Many astronauts have spoken with wonder of the beauty of planet earth suspended in space. From a heavenly viewpoint it seems so small, so fragile and so one because all frontiers vanish.

Lent is a season when Christians are invited to take a God’s eye view of everyday life. The traditional Lenten call to prayer, fasting and almsgiving is a challenge to let the Holy Spirit lead us beyond frontiers of my time, my needs and my securities into God’s one world.
In Secret

In the Gospel on Ash Wednesday (Matthew 6: 1–6 16–18) Jesus tells his disciples that their **Prayer, Fasting** and **Almsgiving** should be done in secret. Yet we journey through Lent not as individuals but as a school or parish community.

Lent Calendar

Make a Lenten Calendar for the Classroom. Mark both the key liturgical dates (Ash Wednesday, Sundays, Holy Thursday, Good Friday; also St David, St Patrick, St Joseph, the Annunciation and Mother’s day) and the seasonal data that helps point the date of Easter. Easter Sunday is the Sunday after the first full moon after the Spring Equinox (equal day and night). If possible, encourage the children to observe the changing moon. For yourself, if you attend the Easter Vigil take a moment before it begins, gathered around the Easter Fire, to look up at the sky and see the full moon.

dates for 2003

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Date</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ash Wednesday</td>
<td>5 March</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spring Equinox</td>
<td>21 March</td>
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<tr>
<td>New Moon</td>
<td>1 April</td>
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<tr>
<td>Full Moon</td>
<td>16 April</td>
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<tr>
<td>Easter Sunday</td>
<td>20 April</td>
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</tbody>
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Phrases for distribution of Ashes

The following phrases are offered as alternatives for Ash Wednesday for School celebrations. They are taken from *God’s Story*. You may like to find your own.

Come, turn to me for I am kind and gentle. Make a new start.

Be happy, be joyful always. God is very near.

When people see the good things you do they will give praise to God.

You should be kind and gentle, and patient and forgiving, and loving like God.
Spring Cleaning

This is an activity which can take place throughout the whole of Lent.

Choose an area, or invite the children to decide, to keep clean. The class or a specific corner, part of the school or the school grounds.

Identify (with the class) what needs to be done to keep the area tidy all the way through Lent: are specific responsibilities or a rota needed? Do you need to identify any reasons why an area is not tidied?

Three aspects to think about:

- Spring cleaning in school is a communal activity for the benefit of the wider community.
- Spring cleaning can be about breaking old habits and learning new ones.
- Spring cleaning in Lent also needs to take place in our heart and soul.

Homework

Why not suggest trying it at home—keeping a bedroom or other space tidy for the whole of Lent.

Reflection

- What does Spring cleaning involve?
- Who does it benefit?
- Why in Spring?
- Do I need a spring clean?

The word Spring comes from the Anglo-Saxon word meaning lengthen. After the Winter Solstice the days are getting longer. The Spring equinox marks when the day and night are of equal length. As the days get longer so they also get lighter and the light reveals the dirt and grime that have built up over the dark days of winter. The mess and clutter we have built up tends obscure what is really there. As we begin the task we will need to decide what needs cleaning, replacing or making new?
Today, as I am writing this, the entire landscape is bleak, grey, dead.

But in two months the meadows will be green, the trees will be full of blossoms, the birds will be singing, a sense of joy and happiness and well-being will fill the land. For nature will fill the land. For nature will have come to life again.

It should be one of our objectives to regain this sense of close association with nature. The natural rhythm of the seasons should be a source of constant delight. Every tiny flower, every little animal, the rays of the sun, the chirp of birds, everything that spring brings back to us should inspire sentiments of joy and gratitude over good fortune.

However, we must not remain on the plane of nature; for us nature is a holy symbol. It is a picture-book given by God to his children in which they may see his beauty and his love; a picture-book which tells of another world which now at Easter is likewise celebrating resurrection, the world of supernatural life within us.

Spring with its transformation of hill and meadow is, accordingly, a great symbol of an event in sacred history and of an event now taking place within the Church.

Pius Parsch

The German priest, Pius Parsch, was one of the leading writers of the Liturgical Movement in the first half of the 20th century.