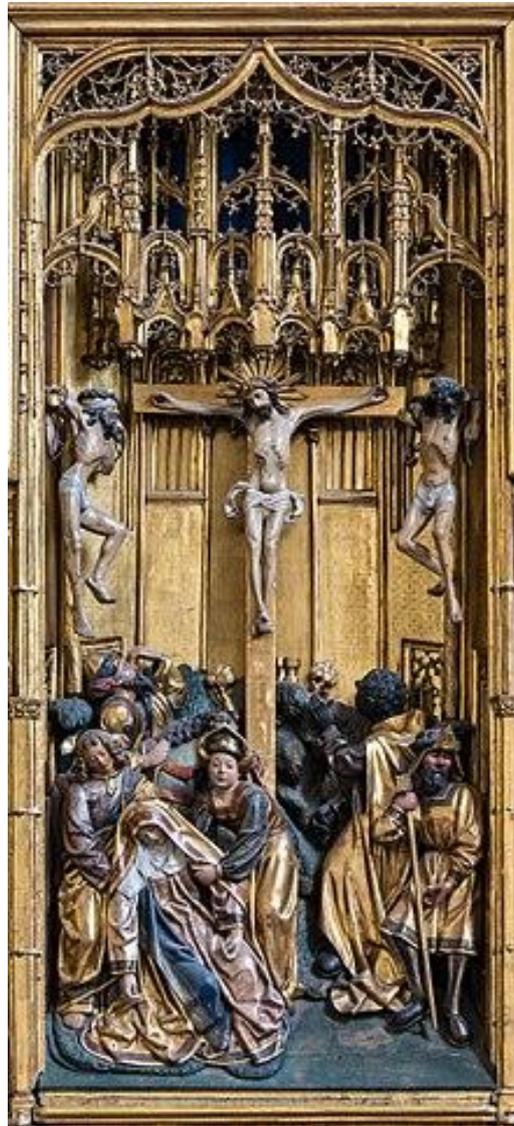


Christ the Saviour, Ealing



Spiritual Resources for
Lent 2022

Week IV

*Sunday 27th March -
Saturday 2nd April 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 virtues of *Faith* and *Hope*, and this week focussing on the call to *Love*. 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.

Fourth Sunday of Lent

March 27th

Each Sunday in Lent Fr Jonathan Aitken introduces one of the Penitential Psalms. This week he looks at Psalm 38.

C. S. Lewis memorably said in his powerful book *The Problem of Pain: God whispers to win our pleasures, speaks in our conscience, but shouts in our pain*. Psalm 37 is a penitential psalm, which hollers and bellows in these poetic cries of a sinner suffering from multiple agonies.

The Psalmist's burdens are both outward and inward. He is tormented in body (*my wounds grown foul and fester ... my loins are filled with burning ... there is no health in my bones because of my sin*) and in mind by the burden of his guilt. His sins have estranged him from his friends and caused his enemies to plot to kill him. In modern parlance he is in a right mess with no earthly hope of escape from the pit he has dug for himself.

But not so fast. For all his moanings and groanings the Psalmist knows where his salvation lies. Every section of the psalm begins: *O Lord*. The author is facing the reality that God knows everything about his misdeeds, has punished him for them, yet is ready to hear his confession.

The first seventeen verses of the psalm are addressed to Yahweh or *Lord*.

*It is for you Lord that I wait
It is you Lord who will answer.*

Then in the 18th verse the Psalmist becomes truly penitent saying:

*I confess my iniquity,
I am sorry for my sin.*

These heartfelt words unlock a new intimacy and a new hope. God is now addressed as Adonai, a gentler Hebrew word, meaning master then as *my salvation* (NRSV) or *my saviour* (NIV).

So the final prayer (verses 21-23) cries out:

*Do not forsake me, O Lord
O my God, do not be far from me
Make haste to help me
O Lord my salvation*

This psalm is a journey from total despair to total trust. The steps along the way are agonising but the sinner believes that his sincere penitence will bring him through God's justice to God's salvation.

Reading

One of the scribes came near and heard them disputing with one another, and seeing that he answered them well, he asked him, *Which commandment is the first of all?* Jesus answered, 'The first is, 'Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one; you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.' The second is this, 'You shall love your neighbour as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these.'

St Mark 12. 28-31

Prayer

O God of love, who hast given us a new commandment through thine only begotten Son, that we should love one another even as thou didst love us, the unworthy and the wandering, and gavest him for our life and salvation: We pray thee to give to us thy servants, in all time of our life on earth, a mind forgetful of past ill-will, a pure conscience, and a heart to love one another; for the sake of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Coptic Liturgy of St Cyril



Love Divine, all loves excelling,
Joy of heaven, to earth come down,
Fix in us thy humble dwelling,
All thy faithful mercies crown.

Jesu, thou art all compassion,
Pure unbounded love thou art;
Visit us with thy salvation,
Enter every trembling heart.

Come, almighty to deliver,
Let us all thy life receive;
Suddenly return, and never,
Never more thy temples leave.

Thee we would be always blessing,
Serve thee as thy hosts above,
Pray, and praise thee, without ceasing,
Glory in thy perfect love.

Finish then thy new creation,
Pure and spotless let us be;
Let us see thy great salvation,
Perfectly restored in thee;

Changed from glory into glory,
Till in heaven we take our place,
Till we cast our crowns before thee,
Lost in wonder, love, and praise!

Charles Wesley (1707-88)

IV - Love

Monday March 28th

Reading

Let love be genuine; hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good; love one another with mutual affection; outdo one another in showing honour. Do not lag in zeal, be ardent in spirit, serve the Lord. Rejoice in hope, be patient in suffering, persevere in prayer. Contribute to the needs of the saints; extend hospitality to strangers. *Romans 12. 9-13*

Introduction to Week IV : Love

Jesus could not be clearer: love is at the heart of what it means to be a Christian, and to follow him. In response to a question from a solicitor, Jesus gives us what's known as the second great commandment *You shall love your neighbour as yourself.* (St Matthew 22. 36-40). There are actually two instructions here: 'you shall love yourself' and 'you shall love your neighbour as yourself.' For some people, such as those suffering from depression, or those who have known violence, it can be the journey of a lifetime before they can truly love themselves. How do we follow Jesus' commandment if we find it hard to honour who we are?

Often, we find it difficult to love ourselves, because we think of God as stern and unforgiving, always demanding more from us. We can ask God to show Jesus the Good Shepherd, stepping into the darkness of our fears to rescue us, rejoicing over us when we are found. The better we can see ourselves through God's merciful love, the easier it will be to fulfil the command 'You shall love yourself.'

And what if we don't feel loving towards our neighbours? We might feel any number of things--apathy, anger, irritation -- but not actually love. What can we do if we don't love our neighbour? There's an important clue in the original version of the Golden Rule, found in the Old Testament (Leviticus 19.18). Jesus quotes the Greek translation of this verse, but the original says, *You shall act lovingly to your neighbour, as to yourself.*

So Holy Scripture reassures us: it doesn't matter how we *feel*, as long as we *act* lovingly towards others. This is the Biblical version of 'fake it till you make it:' by doing what is loving, even if we don't actually feel it. Gradually, our resistance to love will be worn away, and we will find it easier to value our neighbours, and to move from valuing them to loving them. In essence, Jesus is asking us to use our imagination, to put ourselves in the place of our neighbour and imagine what it would like to be them. He says during the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 7.12), *In everything do to others as you would like them to do to you, for this is the law and the prophets.*

This is of course known as the 'Golden Rule.' The Catechism in the Book of Common Prayer joins the Second Great Commandment with this Golden Rule.

What is your duty towards your neighbour?

My duty towards my neighbour is, to love him as myself. And to do to all men as I would they should do unto me.

These two commandments are profound: they are so simple that anyone can understand them, they teach us what it means to love and be loved, and they show us the way to follow Jesus in our care for others.

Tuesday March 29th

Reading

So we have known and believe the love that God has for us. God is love, and those who abide in love abide in God, and God abides in them. Love has been perfected among us in this: that we may have boldness on the day of judgement, because as he is, so are we in this world. There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear; for fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not reached perfection in love. We love because he first loved us. Those who say, *I love God*, and hate their brothers or sisters, are liars; for those who do not love a brother or sister whom they have seen, cannot love God whom they have not seen. The commandment we have from him is this: those who love God must love their brothers and sisters also.

1 John 4. 16-21

Reflection

If you want to see Love fully worked out in a life we can go to the person of Jesus Christ. At the height of his ministry, he came out with his greatest command: *You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength ... You shall love your neighbour as yourself.*

I imagine Jesus was speaking out of his own experience. Here was someone who was prepared to love God with all his inner being: heart, soul, mind and strength. This was to be balanced with an outer love to neighbour, which included everyone in the immediate vicinity, and was further balanced by a true and genuine love of himself. In St John's Gospel, he confirmed the source of his love: *As the father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my father's commandments and abide in his love.* The two commandments were simplified into one. *I give you a new commandment that you love one another, just as I have loved you. You also should love one another.* Jesus lived out this new commandment to the very end.

Bill Sykes (1939-2015)

Chaplain of University College, Oxford

Prayer

O God of love, we pray thee to give us love:
love in our thinking, love in our speaking,
love in our doing, and love in the hidden places of our souls;
love of our neighbours near and far;
love of our friends, old and new;
love of those with whom we find it hard to bear,
and love of those who find it hard to bear with us;
love of those with whom we work,
and love of those with whom we take our ease;
love in Joy, love in sorrow;
love in life and love in death;
that so at length we may be worthy to dwell with thee,
who art eternal love. Amen.

Wednesday March 30th

Reading

If I speak in the tongues of mortals and of angels, but do not have love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. If I give away all my possessions, and if I hand over my body so that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing.

Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but rejoices in the truth. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

Love never ends. But as for prophecies, they will come to an end; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will come to an end. For we know only in part, and we prophesy only in part; but when the complete comes, the partial will come to an end. When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child; when I became an adult, I put an end to childish ways. For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then we will see face to face. Now I know only in part; then I will know fully, even as I have been fully known. And now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; and the greatest of these is love.

1 Corinthians 13. 1-13

Reflection

The crusading mind is rooted in intolerance, and its ultimate end is the destruction of its opposition. The crucified mind is rooted in the love which grows deeper through pain, and which seeks its end through what may seem a harsh and dreadful love, but whose aim is the transformation of its opponents. It is this mind which is expressed so often in the writings and speeches of the late Martin Luther King, and nowhere more powerfully than in his letter of May 1963 after the children's march. He wrote:

We must say to our white brothers all over the south who are trying to keep us down: We will match your capacity to inflict suffering with our capacity to endure suffering. We will meet your physical force with our soul force. We will not hate you. And yet we cannot in good conscience obey your evil laws. Do to us what you will. Threaten our children, and we will still love you. Say that we are too low, that we are too degraded, yet we will still love you. We will wear you down by our capacity to suffer and still to love. In winning the victory we will win not only our freedom. We will so appeal to your heart and your conscience that we will win you too in the process.

Kenneth Leech (1939-2015)

Anglican priest, writer and activist

Prayer

Look graciously upon us, O Holy Spirit;
and give us for our hallowing, thoughts that pass into prayer,
prayers that pass into love, and love that passes into life.
Amen.

Thursday March 31st

Reading

This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you. I do not call you servants any longer, because the servant does not know what the master is doing; but I have called you friends, because I have made known to you everything that I have heard from my Father. You did not choose me but I chose you. And I appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask him in my name. I am giving you these commands so that you may love one another.

St John 15. 12-17

Reflection

If you love yourself, then you love everyone as much as yourself. But as long as there is anyone whom you do not love as much as yourself, then you have never properly loved yourself - unless you love everyone as yourself, loving all in one person, in someone who is both human and divine. Such a person, who loves themselves and everyone as much as themselves, is doing the right thing. Now some people say: I love my friend, who is a source of good things in my life, more than I do someone else. This is not right; it is imperfect. But we must accept it, just as some people cross the sea with a slack wind and still reach the other side. It is the same with those who love one person more than another, although this is natural. But if I loved him or her as much as I love myself, I would be just as happy that whatever happens to them, whether joy or pain, death or life, should happen instead to me, and this would be true friendship.

Meister Eckhart (1260-1328)

German Catholic theologian, philosopher and mystic

Prayer

Anima Christi

Jesus, may all that is you flow into me.
May your body and blood be my food and drink.
May your passion and death be my strength and life.
Jesus, with you by my side enough has been given.
May the shelter I seek be the shadow of your Cross.
Let me not run from the love which you offer,
But hold me safe from the forces of evil.
On each of my dyings shed your light and your love.
Keep calling to me until that day comes,
When, with your saints, I may praise you for ever.

Trans. David Fleming SJ 1978

Friday April 1st

Reading

No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Romans 8. 38-39

Reflection

It does seem that people
come to themselves when
they are able to repent and
certainly when they are forgiven.
Love when it is true longs
to forgive. Forgiveness does not
mean forgetting; it means
remembering the past in a new way.
When we ask for Christ's forgiveness,
the effect is that so far as
the past is remembered again,
it will have lost its power to hurt us,
and make us afraid.

Eric Symes Abbott (1906-1983)
Dean of King's College, Dean of Westminster

I rest on God, who will assuredly not allow me to find the meaning of life in his love and forgiveness, to be wholly dependent upon him for the gift of myself, and then destroy that meaning, revoke that gift. He who holds me in existence now, can and will hold me in it still, through and beyond the dissolution of my mortal frame. For this is the essence of love, to affirm the right of the beloved to exist. And what God affirms, nothing and no one can contradict.

John Austin Baker (1928-2014)
Bishop of Salisbury, academic theologian & writer

Prayer

Lord, when I am hungry, give me someone to feed.
When I am thirsty, give water for their thirst.
When I am sad, someone to lift from sorrow.
When burdens weigh upon me,
Lay upon my shoulders the burden of my fellows.
Lord, when I stand greatly in need of tenderness,
Give me someone who yearns for love.
May your will be my bread, your grace my strength,
Your love my resting place.

Trans. from the French 'Prières pour une foi'

Saturday April 2nd

Reading

Set me as a seal upon your heart,
as a seal upon your arm;
for love is strong as death,
passion fierce as the grave.
Its flashes are flashes of fire,
a raging flame.
Many waters cannot quench love,
neither can floods drown it.
If one offered for love
all the wealth of one's house,
it would be utterly scorned.

Song of Songs 8. 6-7

Reflection

Wouldst thou learn thy Lord's meaning in this thing? Learn it well: Love was his meaning. Who shewed it thee? Love. What shewed he thee? Love. Wherefore shewed it he? For Love. Hold thee therein and thou shalt learn and know more in the same. But thou shalt never know nor learn therein other thing without end. Thus was I learned that Love was our Lord's meaning.

Dame Julian of Norwich (1342-1416)
Anchoress, Christian mystic

Love all God's creation, the whole of it and every grain of sand in it. Love every leaf, every ray of God's light. Love the animals, love the plants, love everything. If you love everything, you will perceive the divine mystery in things. Once you have perceived it, you will begin to comprehend it better every day, and you will come at last to love the world with an all-embracing love.

Fyodor Dostoyevsky (1821-1881)
Russian novelist, essayist & journalist

Prayer

Lord, God, you have called your servants to ventures of which we cannot see the ending, by paths as yet untrodden, through perils unknown. Give us faith to go out with good courage, not knowing where we go, but only that your hand is leading us and your love supporting us; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Eric Milner White (1884-1963)
Dean of York, academic, decorated military chaplain