity.
Fast from pressures and be prayerful
Fast from bitterness; fill your hearts with joy.
Fast from selfishness and be compassionate.
Fast from grudges and be reconciled
Fast from words; be silent and listen

Pope Francis

ASH WEDNESDAY MASS DATES & TIMES— 5 March 2025. Ash Wednesday is a day of abstinence (not eating meat) and fasting (eating less than usual). Our mass times are as follows:

St. Joseph's Church

- ◆ 9:15am Mass
- ◆ 1:15pm Liturgy with St. Joseph's School
- ◆ 7:00pm Mass

St. Vincent de Paul Church

- ◆ 10:00am mass

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF LENT?

Lent cannot be a time for wallowing in the negative. The English word 'Lent' comes from the same root as 'length'. Lent is a time for our being lengthened. We are to grow into the full stature of Christ, to move nearer the kingdom prepared for us before the world's foundation.

It may be very noble, and may meet some psychological need within ourselves, to think about Lent as our trying hard, as Lent being our effort. But when we think that way, the focus is probably on ourselves. What Lent is really about is opening ourselves to someone else, about stretching ourselves, so that we can receive the gift of new life coming from God alone.

Some people think that Lent is about resisting our temptations to chocolate or alcohol, that by doing this, we somehow gain merit, and rise above mere sensuality. But this way of thinking does not have much to do with the gospel.

When Matthew and Luke in their different ways name the temptations Jesus faces, it seems as though Jesus himself is growing into, being stretched towards, the full reality of his mission. He has to recognise that his way is not that of simple miracle-working. He has to realize that his kingdom is a kingdom given from above, and therefore not of this world (John 18: 36-37). Jesus is not proving his moral fibre, but growing in his sense of his own identity.

The mindset we bring to Lent is very important. Lent is 'this great season of grace', God's gift to the Church. Lent places us before the author and pioneer of our faith, Jesus Christ, and asks us how we might follow him more deeply.

Lent is Christian only if it is positive. Lent is for lengthening, not for constriction.

As we begin the forty days, we need to ask the Spirit where we are being called, here and now, to grow.

We need to ask ourselves what we must do in order to further that divine purpose.

We need to stop confining ourselves, and instead be open to the one who calls light out of darkness, brings life out of death.

It is not really about our effort, still less about our looking miserable. Rather, with humble pride, we boast that all we can do is to plant and to water.

The real growth, the true lengthening, comes from God (1 Corinthians 3:5-7).

Philip Endean SJ, Professor of Spirituality at Centre Sèvres, Paris.

Lenten Appeal: Our Lenten almsgiving is appropriately channelled through the Lenten Appeal, organised by *Caritas*, the Catholic Church's main aid and development agency. You can make several donations or a lump sum donation to support the needy of our world. Lent Appeal envelopes are available at the church entrances. Or you can make an online deposit to Caritas 03 0518 0211216 03. Donations are tax deductible.