

“ Like a great waterwheel, the liturgical year [or Christian Calendar] goes on relentlessly irrigating our soul, softening the ground of our hearts, nourishing the soil of our lives until the seed of the word of God itself begins to grow in us, comes to fruit in us, ripens us in the spiritual journey of a lifetime.”
~ Joan Chittister, The Liturgical Year

What is Lent?

In the Christian calendar Lent is the season that follows Advent and Epiphany, it's the 40 days leading to the high-point of the Christian year, and celebrating the death and resurrection of Christ. Lent has been traditionally understood as a time of fasting and self-examination for the sake of reorienting our lives. It is by fasting that we move away from our own sin, or the ways we miss the mark, towards repentance and renewal.

The word Lent itself means “spring” and comes from the Old English word “lengthen.” This is a season of moving from darkness into light. Lenten fasting then is not undertaken for the sake of making life hard, nor is it a resolution where we give up chocolate or Netflix for the sake of healthier living and good habits. The fasting we embrace is practiced so that we might move away from the darkness in our own lives and turn towards God's light.

What will Lent look like for you?

First, as you consider your own Lenten journey, ask God to show you what you need to fast from AND what to feast on or fill that space with. Pray with the Psalmist, “Search me, O God, and know my heart! Try me and know my thoughts! And see if there be any grievous way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting! (Psalm 139:23-24).

Questions you could ask yourself and God are:

1. What distracts me from paying attention to God and the work of the Holy Spirit in my life?
2. Do I need to fast from something in order to create space for time with God?
3. Do I need to fast in order to remember that Christ suffered and died – offering me salvation and life?
4. Do I need to fast from a habit of thought, in order to shift my gaze upon Christ?

Spiritual practices to consider:

- Fast from a meal on a regular basis; to fill that space with prayer and time with God
- Fast from media; to fill that space with real conversations (with the real people)
- Fast from self-focus; to feast on hospitality and welcoming others
- Fast from judging others; to feast on Christ dwelling in them
- Fast from anger; to feast on patience
- Fast from worry; to feast on unceasing prayer
- Fast from bitterness; to feast on forgiveness

Your commitment. Write a prayer expressing to God what you are hoping to fast from in the coming weeks, and what you are looking to feast on as God's light grows in your life.