

Septuagesima Sunday, this is the name for the ninth Sunday before Easter, the third before Ash Wednesday. The term is sometimes applied to the period of Shrovetide, the Pre-Lenten Season, that begins on this day and ends on Shrove Tuesday, the day before Ash Wednesday, when Lent begins

Dear Friends,

As the season of Lent looms on the horizon, our thoughts should be turning to the notion of fasting. What will you give up for Lent? At first blush, we might think that this spiritual discipline has had its day in the Church and in our Western culture. Certainly, there is nothing equivalent in the context of the Church of England to Ramadan, the month of communal fasting, prayer and reflection practised in Islam. While that may be the case, it is also true that, even in our secular society, fasting in its truest sense echoes surprisingly contemporary concerns. It resonates with a greater general awareness of the impact our choices have on others and our planet, and a stronger cultural consensus that wants to avoid waste and live more sustainably for the sake of the common good of all. That said, fasting can easily seem to be only about individual choices not to do something.

By contrast, our reading from Isaiah today gives a wonderfully disarming, communal and positive definition of fasting. 'Is not this the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of injustice, to undo the thongs of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke? Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, and bring the homeless poor into your house; when you see the naked, to cover them, and not to hide yourself from your own kin?' This is not about what we privately forgo but how we discipline our hearts to let go of a consumerist self-interested attitude by opening them to an abundance of life that only comes from recognising each other's common humanity, especially of the marginalised and excluded in our midst. This is about fasting from only seeing things through our eyes and learning to see and engage with the world through the eyes of others in a shared community.

Such fasting prepares us for truly all-inclusive feasting. A feast is always a communal reality beyond mere self, rooted in openhearted encounters and transforming relationships between people in all their mystery and capacity for joy and sorrow, betrayal and forgiveness. Indeed, a truly Christian feast can only get underway in a community whose capacity to celebrate what is human in the light of the crucified and risen Christ is at one with a fasting that positions it against all the dehumanising and destructive aspects of our social order and our own desires.

The Anglican priest and prophet, Kenneth Leech, spoke about this with characteristic zeal. For him the grace of the Holy Spirit calls not only for fasting in terms of the daily conversion of our lives, but the feast of a 'holy resistance' nourished by Word and Sacrament. Resistance, says Leech, is the 'normal condition of a prophetic, counter-cultural church.' It must embody a way of being human together that moves beyond mere rescue of those in need and critique of those in power to calling 'the principalities and powers to account' – to overturn all the forces that make us mean, uncaring, ungenerous, self-obsessed. The more we make fast a shared discipline lived out in community, the more we forget our own narrow concerns and open up to others; then the more our fasting turns to feasting, the more we celebrate the worth of every person, the more we see their well-being as tied to our own and the more we dare take a stand against all that would diminish others. Another way to put this is that there can be no real worship without justice. The discipline of fasting should remind us that to be the people of God is to be turned outward towards our neighbour. At St George's we rightly value the beauty of our liturgical worship, but we must also live as those who are shaped by righteousness and compassion. Such is the true measure of our fasting and our feasting.

With my prayers and blessings
Fr Angus

Friday is my day of rest unless the matter is very urgent.

This Week's Diary - February

It is now possible to donate to St George's using your smartphone by scanning the QR Code shown on the right. If you are unsure on how to use it, please seek advice from our Treasurer, Alison Davis, or Fr Angus.



Monday 6th - St George's Tots in the Centre – 10:30am to 12:00pm
Tuesday 7th– Church Choir rehearsal in the Centre @ 6pm
– WRAP Community Choir in the Centre @ 7.30pm
Wednesday 8th- Said Mass in the Lady Chapel - 11.30am
Thursday 9th - Said Mass in the Lady Chapel - 9.30am
Sunday 12th – Parish Mass - 10.00am

Pancake Party for families with young children – Sunday 19th February @ 3.30pm

The season of Lent is approaching. But before the fast comes the feast in the form of a Pancake Party. There will be time for crafts, a story and singing in church, a pancake race and pancakes in the church centre. The event begins at 3:30pm on Sunday 19 February and will finish around 5pm. There is a suggested donation of £3 per family at the door. All children must be accompanied by an adult. If you would like to come, please register on Eventbrite.

All are welcome to our **Happy Cafe Breakfast** to be held on **Saturday 25th February** 10-12pm in the Centenary Centre – Tickets from Jill Merry -- £10 per adult - £5 per child - Under 5yrs - free!
Main course a freshly cooked English breakfast with vegetarian option. Fruit juice, granola, yoghurt, toast etc. tea/coffee. Come and join us for lovely food and fellowship!

Ash Wednesday - Lent begins on Wednesday 22nd February. There will be a choral mass with the liturgy of ashing at 7.30pm. There is also our usual said mass with ashing at 11.30am for those who would rather attend in the morning.

Palm Crosses for Ash Making - In preparation for Ash Wednesday, we are asking people to bring in their old palm crosses from last year's Palm Sunday liturgy (or earlier years!). These will be burned and turned into ash for use during the service. We have three Sundays left before Lent begins so, please do bring them to church in that time if you can.

Wednesday Lent Group: Psalms of Lament and Praise – Our Lent Group this year will be exploring the book of the psalms. The psalms transform every human experience into an expression of profound prayer. They are the words Jesus used to pray even in his darkest moments. Their words echo throughout Scripture, the liturgy, our culture, and creation. They offer us words of hope and consolation when we find it difficult to find words ourselves. They sing the language of the heart in all its depths and heights. During each session, we will be delving into the rich and challenging language of psalms and connecting it to our own experiences in life and faith. Participants will need to bring a copy of the bible (copies available at church too). **There will be four sessions held at 7:30pm each Wednesday from 8th March to 29th March, meeting in the Centenary Centre.** Fr Angus will lead the sessions, but group participation will be essential! Sign-up sheets are available from this Sunday at the back of church.

Stations of the Cross with Adoration - At 2pm on each Thursday during Lent, 2nd March to 30th March, there will be a service of the Stations of the Cross followed by a short period of Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament in the Lady Chapel. Everyone is welcome to this meditative service in which we follow the way Christ walked through suffering into the fullness of the life of the resurrection.

WRAP-CHAT Update The February meeting, presented by Claudia Deamer from the W.S.C.C. contained so much useful information regarding keeping safe on line, on the telephone, landline/mobile, at your front door etc. As promised Claudia has forwarded a document containing three pages of useful links regarding scams, breaching of your personal data, fraud etc, etc. If those who attended the meeting, or anyone else would like a copy emailed to you or if necessary to receive a paper copy please let Geraldine know. Her contact details are at the bottom of the newsletter.

St Peter's RC Church, East Wittering, PO20 8PS - Sunday 26th February @ 4pm, an invitation has been received to join them in attending an ecumenical prayer service with music from **Taizé**. The theme will be The Prodigal Son '*Come back to me.....a moment for peace, reflection and prayer*'. Refreshments will be available and there is a large car park.

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