

Eaglais na hÉireann ✠ The Church of Ireland
MALLOW UNION *of* PARISHES



A Guide to the Season of
LENT
2023

INTRODUCTION

The season of Lent has often been described as the ‘sad springtime of the Church’ when we are invited to embark on a journey of forty days leading towards Easter, with an emphasis on prayer, penitence, fasting and good works. This timing reflects both the period Jesus spent alone in the wilderness preparing for his public ministry, as well as being an echo of the forty years the people of Israel spent as nomads in the wilderness before entering the Promised Land.

It is very easy to see Lent as a negative time, with its emphasis on self-denial, as our churches are left bare of flowers and other decorations, and our worship feels sparser. Yet, if we will allow it to be, Lent can be an extraordinarily rich and generous time of the Christian year. It offers us opportunities for exploration and discovery, time to be renewed and refreshed by silence and prayer, moments to reconnect our lives to God from whom we come and to whom we will return.

The 17th Century priest and poet, George Herbert, who devoted his short ministry to being the parson of a small rural community, wrote a poem in which he describes Lent as a ‘feast.’ It depicts a table spread with prayer and fasting, silence and simplicity. They will be our companions, and maybe even our friends, for forty days and forty nights. This is one way in which Lent can become a fruitful time. The simplicity of this season acts like a ‘detox’ to clear the accumulated burdens of our lives, lightening our load, freeing us to see what really matters in life. It offers us a chance to be better resourced along the journey towards Easter, when we are surprised by the miracle of life and grace, as we rediscover a delight in being human in the place where the risen Lord is already waiting to greet us.

WEDNESDAY 22nd FEBRUARY

Ash Wednesday: The First Day of Lent

On this solemn day, we are invited, in the name of the Church, to begin the observance of a holy Lent, by prayer, fasting, self-denial and by reading and meditating on God's holy word. For those who wish to do so, there will be an opportunity to receive the traditional sign of the cross in ash.

11.00am THE EUCHARIST *in St James's Church, Mallow*

8.00pm THE EUCHARIST *in St Mary's Church, Doneraile*

BLESSINGS & COMMANDMENTS

An Exploration of the Gospel according to St Matthew

During this Christian year, our readings at Sunday worship are focussed on the Gospel according to St Matthew. Its unique character springs from the Jewish world from which it emerged, as it speaks to a community seeking a new way of faith and life, reminding Christian people of their deep roots – as well as resourcing them as to discover a new direction as followers of Jesus. Over the course of three sessions, we will look at different aspects of this Gospel, gaining an insight into the world from which it emerged, and making connections for today.

Each session will comprise of a 40-minute presentation and discussion, followed by some refreshments and a short time of prayer.

THURSDAYS at 2.30pm in the Parish Hall in Mallow

2nd March **HOW, WHY & WHERE?**

An introduction to the world from which the Gospel emerged, the people it was originally written for, and how it spoke to their time and situation.

16th MARCH

JESUS, THE LAW & THE PROPHETS

Discovering Matthew's distinct way of portraying Jesus, the emphasis of his teaching and how it encouraged the earliest followers of Jesus.

30th MARCH

THE GOSPEL HANDED-ON
FOR THE FUTURE

Discovering how the Jewish roots of Matthew's Gospel can speak to us in a very different world, as it inspires and encourages Christian people today.

EVERY WEDNESDAY *during Lent*

11.00am

THE EUCHARIST with short devotional address
in St James's Church, Mallow

A PRAYER FOR LENT

Almighty and ever-living God,
you have given us this season of grace,
to renew our minds and purify our hearts,
as we are blessed by your power to forgive.
When the weight of our sin is great,
give us the sorrow that heals;
when the depth of our anguish seems vast,
give us the confidence to receive your unfailing love;
when we are tempted to despair,
give us hearts to praise you,
the one in whose image we are fearfully and wonderfully made.
We ask this through Jesus Christ, who died and rose again,
whose Holy Spirit refreshes us with life in all its fulness. Amen.