



Theme: "You have been buried with Christ in baptism, with him you are also risen."

Pope's Lenten message 2011 theme

‘Fasting’ is rooted deeply in our Celtic past:

Have you ever explored the meaning in the Irish for Wednesday, Thursday and Friday? When translated each of these days of the week has the word ‘Aoin’ at the end of it; Céadaoin, Déardoin and Dé hAoine. ‘Aoin’ means Fast. The earliest Christian communities that lived in Monastic settlements throughout Ireland broke their week up in terms of Fasting. There was the First Fast on the Céadaoin, the second on the Déardoin and the major Fast on Dé hAoine as every Friday is a reminder of Good Friday the day the Lord was crucified. The tradition on this Friday was to abstain from red meat. This custom remained with us for many years and is still an option for Catholics today.

Fasting continues to be a powerful prayer. Mahatma Gandhi was renowned for fasting. When asked why he fasted he said fasting did not necessarily bring him closer to God but it made his desire for God more intense. This is worth reflecting on.

Opening Prayer:

If you call the Lord will hear you; if you cry to him, he will say, 'Here I am'.

Short Scripture Reading: The true meaning of Fasting

“This, rather, is the fasting that I wish: releasing those bound unjustly, untying the chains of bondage; setting free the oppressed” (Is 58:6).

Alternative Reading: Matthew 6: 1 – 6.

A parcel of Ashes:

Carry a small parcel of Ashes in your wallet or purse. Let it be a reminder to you of your call to be humble before God during this season of Lent: Take your motto for Lent from the prophet Micah: *'Love tenderly, act justly and walk humbly with your God'*. When you open your purse or wallet and see your parcel of ashes consider one of the following;

- Recall the gifts God has given you.
- What in your life must you “give up” in order to live the new life in Christ?
- Choose one or two works of justice, mercy or love to which you will be faithful during Lent.
- Consider ways that you can give of yourself to those with whom you live, work, pray and play.
- Discuss/pray together as a family or a community about how the traditional practices of Lent may take on new life — e.g. setting aside part of a food budget for groups concerned with hunger

Concluding Prayer

God our Father
You formed us from the dust of the earth
And brought us to new life in Christ
Through the waters of Baptism.
We ask you to change our hearts
As we journey through these 40 days of Lent
Help us to see Jesus in everything we meet
And to serve him in all persons
Especially the poor the sick and the lonely
By your grace may our prayers and sacrifices this Lent
Help us to grow closer to each other and to you
As one family in Jesus
We make our prayer through Christ our Lord Amen.

