

# ST VINCENT DE PAUL CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL, STEVENAGE



## Supporting a Lenten Journey



40 days of preparation with all our children



This booklet aims to support families on a special journey through Lent. It will give some background to the Lenten season, make links to some things that will be happening in school and in church and will make some suggestions of ways to prepare at home.

*We are called to be the hands and face of Jesus as we learn, love and grow together.*

## What does the word Lent mean?

The word *Lent* derives from the Middle English word 'lenten', meaning springtime – the time of lengthening days. There is biblical support for doing penance in both the Old and New Testaments. The season of Lent builds on this biblical support, but like all Catholic liturgical seasons, it developed over time. Nowadays, most adult converts to Catholicism are baptised at the Easter Vigil, which takes place after sundown on Holy Saturday.

**Ash Wednesday** marks the start of Lent. This is a Holyday of Obligation, and this year is on Wednesday 22<sup>nd</sup> February.



Children in KS2 (Yrs 3 to 6) will attend **Mass at St Joseph's at 11am**. All are welcome to join us at Mass. Children in EYFS and KS1 will have a liturgy in school.

On this first day of Lent, we receive ashes on our foreheads in the shape of a cross as a sign that we believe and that we turn to Jesus as a model of the way to live. The ashes used on this day are from the burnt palm leaves from Palm Sunday the previous year.

## How is Mass different during Lent?

During Lent, the word 'Alleluia' meaning 'Praise the Lord' is not said or sung at Mass. The Gloria is also omitted because these are joyful acclamations and are more appropriate at Easter and throughout the year. Flowers are also not seen in the church during Lent and during Holy Week the statues and artefacts are covered with purple cloth and the church is sparse and bare until Easter. This is a time of real anticipation for something new and bright that will arrive.

## During Lent we are preparing for the great feast of Easter.

Lent is a time when we think about ways that we can have a **change of heart**, to make us all better people. It is a time to fix our relationship with God by focusing on how we have treated others. The Catholic Church has a powerful sacrament that can help us to do this, **RECONCILIATION**.

Many of our children in Year 3 are currently preparing to take part in this sacrament for the very first time. On February 24<sup>th</sup>, Father Nigel, Father Michael and Father Frank will all be available in the KS2 Hall so that children in Yrs 4, 5 & 6 can partake in the Sacrament of Reconciliation should they wish to.

All of the children will be prepared so that they know exactly what to do and will then be given the option to attend. We did this last Lent and during the season of Advent and the children were very keen to connect with it. The children will prepare the hall so that it is a reflective space for them to take part in this beautiful sacrament.

### How do Catholics Prepare for Easter?

There are three things that Christians try to do during Lent as a form preparation:

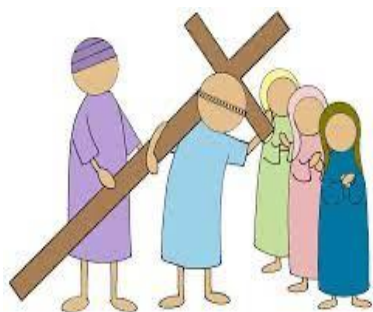


These three areas can be a focus for us in school and at home throughout Lent.

### PRAYER in school and at home

Our school day has a great rhythm of prayer. You can find out more about this on our website. In Lent there are some additional aspects that help us in our prayer. Each class will be learning about a different station of the cross, using beautiful images painted by Rachel Mabey. You can see these images on the McCrimmons website:

<https://www.mccrimmons.com/shop/church/a-way-of-the-cross-for-children-posters/>



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With this document you will have been sent the Missio Stations of the Cross to help you in this. You may want to focus on the **Station of the Cross** at home during Lent as this is a powerful and traditional way to remind us all of the story of Jesus' final days. You may also want to look at the Stations of Cross in our Churches.

Each day during Lent, the School Parliament team will be selecting an image to display on the '**lenten lines**' in our purple shed at the main entrance to the school. You may want to stop at this point with your child, look at the new image and say a prayer together each day.



During the penultimate week of term, all children will engage with **BE SPIRITED** activities. These aim to encourage prayerful reflection on the Season. Talk to your child about what they have done during these sessions.

## FASTING at school and at home

This can be a difficult concept for our young people to understand. However they do understand about **'giving something up'** which is a form of fasting. This is a way that they can begin to understand a sense of sacrifice. Pope Francis has spoken about **'fasting from things that hurt others'** as another way of thinking about it. On Holy Days of Obligation, Catholics traditionally **go without meat** – this is why our menu has been rearranged for Ash Wednesday.

The flip side of giving something up, is **doing something positive in addition**. During Lent, each of our Year groups have chosen a theme from Catholic Social Teaching that will be their additional gift during and beyond Lent. Ask your child about what their class is doing!



Dignity



Community



The poor



Work



Peace



Stewardship

## GIVING in school and at home



Throughout Lent, we have three giving projects that you will be able to help us with:

- **Food Bank Friday** will return! Please leave items in the trolley outside St Joseph's workshop that we can share with the **St Vincent de Paul Society** to support local families.
- Children will be sent home with a **CAFOD penny box**. Maybe they could complete jobs at home for a small fee to support overseas sustainable aid projects.
- Easter raffle tickets will be on sale during the last few weeks of term. Pupils can buy tickets that might earn them an Easter treat donated by the staff team. Funds raised will support Father Kakuba's Kanyike Project in Uganda. You can find out more about this here:

[Kanyike Project](#)



## What is HOLY WEEK?

Holy week comes at the end of our Lenten journey and will occur during the Easter Holidays. The children will be learning about this in school and through our assemblies.



To help you in preparing for this special time we have prepared a Holy Week reflection which will be sent with this document. You may wish to share this with your child(ren).

You may also wish to accompany your children to Church to participate in the beautifully rich liturgies.



### **HOLY WEEK BEGINS WITH PALM SUNDAY:**

This celebrates Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem on a donkey. At Mass we experience a long reading of the Passion. We receive a blessed palm to wave with our 'hosannahs'.

### **HOLY (MAUNDY) THURSDAY**

This is the memorial of the Last Supper where Jesus gathers with his disciples to celebrate the Passover. This special meal became the first Mass with the institution of the Eucharist. At this Mass, like Jesus, the priest washes the feet of 12 parishioners as a sign of Jesus' service to others. Just as Jesus went to pray in the Garden of Gethsemane, the Eucharist is removed to an 'Altar of Repose' and people wait and pray.



### GOOD FRIDAY

Jesus makes his final journey, carrying his cross. He is crucified and dies. This is often a day when we focus on the Stations of the Cross. Many Christians will attend an ecumenical walk of Witness through the town. In Church at 3pm there is a solemn liturgy during which a cross is 'shown' and participants venerate it by kissing it. There is a service of the Eucharist but no Mass.



### HOLY SATURDAY

The first Mass of Easter is celebrated in the evening and the alleluia returns with great joy! The Mass starts in darkness with just the light of a bonfire outside. From this the new Paschal Candle is lit, symbolising the resurrection: 'the light of Christ has come into the world' and spreads through the church as individuals light their candle from the Paschal Candle. Traditionally new adult members of the Church are received during this Mass and everyone renews their Baptismal promises.



### EASTER SUNDAY

This Mass celebrates the great joy of Easter and the Resurrection.

**Praying together with our children is one of the best ways to prepare during this season. Maybe you could write a family prayer together or use this one:**

*Loving Father*

*You teach us to love with a heart that sees and to act with compassion and love. May our family be a place where this love can thrive and a place where actions can grow. Help us to be a great team, your team, ready to bring your love to others in the world.*

*May our preparations this Lent bring us all closer to you than we already are.*

*Amen*

The staff and Governors of St Vincent de Paul School wish everyone a fruitful Lenten Journey and the joy of the resurrection when it arrives.

Thank you for all that you do to help us prepare our children for a life in faith.

This partnership is so important to us.