

LENT IS A TIME FOR SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINE.

The Church is preparing to observe Lent this year. Lent is a time for spiritual discipline, inviting us to spend time with God amid our everyday duties. This discipline is essential for confronting the world, the flesh, and the devil, fulfilling the promise made at baptism. As faithful disciples responding to God's calling in various ministries, we are encouraged to live lives empowered by the Holy Spirit, committed to prayer and diligent in the Word. Christian ministry presents many challenges, and we need God's divine wisdom to gain strength. Human strength alone cannot overcome these challenges.

During Lent, there are several liturgical matters that members of the Church should recognise, as this period serves as a time for reflection, penance, and preparation for Easter. Here are some liturgical practices and issues to consider:

1. The Liturgical Colours

- **Purple (Violet):** This colour is associated with Lent, symbolising penance, reflection, and preparation. During this season, the altar, the priest's vestments, and other liturgical elements are generally purple.
- **Rose:** This colour is used on the Fourth Sunday of Lent (Laetare Sunday), offering a moment of encouragement and a sign of joy amid penance.

2. Fasting and Abstinence

- **Ash Wednesday and Good Friday:** These days are marked by fasting (eating less) and abstinence (avoiding certain foods, typically

meat). Those between the ages of 18 and 59 are encouraged (fasting), and those over 14 are expected to abstain from meat on these days.

- **Fridays during Lent:** Anglicans are encouraged to abstain from meat.
- **Fasting** can take many forms. Typically, it involves eating one full meal and breaking the fast in the evening. For others, it may just include being vegetarian.

3. Spiritual Practices

- **Morning prayer:** Lent encourages us to get closer to the Word of God and prayer. Churches have Zoom morning prayer in different languages. Parishes often have extra time for prayer vigils and counselling (confession) during Lent to allow their members to prepare for Easter through the cleansing of sin.
- **Prayer and Almsgiving:** Many congregations emphasise acts of charity (almsgiving), stewardship of creation, and spiritual reflection during Lent. These actions aim to enhance one's relationship with God during this period.

4. Stations of the Cross

- This devotion, which involves reflecting on the events of Jesus' Passion, is especially emphasised during Lent. Some churches offer Stations of the Cross on Fridays during Lent as a communal practice.

5. Lenten Fasting and the Eucharist

- During Lent, some Churches will have Holy Communion services as a central part of the Lenten experience. There is also a focus on attending the Holy Communion service, particularly during the week.

6. The "Alleluia"

- The "Alleluia" is not sung during Lent, as it is considered a joyful expression meant for the Easter season. This is replaced with other chants or hymns of penitence and reflection.

7. No Gloria or Alleluia

- During the Lenten season, the **Gloria** (a hymn of praise to God) is omitted from the liturgies, except for specific feasts. This symbolises the solemn nature of the season.
- The **Alleluia** is also omitted, with a focus on more sombre and reflective hymns and responses.

8. Lenten Liturgies and practices

- **Ash Wednesday:** A special liturgy where ashes are placed on the foreheads of the faithful to remind them of their mortality and the need for repentance.

- **Lenten Liturgy:** The liturgy during Lent will emphasise themes of penance, repentance, and preparation for the Paschal mystery (the suffering, death, and resurrection of Christ).

9. Preparation for the Easter Vigil

- Lent is when the Church prepares for the Easter Vigil, where catechumens (those preparing for baptism) are received into the Church. This Vigil is considered the most significant liturgy of the Church year and often marks the culmination of the Lenten journey.

10. Liturgical Revisions for Local Context

- In the diocese, where there are different linguistic, racial and cultural groups, there may be other practices and guidelines for Lenten's observance. Over time, these practices met the needs of the local congregation.
- By being mindful of these liturgical practices, members of the Church can more fully engage in the spirit of Lent, which is intended to lead to a deeper relationship with Christ and a more profound celebration of the Paschal mystery at Easter.

Written by Bishop Charles Samuel