

LENT

Rigorous fasting and abstinence during Lent was common in the past. In some areas, only one meal a day was taken during the entire 40 days. Other fasting practices included eating only bread and water; not eating until 3pm; and eliminating all meat, eggs, dairy and fruit.

Mardi Gras (Fat Tuesday) is a tradition that dates back thousands of years to pagan celebrations of spring and fertility, including the raucous Roman festivals of Saturnalia and Lupercalia. When Christianity arrived in Rome, religious leaders decided to incorporate these popular local traditions into the new faith, an easier task than abolishing them altogether. As a result, the excess and debauchery of the Mardi Gras season became a prelude to Lent, the 40 days of fasting and penance



between Ash Wednesday and Easter Sunday.

In **Denmark** the last Sunday before Lent begins is called "Fastelavn." Cream- or jam-filled buns are eaten and children dress up in costumes. A barrel filled with candy is beaten, much like a Mexican piñata, and the two children who break the barrel are crowned the Cat King and Cat Queen (because the barrel used to contain a live cat instead of candy).



In **Greece** the Monday before Ash Wednesday, called Kathari Theftera, or Clean Monday, is a national holiday in Greece. Families go to the countryside and beaches for picnics and kite-flying. Greek Orthodox Christians give up all meat and animal products during Lent, and eat beans, orzo and pastas. Cookies and cakes are permitted as long as butter is omitted.



40
days
of Lent

St Cross Newsletter March 2022

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The Vicar writes...

This month's newsletter is the hardest one I've had to write since coming to St Cross, not least because the current situation in Eastern Europe is changing day by day. By the time you come to read this it is possible the situation may have escalated or, hopefully, reason, common sense and compassion may have come into play and hostilities will have come to an end. We simply don't know how this terrible situation will play out and we must continue to pray for cool heads, honesty and an acceptance of responsibility towards the whole of creation, and for peace to return.

Most of us will never have known in our lifetime the consequences of being in conflict; even though our country has been involved on several occasions, there has been little direct impact for many of us. It's worth reminding ourselves that the fears we have are fears that have been held for many years in other places of the world such as Bosnia, Iraq, Afghanistan, Somalia or Yemen. But now things seem closer to home, and the fears we have are justified because of the political situation in Europe. The military capability, too, is one of which we are all fearful. We all long for peace, safety and stability.

Peace is a word often used by Jesus to bring calm to those he was speaking to. The disciples were locked away in fear after Jesus had been crucified. There had been reports he was alive again but for many of them, they were yet to experience the Risen Lord and the peace his

presence brings. When Christ appeared to them peace came into the room, bringing courage and faith.

Somehow, the human need for peace does not necessarily translate into human history which shows us that it is taking us a long time as a collective human race to learn the lessons from the past. This is particularly so with dangerous human leaders who have the capacity to abdicate their responsibility in a quest for power and greed.

Jesus offered a new vision, a new leadership; he came and preached peace and ended up suffering the worst violence that humanity can offer. And his resurrection shows us that, in the end, God always wins, love overcomes hate.

In our own moments of fear and uncertainty we should seek the Lord with all our heart. The season of Lent, if taken seriously, gives us the opportunity to find the time to do just that. And in seeking Him and spending time in prayer and reflection, our hearts must unite with Him in seeking to share the concerns of the world by praying for God's Holy Spirit to bring change and transformation into the broken world in which we live.

Yours, in Christ
Paul

A Prayer for Ukraine

God of peace and justice, we pray for the people of Ukraine today.
We pray for peace and the laying down of weapons.
We pray for all those who fear for tomorrow,
that your Spirit of comfort would draw near to them.
We pray for those with power over war or peace, for wisdom,
discernment and compassion to guide their decisions.
Above all, we pray for all your precious children, at risk and in fear,
that you would hold and protect them.
We pray in the name of Jesus, the Prince of Peace. **Amen**

Occasional Offices

Funeral

22nd February Jean Nuttall



Readings for Services - Sundays and Wednesdays

	MP = Morning Prayer (<i>Audio</i>) E = Eucharist	Evening Service
2 March Ash Wednesday	E Isaiah 58.1-12 John 8.1-11	
Sunday 6 March Lent 1	MP/E Deuteronomy 26.1-11 Romans 10.8b-13 Luke 4.1-13	4.30pm Celtic Eucharist Jonah 3 Luke 18.9-14
9 March Wednesday	E Jonah 3 or Psalm 51.1-5,17-18 Luke 11.29-32	
Sunday 13 March Lent 2	MP/E Genesis 15.1-12, 17-18 Philippians 3.17-4.1 Luke 13.31-end	7pm Compline (Zoom)
16 March Wednesday	E Jeremiah 18.18-20 Matthew 20.17-28	
Sunday 20 March Lent 3	MP/E Isaiah 55.1-9 1 Corinthians 10.1-13 Luke 13.1-9	
23 March Wednesday	E Deuteronomy 4.1, 5-9 or Psalm 147.13-end Matthew 5.17-19	
Sunday 27 March Lent 4 Mothering Sunday	MP/E 1 Samuel 1.20-end 2 Corinthians 1.3-7 Luke 2 .33-35	7pm Compline (Zoom)

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