

Christ the Saviour, Ealing



Spiritual Resources for
Lent 2022

Week III

*Sunday 20th March -
Saturday 26th March 2022*

Lent 2022

The season of Lent offers an opportunity for us to journey together as a community, and we hope that the resources we offer each week will be of help as we explore our faith and our commitment to Christ and his Church. This year we began by reflecting on the nature of *The Journey*, followed by looking at the key Christian virtue of *Faith*, and this week focussing on the call to *Hope*. In subsequent weeks we will be reflecting on *Love*, and our concluding week will focus on *The Journey's End* before we move into the solemn days of Holy Week, leading us through Christ's Passion to the glories of the resurrection which we celebrate at Easter.

This year our resources are produced in conjunction with the parish of St Matthew's, Westminster. I'm grateful to colleagues for the considerable help given to make this weekly production possible, and pray that it may be a blessing to us all as we follow Our Lord through these holy days.

Fr Richard Collins

Introduction to Lent

Lent is a season of forty days, not counting Sundays, which begins on Ash Wednesday and ends on Holy Saturday. The English word *Lent* comes from the Anglo-Saxon word *lencten*, which means *lengthen* and refers to the lengthening days of spring. In many other languages, the word used for this season refers to the 40-day length of the season (*cuaresma* in Spanish, *carême* in French, *quaresima* in Italian) or to the fasting that characterizes it (*Fastenzeit* in German, *fastan* in Swedish, *paasto* in Finnish).

Historically, Lent began as a period of fasting and preparation for baptism by converts and then became a time for penance by all Christians. The first Sunday of Lent describes Jesus' temptation by Satan; and the sixth Sunday (Palm Sunday), Christ's triumphal entry into Jerusalem and his subsequent passion and death. Note that the readings during Lent, until Palm Sunday, focus primarily on the meaning of baptism and discipleship, in continuity with the season's original purpose. Because Sundays are always little Easters, the penitential spirit of Lent is tempered with joyful expectation of the Resurrection.

Holy Week is the final week of Lent, beginning with Palm Sunday and concluding with Holy Saturday. It is during these days that the readings focus primarily on the last days and suffering and death of Jesus.

The Great Three Days – also called the Triduum or Pasch – from sunset Maundy Thursday to sunset Easter Day are the climax of Lent and of the whole Christian year and a bridge into the Easter Season. This holy season proclaims the paschal mystery of Jesus Christ's passion, death, and resurrection. During these days, the community journeys with Jesus from the upper room, to the cross, to the tomb, and to the garden. They should be seen as a great and single unified service beginning with the Mass of the Last Supper on Maundy Thursday and concluding with the services of Easter Day.

Third Sunday of Lent

March 20th

Each Sunday in Lent Fr Jonathan Aitken introduces one of the Penitential Psalms. This week he looks at Psalm 32.

Psalm 32 is the most cheerful and least doleful of the seven penitential psalms. It's title: *The Joy of Forgiveness* in the NRSV Bible and its exuberant opening line *Happy are they whose transgressions are forgiven* send a clear message about the blessings of redemption.

Augustine cherished this psalm, possibly because he never forgot or underestimated his own racy youth. *The beginning of knowledge is to know yourself to be a sinner* was one of his maxims and the same thought is more or less echoed by this psalmist in verses 3 & 4.

It is a frequent fault of sinners to be in denial, to engage in a cover-up, or to keep silence. The last sin caused the psalmist much torment in the form of wasting away, groaning and losing strength. But then came the breakthrough (verse 5):

Then I acknowledged my sin to you
And I did not hide my iniquity.
I said 'I will confess my transgressions to the Lord.'
And you forgave the guilt of my sin.

There are interesting theological signposts in the second half of the psalm which warn against leaving it too late before turning to God in penitence and against persisting in sin with animalistic stubbornness (*Do not be like a horse or mule, without understanding* – verse 9). The message here is that early and intelligent cooperation with God in prayer is the right way for the faithful.

Charles Wesley's great hymn *Jesus Lover of My Soul* was inspired by Psalm 32, and one of its verses emphasises the Psalmists point that it is important to turn to God while the opportunity remains.

As Wesley wrote:

While the nearer waters roll
While the tempest still is high
Hide me: O my saviour hide, ...

We must assume that the author of the psalm did confess his sins in good time, was not carried away by *the rush of mighty waters* of rebellion and so became saved by his trust in the Lord. For the final verse of the psalm exudes *the joy of forgiveness* with the words:

Be glad in the Lord, and rejoice, O righteous:
and shout for joy all you upright in heart!

Perhaps we don't do enough shouting for joy in lugubrious Lent.

But Easter is coming.

Prayer

Lord God, we come to adore you.
You are the ground of all that is.
You hold us in being, and without you we could not be.

Before we were born, before time began,
before the universe came into being, you were.
When time is finished, when the universe is no more,
you will still be.

Nothing can take your power from you.
And in your presence
we can only be silent before the mystery of your being,
for no words of ours can do justice to your grandeur.

Yet you have spoken to us.
Out of universal silence
your living word has sprung.
You have spoken,
and given form and beauty to the world.
You have spoken,
and given purpose to human life.
You have spoken,
and declared the forgiveness of our sin.
You have spoken,
and freed us from the fear of death.
Lord Jesus Christ, divine Word,
speak to us now.
Show us the beauty of life;
open to us your ways; remove our guilt;
conquer the fear which often pervades our thoughts.
Speak and let us hear, for your name's sake. Amen.

Lord Jesus Christ,
the Prince of Peace,
you have asked us to love our enemies
and pray for those who wish us ill,
hear our prayer today for our enemies;
grant us the gift of the Holy Spirit,
renew our hope in God,
that all the peoples of the earth may learn to work together
for that justice which brings true and lasting peace;
to you be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

III - Hope

Monday March 21st

Reading

Let us hold fast to the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who has promised is faithful. And let us consider how to provoke one another to love and good deeds, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

Hebrews 10. 23-25

Introduction to Week III : Hope

Liverpool is a city with a very large Irish population, and for many years was riven by sectarian conflict. Famously, the road which has the Roman Catholic cathedral at one end and the Anglican one at the other was renamed "Hope Street." The promise held out by the name has been more than fulfilled. Relations between different communities in Liverpool have now been largely healed, and the violence between them a distant memory. There's even a university, Liverpool Hope University, founded by the Church of England and the Roman Catholic Church.

Where can we find similar hope today, for ourselves, and for the peoples of Europe drawn into war? The war in Ukraine is being fought in all the media: we cannot avoid confronting the terrible evil of the war, the frightening collapse of basic services such as the provision of water and food, threatening famine, and the human cost of war in lives lost and refugees. We are living in a time of fear, where hope seems distant.

The teaching of the Church suggests three things we might do in times such as this. Firstly, we can come to the aid of victims of war. Few of us can take in a family of refugees, but many of us can make a regular donation to a refugee charity, such as the Disasters Emergency Committee.

Secondly, we can face our fear of war directly. Each day, as we pray, we can ask Jesus to enter the fear with us, to stand with us where we are scared. We can take his hand and ask him to accompany us during the day. We can journey with Jesus to the Garden of Gethsemane (St Luke 22. 40-46), kneeling next to him in his own moment of despair and fear as he waits to be arrested and tried. Jesus may not take our fear away, but he will share the burden with us.

Finally, we can pray for those affected by war. Jesus is very clear: here we must pray for enemies as well as for friends. In this case, that means praying for those who are invading Ukraine, and for those who bear responsibility for this action, such as President Putin. This is the most difficult step for most of us. If we find it hard to hold for the Russian Army and political leaders in our prayers, we can simply pray for grace to do so. God can work with the slightest fragment of love to fulfil his purposes – as the churches found in Liverpool. We are asked simply to take the first step, to pray for the gift of hope.

Tuesday March 22nd

Reading

Truly the eye of the Lord is on those who fear him, on those who hope in his steadfast love, to deliver their soul from death, and to keep them alive in famine.

Our soul waits for the Lord; he is our help and shield.

Our heart is glad in him, because we trust in his holy name.

Let your steadfast love, O Lord, be upon us, even as we hope in you.

St Mark 11. 22-24

Reflection

Faith, whenever it develops into hope, causes not rest, but unrest; not patience, but impatience, It does not calm the unquiet spirit, but is itself this unquiet heart in man. Those who hope in Christ can no longer put up with reality as it is, but begin to suffer under it, to contradict it. Peace with God means conflict with the world, for the goad of the promised future stabs inexorably into the flesh of every unfulfilled present, If we had before our eyes only what we see, then we should cheerfully or reluctantly reconcile ourselves with things as they happen to be. That we do not reconcile ourselves, that there is no pleasant harmony between us and reality, is due to our unquenchable hope.'

From 'Theology of Hope' by Jürgen Moltmann

Professor Emeritus of Systematic Theology at the University of Tübingen

He is a God who does not make empty promises for the hereafter nor trivialize the present darkness, futility and meaninglessness, but who himself in the midst of darkness, futility and meaninglessness invites us to the venture of hope.

Hans Küng (1928-2021)

Swiss Catholic priest, theologian, and author

Prayer

And now, Lord, what is my hope? Truly, my hope is even in thee. though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, yet will fear no evil. Lord, thou knowest whereof we be made; thou rememberest that we are but dust. I am thine, Oh, save me! Behold, O Lord, how that I am thy servant, and the son of thine handmaid. thine unprofitable servant; yet thy servant. thy lost prodigal child, yet thy child. Into thy hands I commend myself as unto a faithful Creator. Lord, I am created in thine own image. Suffer not thine own image to be utterly defaced, but renew it again in righteousness and true holiness. Into thine hands I commend myself, for thou hast redeemed me, thou God of Truth. Amen.

Lancelot Andrewes (1555–1626)

Bishop, Scholar, Dean of Westminster

Wednesday March 23rd

Reading

I became its servant according to God's commission that was given to me for you, to make the word of God fully known, the mystery that has been hidden throughout the ages and generations but has now been revealed to his saints. To them God chose to make known how great among the Gentiles are the riches of the glory of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.

Colossians 1.25-27

Reflection

For if you find hope in the ground of history, you are united with the great prophets who were able to look into the depth of their times, who tried to escape it, because they could not stand the horror of their visions, and yet who had the strength to look to an even deeper level and there to discover hope.

Paul Tillich (1886-1965)
German American theologian

Christian Hope is the consecration of desire, and desire is the hardest thing of all to consecrate. That will only happen as you begin to think how lovely the life according to Christ is.

William Temple (1881-1944)
Archbishop of Canterbury

Prayer

In me there is darkness,
but with you there is light;
I am lonely, but you do not leave me;
I am feeble in heart, but with you there is help;
I am restless, but with you there is peace.
In me there is bitterness, but with you there is patience;
I do not understand your ways,
But you know the way for me.
Lord Jesus Christ,
You were poor
And in distress, a captive and forsaken as I am.
You know all our troubles;
You abide with me
When others fail me;
It is your will that I should know you
And turn to you.
Lord, I hear your call and follow;
Help me.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer (1906-1945)
German Lutheran pastor & theologian,
executed in Nazi Germany

Thursday March 24th

Reading

For surely, I know the plans I have for you, says the LORD, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope. Then when you call upon me and come and pray to me, I will hear you. When you search for me, you will find me; if you seek me with all your heart, I will let you find me, says the LORD, and I will restore your fortunes and gather you from all the nations and all the places where I have driven you, says the LORD, and I will bring you back to the place from which I sent you into exile.

Jeremiah 29. 11-14

Reflection

Every day Christ's Kingdom may be carried forward by the men and women of hope, for hope is the strong awakening from the spells of discouragement and listlessness of despair. It is the refusal to be weighed down and depressed by evil; a refusal because it is not right to indulge in the melancholy pleasure of looking at the dark. Hope calls us to the light as hope fights with such power on the side of God. For it not only receives, not only welcomes, not only trusts in God's promises, but it throws them into light and reality- so that they become not words, but things of substance.

George Congreve, SSJE (1835-1918)
The Cowley Fathers, Oxford

To the Lord all,
In the Lord all.
God be your hope,
God be your fortitude,
God be your firmness.
He be your prayer,
He be your praise.
He be your help
By which you labour.
He be your end
In which you rest.

St Augustine (354-430)
Theologian, philosopher & Bishop of Hippo in North Africa

Prayer

O Lord our God, under the shadow of thy wings let us hope.
Thou wilt support us, both when little, and even to grey hairs.
When our strength is of thee, it is strength; but, when our own, it is feebleness.
We return unto thee, O Lord, that from their weariness our souls may rise towards thee,
leaning on the things which thou hast created, and passing on to thyself,
who hast wonderfully made them; for with thee is refreshment and true strength. Amen.

St Augustine (354-430)
Theologian, philosopher & Bishop of Hippo in North Africa

Friday March 25th

Reading

For God alone my soul waits in silence, for my hope is from him.
He alone is my rock and my salvation, my fortress; I shall not be shaken.
On God rests my deliverance and my honour;
my mighty rock, my refuge is in God.
Trust in him at all times, O people;
pour out your heart before him; God is a refuge for us.

Psalm 62. 5-8

Reflection

You have to wait in hope, waiting for the mystery, to unfold, going on doing ordinary things but all the time listening, learning, pondering, growing and energetically serving. You have to be silent before the mystery. In the Book of Job the 'comforters' are the ones who cannot be silent before it but must rush in with their explanations. You know your kinship with the mystery. By your closeness to Christ his mind is being formed in you and he is leading you into his own experience, his own joy and longing, and his own knowledge of the Father. Whatever the renunciations, the inner poverty and the successive little deaths and lettings-go, this life of contemplation is a life of joy, because lived in Jesus it is a journey into God, and unfinished tale.

As you ponder the word in your heart, like Mary pondering all her life mysteries she served and adored but did not fully understand, you are the Church. Like Israel, the Church is the womb-community sheltering mysteries not yet seen. The Church has received the word but must give it life within its own life, and let the word speak and speak again through every age and culture in its inexhaustible fullness.

from 'The Coming of God' by Maria Boulding (1929-2009)
English nun & theologian

Prayer

Almighty God, have mercy upon us, who, when troubled with the things that are past, lose faith, and life, and courage, and hope. So have mercy upon us, and uphold us, that we, being sustained by a true faith that thou art merciful and forgiving, may go on in the life of the future to keep thy commandments, to rejoice in thy bounty, to trust in thy mercy, and to hope in the eternal life. Grant unto all of us, whatsoever may betide us, to remember ever that it is all of thy guidance, under thy care, by thy will; that so, in darkest days, beholding thee we may have courage to go on, faith to endure, patience to bear, and hopefulness to hold out, even unto the end. Amen.

George Dawson (1821-1876)
Nonconformist preacher, lecturer & activist

Saturday March 26th

Reading

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Romans 15. 13

Reflection

the ultimate reason for our hope is not to be found at all in what we want, wish for and wait for; the ultimate reason is that we are wanted and wished for and waited for. What is it that awaits us? Does anything await us at all, or are we alone? Whenever we base our hope on trust in the divine mystery, we feel deep down in our hearts: there is someone who is waiting for you, who is hoping for you, who believes in you. We are waited for as the prodigal son in the parable is waited for by his father. We are accepted and received, as a mother takes her children into her arms and comforts them. God is our last hope because we are God's first love.

*From 'Theology of Hope' by Jürgen Moltmann
Professor Emeritus of Systematic Theology at the University of Tübingen*

Hope is a completely confident expectation; that sureness and certitude with which the awakened soul aims at God and rests in God. It is the source of that living peace; that zest and alertness, that power of carrying on, which gives its special colour to the genuine Christian life.

*Evelyn Underhill (1875-1941)
Poet, author and spiritual writer*

Prayer

O God, thou art Life, Wisdom, Truth,
Bounty, and Blessedness,
the Eternal, the only true Good!
My God and my Lord, thou art my hope and my heart's joy.
I confess, with thanksgiving, that thou hast made me in thine image,
that I may direct all my thoughts to thee, and love thee.
Lord, make me to know thee aright,
that I may more and more love, and enjoy, and possess thee.
And since, in the life here below, I cannot fully attain this blessedness,
let it at least grow in me day by day, until it all be fulfilled at last in the life to come.
Here be the knowledge of thee increased, and there let it be perfected.
Here let my love to thee grow, and there let it ripen;
that my joy being here great in hope, may there in fruition be made perfect. Amen.

*St Anselm (1033-1109)
Archbishop of Canterbury, Benedictine monk,
philosopher & theologian*