

**NO DOOM AND GLOOM TODAY, THANK YOU!**



Ash Wednesday, Lent Study Groups, Passiontide, Holy Week, Good Friday...  
it could all sound a bit depressing, heavy weather, hard work, at this time of year, couldn't it?

**But it isn't. Not at all.**

Lent is **not** a time for depressives or gloom-merchants. The word "Lent" derives from a German word for Spring, the time when the earth revives after winter and starts to make us a promise, the promise of Summer. Lent is, quite simply, the expression of a similar transformation from winter to spring and a time of preparation for Easter, the liturgical expression of the deepest joy of our faith. Easter is the time when we celebrate, Lent is the time to prepare.

It has been said many times before, but it is none the less true.

**We are the Easter People.**

We are called together by God to celebrate and share Good News. We are called to know within ourselves the new life which the resurrection of Jesus makes possible.

We are NOT called together to be gloomy. We are NOT called together by suffering and death. We are NOT called together by being miserable sinners.

We are called together because in our faith we see the restoration of God's perfect creation and the promise of this encourages us to work for it, pray for it and lay ourselves open to it, every day.

So, as the season progresses towards its Easter conclusion, we prepare by observing 3 ancient and basic Christian principles in Lent.

We consider our relationship with

- 1. God**
- 2. our neighbour, and**
- 3. we review our place in the Christian discipleship which is ours by virtue of our baptism.**

1. In Lent, we make provision for study, prayer and worship and we undergo a time of self-restraint so that when Easter comes, we will be able to enter its joy and mystery all the more deeply. From this we gain strength so that our lives may bear fruit from our faith. This is a deep personal and communal duty to God. It refreshes our search and renews our sense of fellowship with other Christian people. Everyone benefits from standing back once in a while and taking stock. In Lent, we take stock and we reflect on our development.

2. Almsgiving is a tradition during Lent. This year, we are raising money through our Lent Lunch series for Escola Todos Santos, All Saints' School in Nacala, Mozambique, and thereby helping children with whom we have a link through our Diocese and also through Edward Betham School. In our society, many people qualify to be "our neighbour" and we have chosen these children as their needs are great even though they are not close to us geographically. Donations to this cause will be welcomed. The main money raising will be by paying more than the Lent lunches cost to produce. Just as Jesus fasted in the wilderness for 40 days, we restrain our appetites, sometimes only symbolically, to share his suffering and the suffering of the world.

3. Baptisms traditionally took place before the Mass of Easter Day, and the communion of the newly baptised was a highlight of the festival. This year we will be having Baptisms at 9.30am and in the Dawn Mass, we will have the opportunity to renew our Baptismal Vows and remind ourselves of our life-long vocation as disciples of Jesus Christ.

So Lent is not now, nor never was, anything but a preparation for joy. We do not feel gloomy, but on the contrary, we feel hopeful and full of anticipation during Lent because **we know what we are preparing for**, and we are looking forward to it eagerly. And when we meet in the dark, on Easter Day, we will feel the fulfilment of that anticipation building up for the joyful sounds of Easter Day.

So no doom and gloom, but only a deep and confident sense of things to come.

Enjoy your Lenten observance, and keep in mind the joy of the resurrection at all times. That is God's gift to us, a gift which nothing can ever take away.