



Benefice Blog

March 2022

Monthly informal addition to the Website with opportunities to interact with Parishioners in the Benefice

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The Season of Lent is upon us

[Reflections on Silence in Lent](#)

When was the last time you experienced a few minutes of complete quiet? Is it even possible in our noise-saturated society?



Ringtones abruptly waken us in the morning. The voice of a beloved author reads her latest bestseller as we drive. The chitchat of co-workers interrupts our concentration on a project due yesterday. A small child questions for the umpteenth time, "Why?" We exercise while streaming informative podcasts. Our phones ding notifications incessantly.

Silence is awkward. Dead air on the radio makes us anxious. When discussion lulls during a meeting, we become uneasy. Quick, somebody say something! We turn on the TV to hear the voice of another human being to fend off the loneliness. We numb our relationship pain by streaming a favourite movie on demand.

Practicing the spiritual discipline of silence helps to restore the peace and clarity that eludes the soul of a weary Christian pilgrim.

What Is the Spiritual Discipline of Silence?

One author defines the spiritual discipline of silence as, "A regenerative practice of attending and listening to God in quiet, without interruption and noise. Silence provides freedom from speaking as well as from listening to words or music."^[1]

In this practice, Christians intentionally place themselves in a quiet place to focus on God and His presence. They refrain from speaking, move away from the voices of other people, and turn off technology and entertainment.

Susan Muto observes, “In a noise-polluted world, it is even difficult to hear ourselves think let alone try to be still and know God. Yet it seems essential for our spiritual life to seek some silence, no matter how busy we may be. Silence is not to be shunned as empty space, but to be befriended as fertile ground for intimacy with God.”^[ii]

The Christian Scriptures Teach the Spiritual Discipline of Silence

In the opening of the book he authored, the Old Testament prophet Habakkuk was confused and demanded answers from God. Why were the wicked prospering in the nation? From his Holy Temple, God then answered and shared his own viewpoint. He assured Habakkuk that He certainly was not blind to the violence and evil on the earth. God was neither absent nor idle. God’s vision and plan for his people would certainly be fulfilled, but in a radically different way than the prophet had expected.

God’s words deeply affected Habakkuk.

But the LORD is in his holy temple;

let all the earth be silent before him.^[iii]

In this passage, the term *silent* refers to a respectful silence filled with awe, a holy hush, a time without speaking. For Christians to practice this command, they must strive to create quietness in the clamour of noise that infiltrates their everyday lives.

Out of the silence, the prophet responded with a new perspective in a beautiful prayer of trust in God. With catastrophic events on the horizon, Habakkuk praised God for his splendour, salvation, and strength.

Suggestions to Practice the Discipline of Silence

1. Find an intentional place

Think of a quiet, safe place where you can escape from the racket and chaos of your life. A sacred space set apart to be with God where other voices cannot reach in, technology cannot distract, and intrusive sounds cannot interrupt.

- A secluded spot in your home
- Alone in your office or workspace
- A quiet corner of a library
- An isolated seat in a museum
- A bench in a city park
- A hiking trail in the woods
- A solitary walk through your neighbourhood or garden
- A path by a lake
- Sitting or walking on a beach

2. Set an intentional time

Make a sacred appointment. Put it on the calendar. Other responsibilities will easily push this appointment aside. Resist the call to attend to “higher priority” or “urgent” tasks.

- Over a coffee break or lunch hour
- While pre-schoolers are napping or after their bedtime
- Before sunrise
- Before the rest of your family begins their day
- Arriving to your workspace before anyone else
- In the evening after work
- Early on a weekend morning

3. Intentionally listen

At first, we may feel lonely, awkward, fearful, or out of control. If this practice is new to you, start small. Ten minutes is a good place to start. Experiment with what works for your everyday reality.

- Turn off your phone, iPad, laptop, and other technology.
- Set a timer to keep from watching the clock.
- You may be tempted to fill the noiselessness with words. *Resist.*
- You may be tempted to do something in your isolation. *Just be still or walk quietly.*
- Your thoughts will scream, “This is a complete waste of time!” *It’s not.*
- Listen to the quiet.
- Still your soul in the silence.
- Turn your thoughts to God.

Calhoun encourages, “And as the silence settles in and nothing seems to be happening, we often struggle with the feeling that we are wasting time... As we remain in the silence, the inner noise and chaos will begin to settle... Silence is a time to rest in God. Lean into God, trusting that being with him in silence will loosen your rootedness in the world and plant you by streams of living water.”[\[iv\]](#)

Practicing the Spiritual Discipline of Silence Deepens a Christian's Relationship with God

When Christians create silence, they place themselves in a consecrated space to begin to hear the gentle Whisper of God. They become aware of their own sacred personhood in the Creator’s eyes, unattached to a career, another person, or perhaps most importantly, their electronic devices.

As the quiet and calm seeps into our harried soul, the chaos in our life is stilled for a few moments. We gain clarity and perspective. As we practice the spiritual discipline of silence, we come to echo the prayer of the poet John Greenleaf Whittier,

Drop Thy still dews of quietness,

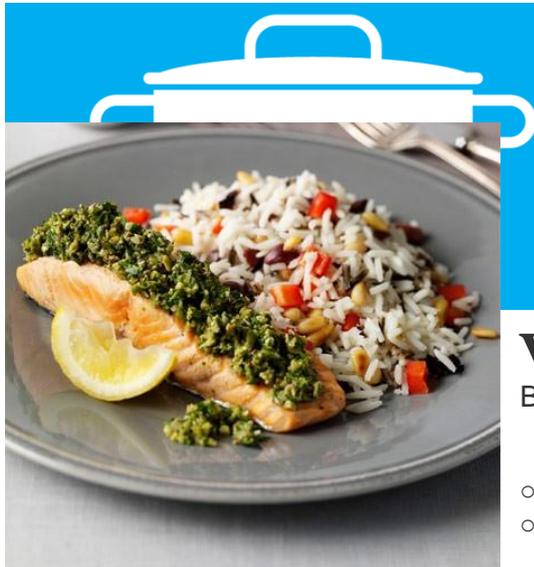
Till all our strivings cease;

Take from our souls the strain and stress,

And let our ordered lives confess

The beauty of Thy peace.

.....Liam O’Riordan



Dish for Lent

Salmon with salsa verde

By [Caroline Hire – Food writer](#)

- Preparation and cooking time
 - **Prep:**15 mins
 - **Cook:**12 mins
- **Easy**
- **Serves 4**

A delicious and fresh Mediterranean baked fish dish with herby green sauce, olives and lemon

Ingredients

- 1 x 25g pack dill, roughly chopped
- 1 x 25g pack mint, tough stalks removed and roughly chopped
- 1 x 25g pack flat-leaf parsley, roughly chopped
- 1 x 25g pack chives, roughly chopped
- 1 ½ tbsp wholegrain mustard
- 2 tbsp caper
- 2 tbsp toasted pine nut
- 1 x 200g tin green olive stuffed with anchovies, drained (85g)
- 2 lemons, juice only
- 4 salmon fillets

To serve (optional)

- 175g wild and white basmati rice
- 50g stoned marinated black kalamata olive
- 75g toasted pine nut
- 1 red pepper, chopped

Method

- **STEP 1**

Preheat the oven to 200C/fan 180C/gas 6. To make the salsa verde, put the herbs, mustard, capers, pine nuts, olives and the juice of the 1 ½ lemons in a food processor and pulse until roughly chopped.

- **STEP 2**

Put the salmon fillets on a lightly oiled baking sheet. Squeeze over the juice of the remaining half lemon and season with freshly ground black pepper. Cook in the oven for 10 – 12 minutes or until cooked through.

- **STEP 3**

If serving with the rice, cook the rice according to the packet instructions. Mix together the olives, pine nuts and red pepper. Once the rice is cooked, stir through the olive mix.

- **STEP 4**

Pile the salsa verde on top of the salmon fillets. Serve with the rice.



Pocket cartoon

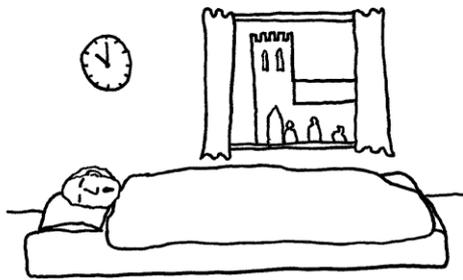
LENT



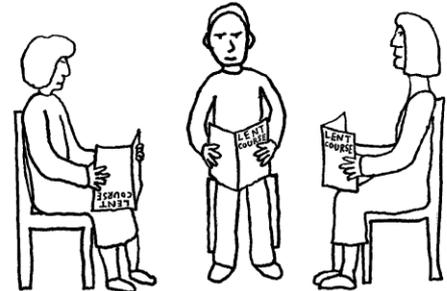
LENT IS A TIME FOR QUIET REFLECTION AND CONTEMPLATION



IT IS A SEASON OF ABSTINENCE AND FASTING



SOME CHRISTIANS GIVE SOMETHING UP DURING LENT



OTHERS CHOOSE TO CARRY OUT ACTS OF PENANCE

CartoonChurch.com



Fasting for Lent: How to Fast and Why Christians Do It

Fasting is practiced by numerous Christian denominations and annually observed during the time of Lent in preparation for Easter Sunday. Discover the Christian significance of fasting for Lent and practical guidance for your fast in 2022.

The biblical practice of fasting dates back to the Old Testament as a spiritual discipline to deepen our communion with God.

Today, fasting is still practiced by many Christian denominations and annually observed during the time of Lent in preparation for Easter Sunday. Lent is a 40-day period of reflection and prayer to remember the life of Jesus Christ - specifically his temptation, struggle, suffering, crucifixion, and death.

The church celebrates the beginning of Lent on Ash Wednesday and ends on Holy Saturday, the day before Easter. The act of abstinence and self-denial from worldly pleasures, gives Christians purposeful time to prayer, repent, and focus on gratitude. Often in today's modern world, the act of fasting has been pushed aside for the comforts of the modern church. Whether your church does not observe Lent fasting, or you simply don't know how to do it, you can discover the Christian significance of fasting for Lent and practical guidance for your fast in the Lenten season of 2022.

What is Christian Fasting?

Christian fasting can be explained as refraining from food for spiritual purposes and edification. Merely abstaining from food because it is not available or for medical causes does not equate to Christian fasting. There must be a spiritual motive and purpose for fasting as a Christian, especially the fasting of Lent.

In his book "[A Hunger for God](#)," John Piper writes, "Christian fasting, at its root, is the hunger of a homesickness for God. Christian fasting is not only the spontaneous effect of a superior satisfaction in God, it is also a chosen weapon against every force in the world that would take that satisfaction away."

The purpose of fasting must be to draw closer to God.



Why do Christians Fast for Lent?

Christians have observed Lent for roughly 2,000 years as a way to praise and memorialize Jesus's death and burial before glorifying His [resurrection](#). One of the central traditions of Lent is fasting, the discipline of abstaining from specific foods or something you enjoy for a set amount of time. The [Newspring](#)

[Church](#) describes the purpose of fasting stating: "Fasting helps us practice saying "no" to our desires and saying "yes" to Jesus [and the will of God]."

In scripture, fasting is a spiritual discipline to develop a closer communion with God. It's a practice of devotion in which we show our obedience to Jesus and repent for sin. In the Book of Joel, fasting is described as a "return to the Lord" saying "Yet even now," declares the LORD, "return to me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning; and rend your hearts and not your garments." Return to the LORD your God, for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love; and he relents over disaster" ([Joel 2:12-13](#)).

Fasting is joined with prayer as spiritual practice and disciplines to deepen our trust and reliance on God for all things. As faithful Christians, we must train our hearts and minds to know that all good things come from God.

"And when they had appointed elders for them in every church, with prayer and fasting they committed them to the Lord in whom they had believed" ([Acts 14:23](#)).

"Consecrate a fast; call a solemn assembly. Gather the elders and all the inhabitants of the land to the house of the Lord your God, and cry out to the Lord" ([Joel 1:14](#)).

How to Fast: A Guide for Fasting in the 40 Days of Lent

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Spiritual and Physical Benefits of Fasting

The spiritual edification of fasting is to encourage our reliance on God and repentance for the lack thereof. Fasting for Lent is primarily a spiritual discipline to orient our full dependence on God. We repent for not always acknowledging God's presence and grace in providing our every need. Our God is a loving God, and fasting is one way to refocus our lives upon seeking first His kingdom of heaven.

"And my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus" ([Philippians 4:19](#)).

Fasting has gained popularity for its health benefits in the last decade as many have questioned the diets and lifestyles of modernity. The physical health benefits of fasting have been studied to show promising biological advantages from ancient spiritual practice. Healthline reported a [collection of health benefits](#) from fasting, some that are mentioned include:

- Promotes Blood Sugar Control by Reducing Insulin Resistance
- Promotes Better Health by Fighting Inflammation
- May Boost Brain Function and Prevent Neurodegenerative Disorders
- Aids Weight Loss by Limiting Calorie Intake and Boosting Metabolism
- Increases Growth Hormone Secretion, Which Is Vital for Growth, Metabolism, Weight Loss and Muscle Strength

Encouraging Bible Verses when Fasting for Lent

[Matthew 6:16-18](#)

"And when you fast, do not look gloomy like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces that their fasting may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. But when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, that your fasting may not be seen by others but by your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you."

[Isaiah 58:3-7](#)

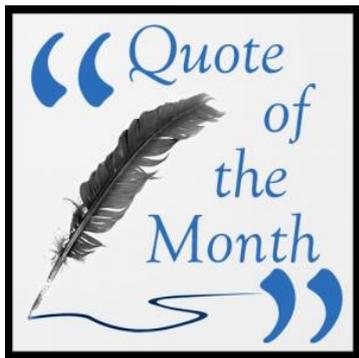
'Why have we fasted, and you see it not? Why have we humbled ourselves, and you take no knowledge of it?' Behold, in the day of your fast you seek your own pleasure and oppress all your workers. Behold, you fast only to quarrel and to fight and to hit with a wicked fist. Fasting like yours this day will not make your voice to be heard on high. Is such the fast that I choose, a day for a person to humble himself? Is it to bow down his head like a reed, and to spread sackcloth and ashes under him? Will you

call this a fast, and a day acceptable to the Lord? "Is not this the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of wickedness, to undo the straps 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 him, and not to hide yourself from your own flesh?"

Joel 2:12-13

"Yet even now," declares the LORD, "return to me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning; and rend your hearts and not your garments." Return to the LORD your God, for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love; and he relents over disaster.

.....Taylor Weinberger



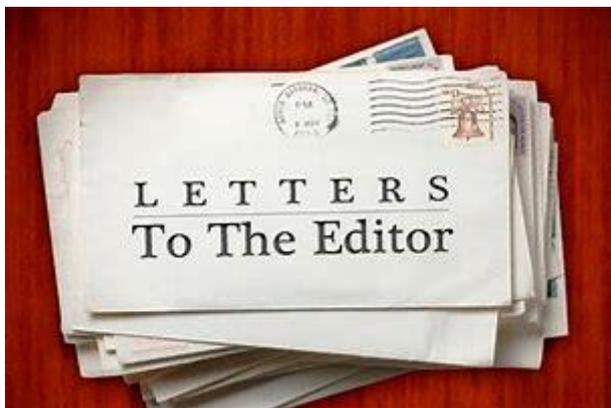
We shall not cease from exploration, and the end of all our exploring will be to arrive where we started and know the place for the first time.

T. S. Eliot

Spiritual Reading during Lent



Read the Holy Scriptures and choose a spiritual book during the 40 days leading up to Easter?



If you have a question to ask or wish to submit an article for the Blog, please reply to

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