THE CHALLENGE OF LENT

Lent is fast approaching as Ash Wednesday arrives on Valentine’s Day, February 14. Whether Lent is new or old to you, it is always good to refresh our understanding of this challenging penitential season.

In the early years of the Church, new converts to the faith were baptized into the family of the Church just after dawn on Easter. As preparation, they would take on a brief period of fasting and penitence for the important occasion of their baptism. Eventually, the Church began to call those who had lapsed in the practice of their faith to a similar season of fasting and penitence in order to be restored to the family of the Church on Easter.

As time passed, the Church saw the benefit of calling all followers of Jesus to engage in a season of penitence and fasting as a way to “put in mind the message of pardon and absolution set forth in the Gospel of our Savior, and of the need which all Christians continually have to renew their repentance and faith.” (The Invitation to the Observance of a Holy Lent, Ash Wednesday).

The season of Lent, then, we are invited by the Church “to the observance of a holy Lent, by self-examination and repentance; by prayer, fasting and self-denial; and by reading and meditating on God’s holy Word.” (The Invitation to the Observance of a Holy Lent, Ash Wednesday). Lent, then, is a season of spiritual disciplines aimed at helping us grow in our lives of discipleship. We look more deeply into our hearts to see where our lives are not in line with God’s will so that we can change our course (repentance). We give things up in order to focus more of our energies on Jesus and become aware of those places where our lives are enslaved by the stuff of life. We take on practices, like greater reading of Scripture, that draw us closer to Jesus. As Lent draws us deeper into Jesus’ love, it isn’t an easy season, but it is a deeply joyful one.

So what can you do this Lent? Here are some suggestions.

Ash Wednesday. Lent begins with Ash Wednesday and the imposition of ashes that come from the prior year’s Palm Sunday fronds. The ashes are imposed as a cross on our foreheads to remind us that we are mortal – that we are creatures dependent upon God for life and that one day we will stand before Jesus in judgment. It isn’t meant to be a fearful or gloomy day, but it is meant to startle us awake from the way we so often live in our own strength and according to our own will.

Fast. Fasting is all about giving something up in order to draw closer to Jesus. When we fast, we become aware of how much time, energy, and desire are consumed by things and activities around us. Many people wonder why they should fast. The intention of fasting is not to give up something you should be giving up anyway. In other words, it isn’t aimed at curbing bad habits. That can be a byproduct of fasting, but it isn’t the intention. The intention is to draw closer to Jesus. As you fast, though, you will find that you have more time and attention to give to Jesus and you will likely become aware how much the thing you are giving up has power in your life. So what are some things you could give up for Lent? Favorite foods. Television. Social Media. Radio in the car.

Evening Prayer. This Lent we will offer Evening Prayer on Wednesdays (Feb. 21-Mar. 21) from 5:30-6:00 p.m. Instead of soup suppers (due to space constraints), we will offer this classic Anglican service as a way to take on a Lenten devotion that can help draw us deeper in our walk with Jesus.

Holy Week Services. Mark your calendars, too, for the services of Holy Week: Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, and the Easter Vigil. These ancient and powerful services draw us deeply into the last days of Jesus’ earthly ministry and into the mighty acts that opened for us the way of salvation. They are at the center of our faith!

I want to challenge you to pour some energy into observing the challenging season of Lent. You won’t be disappointed!

Yours in Christ,
Thomas Cranmer and the Power of the Word

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters. And God said, “Let there be light,” and there was light. (Genesis 1:1-3, ESV)

[God] calls into existence the things that do not exist. (Romans 4:17b)

[The Son] upholds the universe by the word of his power. (Hebrews 1:3b)

The Word of God has power. Creation begins when God speaks and calls it into existence. Creation endures, and does not crumble back into nothingness, because of the divine Word that upholds it. For Thomas Cranmer—who first crafted the Book of Common Prayer that has become a regular fixture in our lives as Anglicans—that same powerful Word comes to us as well. As John W. Yates III says, “The firm conviction of the Anglican Reformers [especially Cranmer] was that this same voice, in the fullness of its power, still speaks through the written word of God in Scripture.”

In the “Homily on Scripture” Cranmer writes,

The words of Holy Scripture be called words of everlasting life: for they be God’s instrument, ordained for the same purpose. They have the power to convert through God’s promise and they be effectual through God’s assistance; and, being received in a faithful heart, they have ever an heavenly spiritual working in them.

Notice how Cranmer connects the power of God’s Word in the Scriptures to the conversion and transformation of our hearts. Just as God spoke into the void and turned the darkness to light, so also can he turn our hearts of stone into hearts of flesh by the power of his Word. Therefore, the Scriptures are not simply a source of infallible knowledge, just waiting there to be studied and mastered. Through the writings of the Scriptures God’s Word accosts us, masters us and, finally, transforms us.

This is important for the living of the Christian life. It is all too easy to fall into moralism: trying to right our lives by our own efforts. Typically, this takes the form of “sin management” (to use Dallas Willard’s terminology). If we curb our bad behaviors, so we think, we’ll make real progress in the Christian life. Our problem, however, is that our sinfulness goes deeper than our actions, for our actions simply manifest the state of our hearts. Our hearts need to be changed. We need new affections.

Cranmer would tell us to turn to the Word with an open ear: “This Word whosoever is diligent to read and in his heart to print that he readeth, the great affection to the transitory things of this world shall be diminished in him, and the great desire of heavenly things that be therein promised of God shall increase in him.”

I would encourage you, therefore, to turn more often to the Word of God, should you desire real and lasting transformation in your life.

Blessings,

Youth Snow Day at Alta Sierra

Saturday, Feb 10

No Snow?
We’ll visit McDermont Field House
In The Parish Family

In Sympathy for …

- The Steward Family on the loss of Don's father, Donald Otis Steward, who died on January 2nd.
- Patty Smale and her family on the death of her mother, Jean Sheldon, who died on January 5th.
- Jo Ellen Holt and her family on the recent death of her brother, Jay Sperry.
- Susan Meyer on the death of her mother in September.

Congratulations to…

- Tom & Susan DeNatale on the birth on their grandchild - a healthy boy, weighing in at 9 lbs. 5 oz.

Trinity Preschool at Belcourt

We ended the year 2017, with an amazing Christmas Program. Christmas carols and a visit from Santa Claus put smiles on everyone’s faces. Father Joe joined in on the fun, singing Jingle Bells with the children and playing his guitar. Thank you Fr. Joe and thank you to everyone who made our first Christmas Program a HUGE success!

2018 has started off with a jump in enrollment and I am so excited about what this new year has in store for our Preschool. Trinity Preschool will continue to grow and offer a wonderful program for our students. If you know anyone that has preschoolers (2 yrs. – 6 yrs.), continue to send them our way. It’s so exciting and I’m so proud of our entire Staff.

Helping Deacon Ron with FLOOD Ministries is always exciting for our Trinity Preschool Families. We donated almost 20 FLOOD bags. AWESOME JOB!

Would you like to be a part of our preschool? VOLUNTEERS ARE ALWAYS WELCOME! You can volunteer by reading stories, baking, assisting in art projects and MORE! Do you have an idea that would be fun to incorporate into a activity with our Trinity Students? Don’t be shy; contact me! I would love for all of you to join in on the fun! Call the preschool office at 661-665-7713.

Jennifer Coburn,
Director
ASH WEDNESDAY
On Wednesday, February 14th, we will have three services of the Imposition of Ashes and Holy Eucharist in our Fellowship Hall at:

7:00 a.m. (no music)
12:00 noon (no music)
7:00 p.m. (music with full choir)

PRAYER VIGIL for MISSIONS
February 24
Sign-ups begin February 11 at church or online

Save the Date
March 17, 2018
St. Patrick’s Day

LENTEN QUIET DAY

Lenten Evening Prayer
Wednesday Evenings
5:30—6:00
February 21—March 21
FEBRUARY BIRTHDAYS

Susie Dietze
Michael Longbottom
Sandy Roper
Roland Bogie
Melanie Mullins
Juana De La Cruz
Charisse Adams

Kelly Ludwin
Madeline Ming
John Karnes
Tom DeNatale
Wayne Deats
Ben Fitzgerald
Merry McCalley

Robert Thomas
Chris Powers
Elaine Kelly
Bob Yerry
Jacob Longbottom
Mildred Woods

If you notice a missing birthday, please call Tara in the church office at 665-7713.

TRINITY STATS

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Total Pledged: $2,714,692
Total Collected (12/31/17): $2,753,829

WORSHIP SERVICES

Sunday Morning
8 a.m. Holy Communion
10 a.m. Holy Communion

Thursday Morning
10 a.m. Healing Service

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Paul Wagner  Sr. Warden
Dennis Gibson Jr. Warden
Kaye Camp  Clerk
Priscilla Beck
Steven Brown
Phil Lamirand
Larry Bright
Jerry Starr
Lynne Hall*
Paul Hancock*
Liz Kinney*
Chris Thomas*
Ed Taylor  Treasurer

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www.trinitybakersfield.com

OUR CLERGY

The Very Rev. Dr. Karl E. Dietze, Rector
The Rev. Joseph Lawrence, Assistant
The Rev. John M. Wilcox, Retired
The Rev. John LaMar, Deacon
The Rev. Ron Christolear, Deacon

2018

Board of Directors

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Dennis Gibson  Jr. Warden
Kaye Camp  Clerk
Priscilla Beck
Steven Brown
Phil Lamirand
Larry Bright
Jerry Starr
Lynne Hall*
Paul Hancock*
Liz Kinney*
Chris Thomas*

Delegates

Dennis Mullins
Melanie Mullins
Milton Pope
Chris Thomas
Paul Wagner

*newly elected

Alternate

Jenny Mason

Ed Taylor  Treasurer