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“The Season of Lent” by Rev. Dr. Marilyn Manning, Parish Associate Pastor,  
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This year, the Season of Lent in the Christian Church encompasses the entire month of March. In the early centuries of Christian history, Lent provided the final, intensive period for the instruction of new converts for their baptism at Easter. The annual remembrance of the death and celebration of the resurrection of Christ were recognized as the most appropriate time for baptism. In the baptismal waters one symbolically enters into death with Christ and is raised with Christ in his resurrection. The baptized life is to die daily to sin, destructive ways and the old life, and to be raised to live a new life sharing in the new creation. Lent later came also to include the reconciliation of those who had lapsed from the faith. Easter was the time for them to reaffirm the covenant previously established in their baptism. Lent's scope was further enlarged when it became a time for all the baptized to remember the saving death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. It was and is a time to get ready for God to make a change in our lives.

Lent is therefore best understood as a time to reflect on the meaning of being joined to Christ in baptism. Lent leads us back to the waters of the font into all that it means to be Christian. It is a time of repentance, of reaffirming the faith, of prayer and discipline, of rebirth and renewal, of probing the questions of faith and life, of overflowing in mission to do God's will and work in the world. The dominant spirit of Lent therefore is not to be giving up something as much as it is to *take up anew* all that it means to belong to Christ.

Lent, in addition to all this, is a time for outreach and inviting others into the Christian community of faith. It is a season for growing in Christian maturity, fulfilling Christ's command to love others as we love ourselves. Lent is that special season that calls us to service. Lent also gets us ready for the Easter season and the joy associated with it. Lent is a time of self-examination. It is a time for self-appraisal and of new beginnings. Lent represents repentance. Easter represents resurrection. Between these two, stands the cross of Good Friday, which represents forgiveness.

Lent is the most solemn and reflective season of the church year. But it is a wonderful and glorious church season. It is that time which prepares us for Holy Week which begins with Palm Sunday, March 25. We pray, study, and nourish one another during this Lenten season so that we may grow together in love and faith as we look forward with eagerness to the Resurrection of Jesus Christ on Easter.