

ASH WEDNESDAY 22 FEBRUARY 2023
REFLECTION BY THE RECVEREND CANON DEBBIE FLACH

The roots of Lent go back to the early Church, when those who wished to become Christians underwent a period of preparation before their baptism. Eventually the whole Church adopted the practice of renewing one's baptism through a period of penitence and recommitment to the Christian life.

Today, Lent is a time when all the baptised are called to renew their baptismal commitment. The key to anything we choose to do as part of our personal preparation during Lent is to recognise its link to baptismal renewal. We are called not just to abstain from something during Lent, but to true conversion of our hearts and minds as followers of Christ. We recall those waters in which we were baptised into Christ's death, died to sin and evil, and began new life in Christ.

The traditional practices of Lent are:

Almsgiving (Matthew 6:2–4), Like fasting, giving (traditionally called “almsgiving”) is as much a spiritual discipline as an act of charity, especially when our giving comes at a personal sacrifice. In our small acts of giving, we strive to imitate Christ, who gave his life for us on the cross so that we might have eternal life.

Prayer (Matthew 6:5–15) Virtually all of the saints spent lots of time in prayer. The reason? These wise men and women realized that prayer—that ongoing conversation or relationship with God—is essential to living the Christian life. Prayer powers the spiritual life. When we pray, we are better able to let God work through us instead of trying to “do it ourselves.”

Fasting (Matthew 6:16–18). The thing we give up might be good in itself, but we give it up in order to obtain a greater good...God. It makes room for God. By emptying ourselves, even if just a little bit, we make room for God to enter our lives more fully.