

The First Sunday of Lent

My dear Friends,

So Lent has begun, something which we are well aware of in the family of the Church but largely forgotten in popular culture. It is only remembered in many households by Pancake Day, our youngsters love to have a go at tossing the pancake and eating them even more! Few people however will know these days that it is properly Shrove Tuesday, traditionally the day when the faithful were shriven, they made their confession and received absolution.

The traditions of Ash Wednesday, the first day of Lent go back to the 7th century. In the early church in Rome penitents in great numbers were ceremonially admitted on this day. This was symbolised by the imposition of ashes on the forehead of the people and clergy in token of mourning and penitence. These customs still continue in both the Roman Catholic and Anglican churches throughout the world. Under our present restrictions the priests were only permitted to sprinkle the Ash and not make the sign of the cross physically on the members of the congregation. Normally in our parish around 100 worshippers attend our three Eucharists, this year we were understandably far fewer in number but we remembered in our prayers those of you at home as we all try to make a good start to our Lenten observance.

The forty weekdays of Lent beginning at this time mirror the forty days and nights that our Lord Jesus spent in the wilderness. There he spent his time in fasting, prayer and reflection. You can see why this idea of no food is not so attractive to popular culture as enjoying pancakes! However people still do attempt to give things up for Lent and take things on. Those concerned with health and fitness will value a boost to their efforts which the Church seems to encourage. In our spiritual lives there is in many of us a constant struggle between the times when we are attentive and when we are negligent, when we put others first or when we are self centred, when we devoutly pray or when we forget and make other priorities.

As we embark on another lockdown Lent, let us use the opportunity to reflect on how we can better listen to the word of God and act upon it in our lives. You will see elsewhere on our newsletter details of the Zoom Lent Course led by our curate the Reverend Ruth Coombs, in Llandaff Matters you can see other resources offered by the Bishop and our Canon Theologian, Trystan Hughes. They will help us nourish our thoughts and reflections. We can also make practical moves in self denial by supporting our charities and remembering that this has been a very financially challenging time for our churches with vastly reduced income yet still necessary expenses to be met. As one of our Ash Wednesday readings reminded us, "where your treasure is there will your heart be also."

Best wishes and prayers
Stewart

The Reverend Canon Stewart Lisk,
Vicar of Roath.