



Thought for the day



Stories we tell on the journey

Lent: pancakes and ashes: what's that about then?

20th – 24th February 2012

Assemblies

A rather complicated half term has moved us to staff leading assemblies for a full week rather than a 3/2 style split. We also have two assemblies displaced to Carloli because of exams, which is something that we need to try out when we lose both halls in the summer term. Visiting clergy are here on their three-weekly cycle again. In the first week, AMO will introduce the idea of Lent but will stay off the notes in forms topics!

Notes in forms

It might help to give students some of the 'back-story' to this week - or ask them to see how much they know or need to find out.

Lent is the period of 40 days leading up to Easter. It is a time of reflection and of preparation. Immediately before it comes Shrove Tuesday. This is both a day for saying sorry and dealing with things wrong from the past, and a day of celebration as the last chance to feast before Lent begins.

During Lent there are many foods that some Christians - historically and today - would not eat, such as meat and fish, fats, eggs, and milky foods. Now people may just think about keeping this tradition going by giving up chocolate!

So that no food was wasted, families would have a feast on Shrove Tuesday, and eat up all the foods that would not last the forty days of Lent without going off.

The need to eat up the fats gave rise to the French name *Mardi Gras* ('fat Tuesday'). Pancakes became linked with Shrove Tuesday as they were a dish that could use up all the eggs, fats and milk in the house with just the addition of flour.

Why 40 days? There is some significance to the number in many of the Bible stories – in the Noah's flood story it rained for 40 days and 40 nights; the people of Israel wandered through the wilderness for 40 years; Jesus was tempted for 40 days in the desert as he began his ministry.

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Jesus said, 'If you want to follow me, then you will have to deny yourself, pick up your cross and that is how you follow me.'

Matthew 16 verse 21



LENT

If it is not chocolate, what else could we give up for Lent? Does it have to be something that it is difficult to do without? Which things in this list would 'hurt' us to do without?

Television Pizza Facebook Making excuses
Putting things off Coffee Throwing things away
My mobile phone ...

So in what ways could it be good for us to give something up? What would be most difficult to do? The mobile phone – could we really manage without them? If not, why not!?

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We now also think about Lent in two bigger ways: what lasting difference will it make to us? Then secondly, what impact will we have for the good of others by what we do?

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'If you do a good job for others, you heal yourself at the same time, because a dose of joy is a spiritual cure.'

Dietrich Bonhoeffer

Shrove Tuesday is followed by Ash Wednesday. This has always been a day of saying sorry for our past wrongs – for clearing things up and being forgiven. In some churches, the minister or priest will make the sign of the cross on someone's forehead to show that they are sorry for what they have done wrong and wish to put it behind them.



'Ash Wednesday is a reminder of our humanity.'

Jenni Friedman

That we get things wrong? Need to be forgiven? Need to start again? Who was the last person we said sorry to? Who was the last person to say sorry to us?

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'Football is like life, it requires perseverance, self-denial, hard work sacrifice, dedication and respect for authority.'

Vince Lombardi

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'If you board the wrong train there is no use running along the corridor in the other direction.'

(ie you have to get off!)

Dietrich Bonhoeffer

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'You cannot hope to build a better world without improving the individuals. To that end each of us must work for his own improvement, and at the same time share a general responsibility for all humanity, our particular duty being to aid those to whom we think we can be most useful.'

Marie Curie