

Spirit of the Season

Lent 2003

Liturgical Year B

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Planet-wide Fasting



See inside

for your full list of dates for Lent and how to work out the date of Easter!

It's not a planet thing - but a **moon thing!**

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.

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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.



One way of thinking about Lent is to compare it to a Slimming Club (or perhaps football training).

We enter the club because we have goal to achieve. It may be to lose weight but it often means a change of life. We commit ourselves to new disciplines and once a week we come together to share our progress. The group supports one another and each person is called to be faithful to themselves and the group. And when the goal is achieved we have a new life—we are new person.

What is my goal this Lent and Easter?

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



Ash Wednesday	5 March
Spring Equinox	21 March
New Moon	1 April
Full Moon	16 April
Easter Sunday	20 April

Phrases for distribution of Ashes



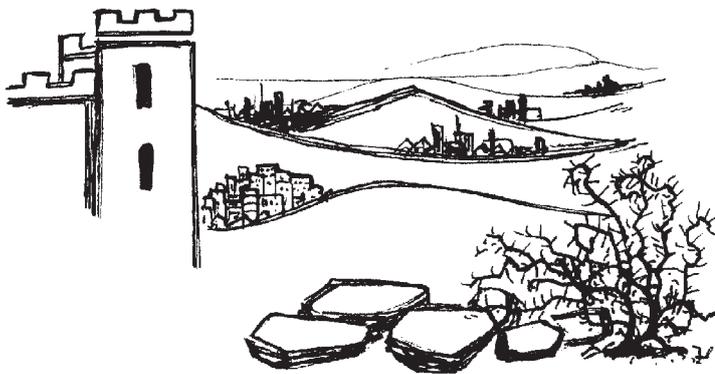
The following phrases are offered as alternatives for Ash Wednesday for School celebrations. They are taken from *God's Story*. You may like to find your own.

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.



The Prayer Space in Lent

- What signs and symbols are there in nature and the Church which can be reflected in the classroom? A clay vessel to hold ashes? Bare Branches? An earthenware jar of seeds? Sprouting in bulbs?
- Bare branches can evoke the lenten scripture of the wilderness, the burning bush, the fig tree given another chance to bear fruit. A large, bare branch or vine may look good hung against a wall or hung overhead, even between light fixtures.
- Small branches can look good arranged in a pot of sand or gravel or some other material, such as perlite. This is a two-person task: put the branches in the pot, hold them roughly where you want them to stand, then add the sand. This is easier than trying to stick the blunt ends of branches into the sand. Now arrange the branches attractively by pushing them apart a bit without lifting them out of the sand.
- A great addition to the prayer space especially later in Lent is a small flowery foretaste of Easter, such as potted primrose, a few daffodils, a cyclamen or a branch of forsythia. Perhaps remove any bows or festive wrappings and instead re-pot the plant in a simple clay or wicker container.

Ideas taken from *School Year Church Year*
by Peter Mazar published by LTP
distributed in UK by McCrimmons 01702 218 956

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 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 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.

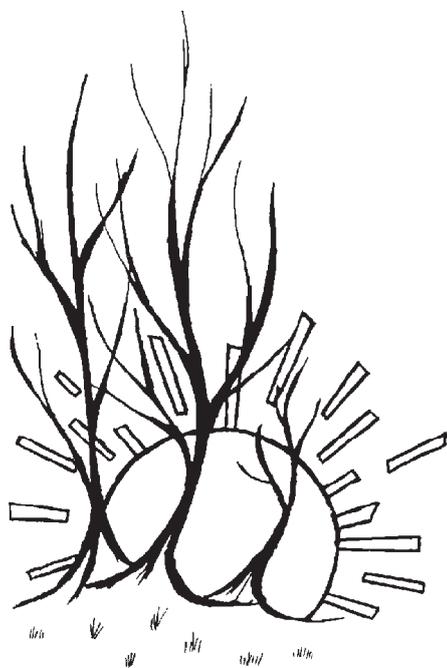
Homework

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 to 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 the leading writers of the Liturgical Movement in the first half of the 20th century.



An opportunity for Word Art:



Go and see *Here I Am* Key Words for this topic : **Death/ New Life**

I love you and I want you to love one another.



God's Story 1, p.33, based on John 13:34-35)

God says: Be clear about what is right and what pleases me!



God's Story 3, p.63 based on Isaiah 58:3

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