



**Barnabas** SAINT  
CLARKSFIELD

**February 2024**

**[barnabas-oldham.co.uk](http://barnabas-oldham.co.uk)**

## Services at St Barnabas' Church

**Sunday 9:30 am Parish Worship**

**Wednesday 10:00 am Bible study**

**Thursday 10:00 am Holy Communion (said)**

**The first Wednesday of each month: Holy Communion  
at the Alexandra Nursing Home in Glodwick, at 11:15 am.**

**Baptisms and marriages by arrangement with the Vicar.**

**Please submit items for the March magazine by 15  
February. Please e-mail files to paulmonk111@gmail.com**

## People at St Barnabas' Church

### Vicar

**The Revd Dr Paul Monk**

**St Barnabas' Vicarage, Arundel Street, Clarksfield, Oldham OL4 1NL**

**Tel: (0161) 624 7708**

### Lay Readers

**Peter Haslam (0161) 345 0215**  
**Lucie Reilly (07880) 861 751**

### Wardens

**Peter Haslam (0161) 345 0215**  
**Lucie Reilly (07880) 861 751**

**Administrator**

**Sarah Gura (07708) 714 813**

**Community Worker**

**MaryAnne Oduntan (07908) 004 682**

**Treasurer**

**Mrs Vicky Heaton (07468) 463 753**

**Parish Hall bookings**

**The Vicar (0161) 624 7708**

## Letter from the Vicar

As I write, snow lies on the ground and the heating cannot dispel the cold. The obvious response is to wrap up warm with lots of sweaters and blankets, insulating myself from the cold. It works, which is why I wrap up warm.

Most of us do the same in a moral sense, insulating ourselves from what we cannot cope with, find distasteful, or think is plain nasty. 'Moral insulation' is a form of self-defence in exactly the same way as layering ourselves with blankets acts as physical insulation.

And we do the same spiritually as we do physically and morally.

But there is a difference. While surrounding ourselves with blankets is essential, layering ourselves with moral protection can cause us to distance ourselves from the truth. And any layering in a spiritual sense is very unwise, for it entails insulating ourselves from God Himself, allowing a distance to exist between Him and us.

God tells us to love Him with our mind to prevent disillusion, and He tells us to love Him with our soul to prevent our distancing ourselves completely.

Ash Wednesday occurs at the exact half-way point in February, with celebration before and penance afterward. Most obviously, we feast before Ash Wednesday and fast afterward; we say the Gloria before and stay silent afterward, and so on. These examples are external but help remind us of the internal demands of Lent: we need the season of Lent to remove anything spiritual that insulates us from God. That way we recognise the 'feel' of God on our soul in prayer and worship, and we are more likely to understand the demands of His love as we seek to serve. For example, removing 'spiritual insulation' helps us understand scripture. As the monk Thomas Merton once said, 'Lent is not just a time for squaring conscious accounts: but for realising what we had perhaps not seen before'.

For these reasons, perhaps our first prayer this Lent should be for the courage to draw closer to God and get rid of those things which separate us from Him.

Wishing everyone a wonder-filled Lent.

PAUL

# News

## Confirmation 2024

The 2024 annual confirmation service occurs on Sunday 16 June. The service will occur mid-afternoon and probably in Leesfield church. Confirmation classes will start in April.

To be eligible, candidates must be baptised into a Trinitarian Christian denomination, and aged 12 or more on the day of the confirmation service. A formal call seeking expressions of interest will be issued in early April, after Easter.

Please speak to Paul if you have any queries.



## Ash Wednesday

Ash Wednesday this year occurs on 14 February. Two services occur that day:

10:00 am at St Barnabas Church

7:00 pm at Waterhead Church

Both involve ashing, liturgy, and Holy Communion.



**'Remember that New Year's resolution  
you made to eat healthy foods?'**  
(with apologies to Genesis 3)

# Bible readings for February

## Sunday 4 February

### Second Sunday before Lent

First: Proverbs 8:1, 22–31

Epistle: Colossians 1:15–20

Gospel: John 1:1–14

## Sunday 18 February

### First Sunday of Lent

First: Genesis 9:8–17

Epistle: 1 Peter 3:18–end

Gospel: Mark 1:9–15

## Sunday 11 February

### Sunday next before Lent

First: 2 Kings 2:1–12

Epistle: 2 Corinthians 4:3–6

Gospel: Mark 9:2–9

## Sunday 25 February

### Second Sunday of Lent

First: Genesis 17:1–7, 15–16

Epistle: Romans 4:13–end

Gospel: Mark 8:31–end

***Our life and our death is with our neighbour.  
If we gain our brother, we have gained God,  
but if we scandalise our brother,  
we have sinned against Christ.***

Antony of Egypt

## Church diary

Wednesday 14 Feb	10:00 am: <b>Ash Wednesday</b> service in the Church.
Sunday 10 March	9:30 am: service for <b>Mothering Sunday</b> .
Sunday 24 March	9:30 am: service for <b>Palm Sunday</b> .
Thursday 28 March	7:00 pm: service for <b>Maundy Thursday</b> .
Friday 29 March	9:30 am: service for <b>Good Friday</b> .
Sunday 31 March	9:30 am: service for <b>Easter DAY</b> . Please be aware that the clocks change early on Easter Day.
Tues–Fri, 2–5 April	10:00—2:00: <b>Holiday activity club</b> , in the Main Hall.
Sunday 14 April	approx. 10:30 am: <b>Annual Parochial Church Meeting</b> .
Sunday 16 June	Mid-afternoon: annual <b>Confirmation Service</b> .

Antony was born in 251 AD, in Lower Egypt, to wealthy landowner parents.

At this time the Roman Empire occupied almost all of Egypt and had done for centuries. Its authority and power controlled everything. So, while Christianity had entered Egypt almost immediately following the day of Pentecost, its existence remained precarious.

Sometimes the Roman Empire tolerated Christianity, but at other times it persecuted the new faith without mercy: it was seen as subversive and therefore a threat to imperial power. During the time of Antony's upbringing, the Empire was ruled by no fewer than ten emperors during a fifteen-year period, implying extreme instability. It's no wonder that when Diocletian came to the imperial throne in 284 AD, he refused to tolerate any opposition, and resumed the persecutions of Christians with an almost insane savagery.

Antony would have feared for the future after seeing this see-sawing of power and political chaos. Perhaps that's why, when he heard a visiting preacher proclaiming Matthew 19, 'If you wish to be perfect, go, sell your possessions, and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me', he felt Jesus was speaking directly to him. He was twenty years old. He had recently inherited great wealth on his parents' death, so he gave away some of his family's lands to neighbours, sold the remaining property, and gave the funds to the poor. He then left to live a life as a recluse.

Antony lived alone as a hermit spending his time in prayer and making rush mats to sell for food. After fifteen years of this life, at the age of thirty-five, Antony withdrew further to live in absolute solitude. He went deep into the desert to a mountain by the Nile called Pispir, in an area enclosed within an old abandoned Roman fort.

He was not entirely alone, however, as other hermits threw food for him over the fort wall. In context, they may also have been fleeing the Roman persecutions of Christianity. And pilgrims occasionally visited even though he refused to see them. Nevertheless, gradually a number of would-be disciples established themselves in caves and huts around the mountain, and a small colony of ascetics formed: they begged Anthony to guide them in the spiritual life. He yielded eventually and, in about the year 305 AD, emerged from his retreat.

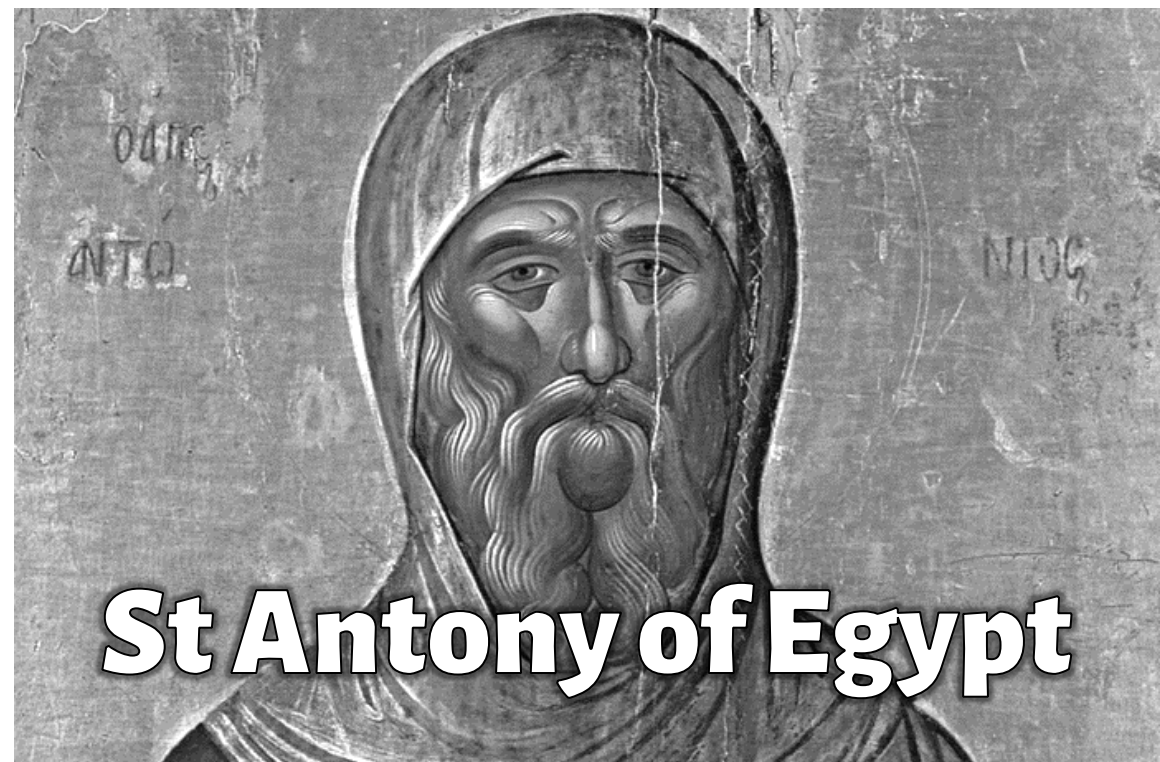
For five or six years, Antony devoted himself to instructing and organising this ever-growing body of monks. He then withdrew again into the inner desert that lay between the Nile and the Red Sea, settling on a mountain-side where there still stands the monastery that bears his name, Deir Mar Antonios. He spent the last forty-five years of his life there. During this last seclusion, he freely saw those who came to visit him and, during the last great

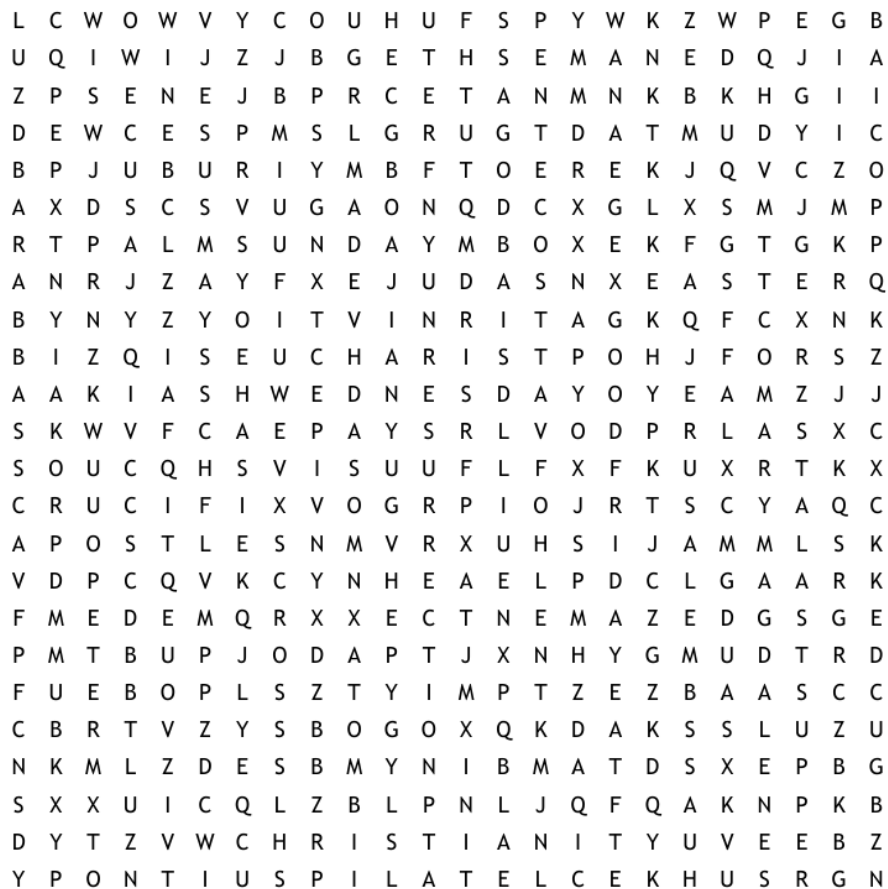
Roman persecution (around 311 AD), Antony travelled to Alexandria and visited those imprisoned there.

Antony composed a simple rule of life for the monks scattered around him in the desert. In part it was intended to stop abuse and preserve the form of life he had come to love, as he did not want continual disruptions to interrupt his prayer life and separate him from God. He therefore drew up a series of rules, adapting his own self-imposed ideas of discipline and prayer. He clearly wanted to preserve his own insights and share the joys he knew. The rule succeeded insofar as his legacy spread throughout Christendom.

Antony lived to an extreme age—legend suggests he died aged 104.

Some years later, Athanasius of Alexandria wrote Antony's biography, but it is not history in any modern sense; rather, it helps explain why he may properly be called the 'Father of Monasticism' in Western Christianity, hence his much later title of 'Antony the Great'. His biography was translated into Latin sometime before 374 AD, in which form it became one of the best-known works of literature in the Christian world, a status it would hold throughout the Middle Ages. Furthermore, the rule of St Antony helped spread the concept of Christian monasticism, particularly in Western Europe via its many Latin translations; monasteries based on this rule helped preserve learning and order during the so-called 'Dark Ages' and therefore helped create modern Europe.





Palm Sunday  
Crucifix  
Peter  
Cross  
Pontius Pilate  
INRI  
Apostles

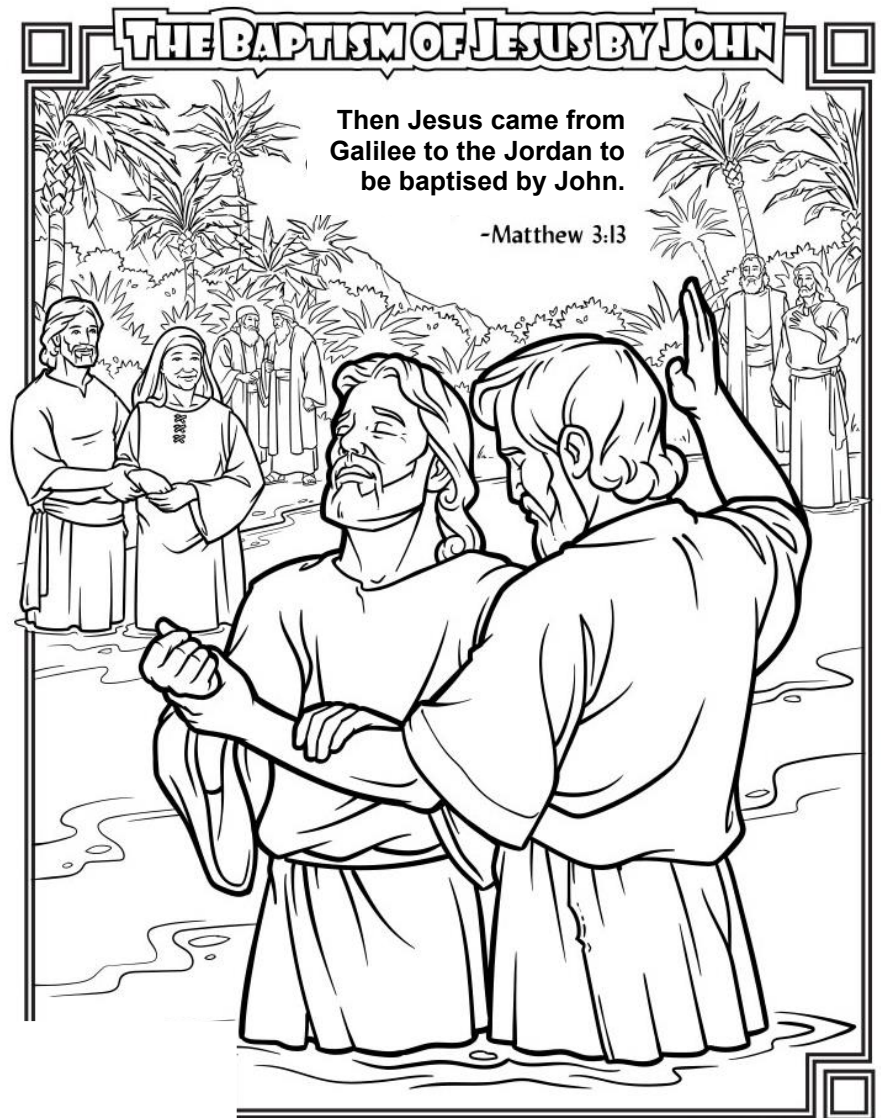
Lent  
Barabbas  
Jerusalem  
Ash Wednesday  
Pentecost  
Gethsemane

Jesus  
Tomb  
God  
Wine  
Mary Magdalene  
Easter

Good Friday  
Resurrection  
Eucharist  
Last Supper  
Judas  
Christianity

## Lent wordsearch

Can you find all these words in the grid above?



Then Jesus came from  
Galilee to the Jordan to  
be baptised by John.

-Matthew 3:13

## Colour this page

The Church commences the season of Lent by remembering  
the baptism of Jesus by his cousin John the Baptist.

# From the parish registers

## Christian baptism

Sunday 21 January Sebastian Daniel Philips, at Waterhead Church.

## Christian funeral

Wednesday 3 January Roy Stanley Fryer, at St John the Baptist Church, Hey.

Wednesday 10 January Ann Garforth, at Waterhead Church.

Monday 15 January Audrey Byrom, at St Thomas Church, Moorside.

Maureen Blower, at Oldham Crematorium.

Wednesday 31 January Val Wild, at Oldham Crematorium.

# Holiday Club

We aim to host a family activity club during the first week of April (which is the first week of the Easter school break). It's totally free: we have received funding from the Department for Education, as administered by Oldham Council.

We convene on Tuesday–Friday, 2–5 April, 10:00–2:00 pm and all are welcome, but we give priority to children in receipt of free school meals. All children should be accompanied by an adult, please.

Booking is essential. Please scan the QR code, or text (07492) 849 158, giving your child's name, age, contact number, and session date. Thank you.



Funded by  
  
Department  
for Education



# Family activity club

Food • Friendship • Fun • Free



Tuesday–Friday, 2–5 April 10:00 am—2:00 pm

All children must always be accompanied by an adult.

[barnabas-thrive-oldham.co.uk](http://barnabas-thrive-oldham.co.uk)



Welcome dear feast of Lent: who loves not thee,  
He loves not Temperance, or Authority,  
But is composed of passion.  
The Scriptures bid us fast; the Church says, now:  
Give to your Mother, what you would allow  
To every Corporation.

\* \* \*

It's true, we cannot reach Christ's fortieth day;  
Yet to go part of that religious way,  
Is better than to rest:  
We cannot reach our Saviour's purity;  
Yet are bid, Be holy ev'n as he.  
In both let 's do our best.

Who goes in the way which Christ has gone,  
Is much more sure to meet with him, than one  
Who travels the by-ways:  
Perhaps my God, though he be far before,  
May turn, and take me by the hand, and more  
May strengthen my decays.

Yet Lord instruct us to improve our fast  
By starving sin and taking such repast  
As may our faults control:  
That ev'ry man may revel at his door,  
Not in his parlour; banqueting the poor,  
And among those his soul. **George Herbert (1593–1633)**

# Lent





**SAINT  
Barnabas  
CLARKSFIELD**

**Service in preparation for  
the observance of a holy Lent**

# **Ash Wednesday**

**Eucharist and ashing**

**Wednesday 14 February, at 10:00 pm**

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**SAINT  
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# **Easter Sunday**

**A joy-filled service for Easter**

**Sunday 31 March at 9:30 am**

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'Tis spring; come out to ramble  
The hilly brakes around,  
For under thorn and bramble

About the hollow ground  
The primroses are found.  
And there's the windflower chilly  
With all the winds at play,  
And there's the Lenten lily  
That has not long to stay  
And dies on Easter day.

And since till girls go maying  
You find the primrose still,  
And find the windflower playing  
With every wind at will,  
But not the daffodil,

Bring baskets now, and sally  
Upon the spring's array,  
And bear from hill and valley  
The daffodil away  
That dies on Easter day.

**A E Housman (1859–1936)**

## **The Lent lily**

# Pray as you can ...

**1** Many people find it easier to communicate when facing the person to whom they are talking. That way, we can direct our voice towards them and observe the expressions on their face as we speak. We can also see to what extent our message is understood and if we need to say more or stop to listen.

In the same way, it's a good idea to look toward God when we pray. The Scriptures say that God is a Spirit so we need a form of prayer that is led by promptings of the Holy Spirit. During times of prayer, we direct our prayers toward God rather than into some vague space we might call 'Heaven'. That's why St Paul tells his disciples to 'Pray in the Spirit'.

When first learning how to pray in this way, it can be useful to consciously think of God by using a picture of something that (for us) helps to represent God. We then direct our prayers to that image.

This practice will probably feel artificial at first. Nevertheless, when this sort of praying seems a little less self-conscious, it often helps if we next ask God to suggest a better image or picture. We hone the picture because our image of God is too immature or too small. He will improve it to make it more realistic.

God is a spirit, so the best images of God are not so much pictorial as *representing* God. For that reason, it's not uncommon for God to gently lead us beyond images and introduce us to concepts. For example, He may ask us to use a single word such as 'God', 'love', or 'spirit'.

And do not be surprised when God asks you to dispense with images altogether. We still direct our prayers to God, but the sheer inadequacy of a pictorial approach actually gets in the way of praying.

# ... not as you can't

**2** Sometimes our prayers feel plodding and (to be honest) quite a chore. We feel they're so boring that they will bore God too?

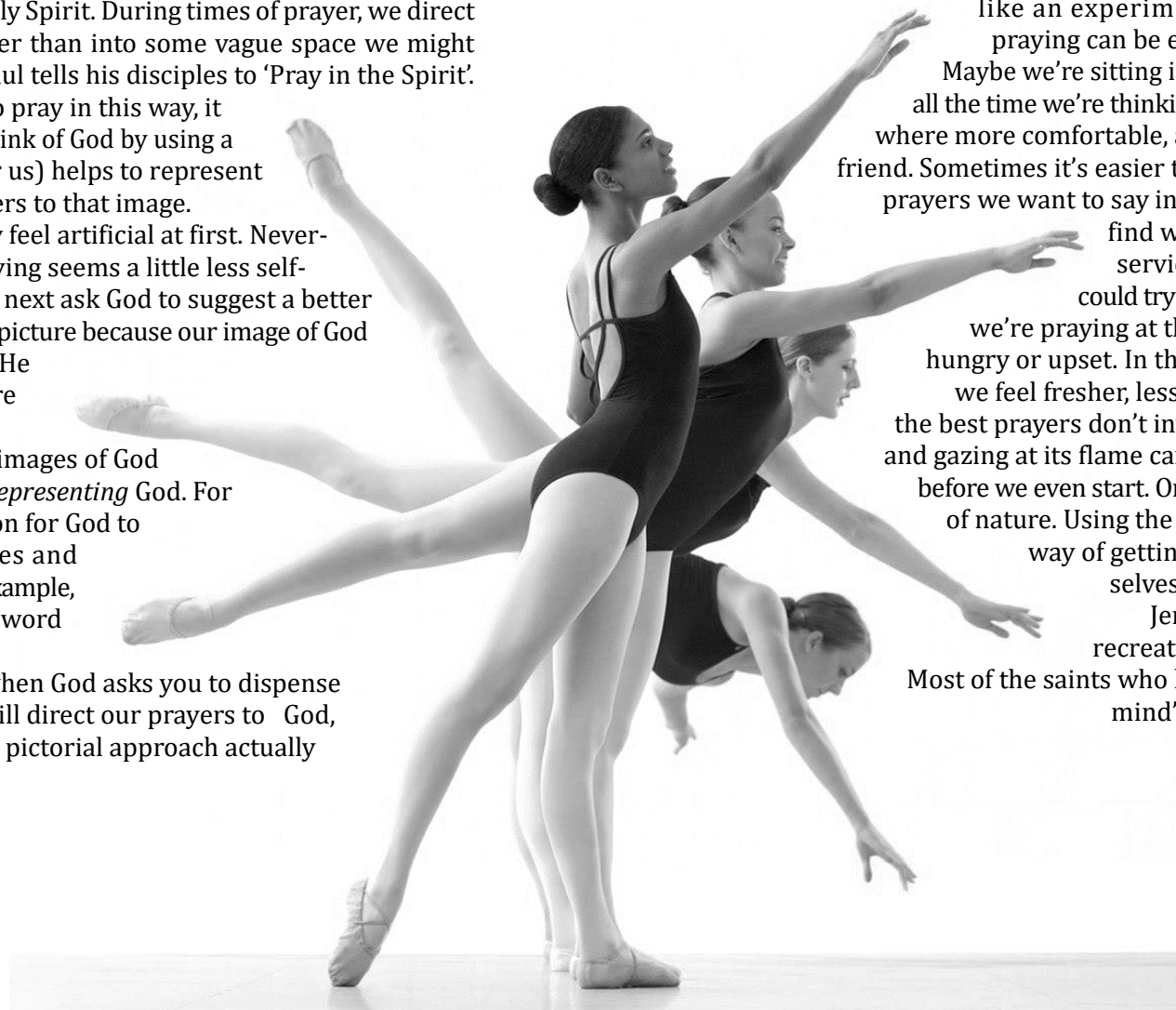
There is nothing wrong or sinful in stopping a prayer that is useless and pointless. God can always deal with our honesty, so perhaps we should start by telling him, 'Lord! I find praying is difficult and feel like it's doing no good ...'

But we should never give up. God allows us to treat prayer almost like an experiment. Trying out different ways of praying can be exciting! Here are a few suggestions.

Maybe we're sitting in an uncomfortable way or kneeling: all the time we're thinking of our knees and back. Find somewhere more comfortable, as you would when talking to a best friend. Sometimes it's easier to move back and forth between the prayers we want to say in our own words and the prayers we

find written by someone else in a book or service card. There's a place for both. We could try praying in a different way. Sometimes we're praying at the wrong time of day. We're tired or hungry or upset. In that case we should try praying when we feel fresher, less distracted, more alive. But many of the best prayers don't involve words at all. Lighting a candle and gazing at its flame can be a good way of calming our soul before we even start. Or try looking at a sunset or the glories of nature. Using the imagination is generally a powerful way of getting close to God. We can imagine ourselves in a crowd watching Jesus rise into

Jerusalem on the first Palm Sunday or recreate the Last Supper in our mind's eye. Most of the saints who looked at Jesus on the Cross in their mind's eye grew closer to God as a result.





The origins of Lent go back to 325 AD, when that period of the Church Year was first used to prepare before a baptism; in context, converts were only ever baptised on Easter Day.

Lent remembers the forty days that Jesus spent in the wilderness immediately after his baptism and before he began the public phase of his ministry in Palestine (see Matthew 3:13–17, Mark 1:9–11, Luke 3:21–22).

Oddly enough, Lent itself lasts longer than forty days because it represents an *additional* period of penitence and self-examination; from very early times, every Friday was regarded as a day of penitence because Jesus had been executed on a Friday. Incidentally, that's why some people used to eat fish on Fridays, because it was considered penitential not to eat other, more luxurious, meats.

Adding these forty extra days of penitence to the Fridays before Easter means that Lent always starts on a Wednesday.

For many people, the Wednesday that kick-starts Lent involves attending a special service in church. The service is heavily penitential and involves many elements from a traditional funeral service, including the phrase, 'Dust you are and unto dust you shall return'. To represent that dust, the priest draws a cross on their forehead in ash—hence the day's name.

Traditionally, the ash on our forehead is made by burning the palm crosses we received on the Palm Sunday during the preceding year. That's why some churches publicly collect together these old palm crosses on the Sunday before Ash Wednesday. It also explains why some homes did not display a palm cross during Lent.

To combine these ideas of penitence and funeral rites, there arose the idea of saying confession straight before Lent commenced. Therefore, starting in the Middle Ages, people went to their priest on the day before Lent started, confessed their sins, and had absolution pronounced. In the dialect of Old English, they were 'shriven', so the day before Lent became known as Shrove Tuesday.

Because Lent is a period of penitence, many people give up all foods considered to be luxurious, which, in context, generally included eggs, butter and fat, and cream. A simple way to use up these special foods all at once was to fry them together, which explains why the tradition arose of eating pancakes on the day before Lent started. Incidentally, the phrase 'pancake day' first arose as late as the 1990s and was invented by UK supermarkets!

**The word 'Lent' comes from a Middle-English word *lente* which means 'springtime' and is itself descended from the Old English word for this, *lencten*.**

Receive this cross of ash upon your brow,  
Brought from the burning of Palm Sunday's cross.  
The forests of the world are burning now  
And you make late repentance for the loss.  
But all the trees of God would clap their hands  
The very stones themselves would shout and sing  
If you could covenant to love these lands  
And recognise in Christ their Lord and king.

He sees the slow destruction of those trees,  
He weeps to see the ancient places burn,  
And still you make what purchases you please,  
And still to dust and ashes you return.  
But Hope could rise from ashes even now  
Beginning with this sign upon your brow.

**Ash Wednesday** by Malcolm Guite

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# Explaining Lent and Ash Wednesday

# The second mark of mission

The word 'mission' means an important assignment given to a person or group of people. The Lord Jesus gave a mission to his church, which he often expressed in terms of his idea of 'the Kingdom'. Helping to create this Kingdom lies at the centre of the template prayer he taught us when he told us to ask God, saying, 'Your Kingdom come!'

The mission to create the Kingdom is a big subject, so the Church has helpfully issued a manifesto on mission, calling it the 'Marks of Mission'. It is based on Jesus' own mission and expresses the Anglican Communion's understanding and commitment to mission.

The Church has sub-divided the topic into five interconnected 'Marks' that each works toward the same goal.

## **The second mark of mission is to teach, baptise and nurture new believers.**

The second mark follows naturally from the first, which suggests we should, 'proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom'. It follows because there is no point in preaching and asking people we make a commitment in a 'spiritual vacuum': we must help them to become Christlike. We do so in three ways:

We **teach**, which always means *living* the faith as well as talking with a new believer, giving them reading material and oversee their studying. And 'living the faith' implies that Christianity is alive and permeates every part of our own lives.

Teach the faith is the responsibility of every Christian. (It is a modern error to assume this aspect is for those who have been trained, such as evangelists or Vicars and Lay Readers.) St Peter was a leader of the

Early Church in Jerusalem. He knew that new converts require help in understanding the Christian faith, navigating services of worship. That's why he told his own church members, 'Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have' (1 Peter 3:15–16). And, if that sounds scary, remember how Jesus himself promised that the Holy Spirit will give us the words to say (Luke 12:12).

We **baptise converts**. A baptism service is a public event with witnesses and will generally occur in a church. Christianity is not a solitary faith and requires interaction with other disciples—we become the 'body of Christ' (1 Corinthians 12).

Without baptism, a new disciple remains a mere onlooker, but baptism is a sacrament which involves the Holy Spirit. He sponsors the baptised person as they grow into membership of 'the body of Christ' as an organic spiritual entity, (1 Corinthians 12:13).

That is why there always comes a point when a person's faith cannot grow in private and needs to be declared in a public way, and why promoting baptism is a guarantee of genuine Christian faith.

We **nurture** new believers. This word means a mix of 'look after', 'care for', and 'protect' during a process of growing. We do so in response to the love of God as He lives and works in us.

In practice, nurture of new believers requires that we become part of a new believer's life. We therefore need to get to know new converts and care for them.

Is this a fast, to keep  
The larder lean?  
And clean  
From fat of veals and sheep?

Is it to quit the dish  
Of flesh, yet still  
To fill  
The platter high with fish?

Is it to fast an hour,  
Or ragg'd to go,  
Or show  
A downcast look and sour?

No; 'tis a fast to dole  
Thy sheaf of wheat,  
And meat,  
Unto the hungry soul.

It is to fast from strife,  
From old debate  
And hate;  
To circumcise thy life.

To show a heart grief-rent;  
To starve thy sin,  
Not bin;  
And that's to keep thy Lent. **Robert Herrick** (1591–1674)

**Using Trumpetware™  
2.0, Joshua attempts to  
hack the firewall of  
Jericho**  
(with sincere apologies to  
Joshua 6)



## Hunger for the Kingdom of God

Robert Herrick's poem (left) seeks to interpret Isaiah 58:6

Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen: to loose the chains of injustice and untie the cords of the yoke, to set the oppressed free and break every yoke?

The idea explains why we fast during Lent: we are working toward creating a better, God-filled society (Jesus calls that society 'the Kingdom' and tells us to pray for it daily). The struggle to create the Kingdom starts with us. To that end, we do without something such as food or time and take up something like social-justice work. ***And we do so because we wish to please God.***

# Lent

*The fruits of the earth are not brought to perfection  
immediately,  
but by time, rain and care;  
similarly, the fruits of men and women  
ripen through practice, study, time, perseverance,  
self-control and patience.*  
Antony of Egypt

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# Maundy Thursday

**Thursday 28 March at 7:00 pm**

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# Good Friday

## Friday 29 March

**Service for all the family, at 9:30 am**

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## Did you know?

When the Sabbath came, [Jesus] began to teach in the synagogue, and many who heard him were amazed. 'Where did this man get these things?' they asked. 'What's this wisdom that has been given him? What are these remarkable miracles he is performing? Isn't this the carpenter?' *Mark 6:2-3*

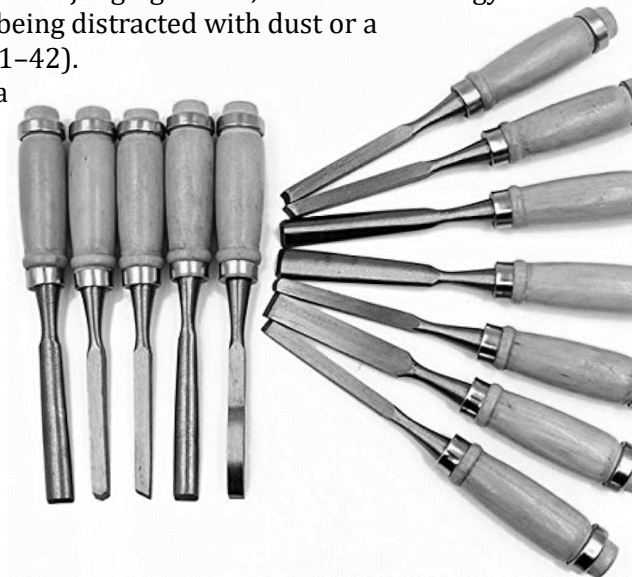
Jesus' career before his anointing and baptism is first mentioned in Mark 6:3 when his neighbours say, 'Isn't this [Jesus] the *tekton*?'

The Greek word *tekton* means a worker with wood, metal, or stone, so he was a construction worker or artisan. Greek-speaking authors such as Homer could also use this same word to mean the foreman who oversaw a construction process. Ancient traditions, though, suggest he worked with wood.

Jesus' former career is nowhere mentioned explicitly in scripture except in Matthew 13:55, but some of Jesus' own sayings imply a carpentry background. For example, when he says that 'my yoke is light' in Matthew 11:30, he is not just coining a metaphor but is probably hinting that he was himself a good carpenter, for a skilled wood worker could indeed fashion a yoke that was both comfortable to the user and could channel a mechanical force. Obvious examples include yokes to help workers carry heavy buckets or for use when ploughing laying the bar across an ox's broad shoulders.

Similarly, when Jesus spoke of judging others, he used an analogy from carpentry and of eyes being distracted with dust or a beam (Matt 7:3-5; Luke 6:41-42).

Likewise, when he later told a parable about the dangers of relying on wealth, he told a story about a man knocking down his barn in order to build an even bigger one (Luke 12:16-21). The parable of building a house on sand or rock may have been suggested by work at the same bench (Matthew 7:24-27).





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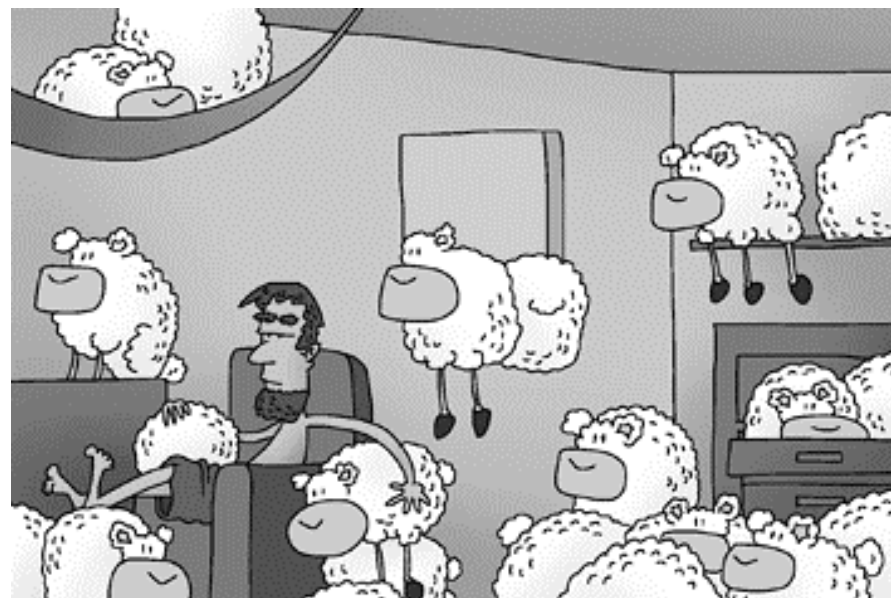
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Maybe He looked indeed  
much as Rembrandt envisioned Him  
in those small heads that seem in fact  
portraits of more than a model.  
A dark, still, young, very intelligent face,  
A soul-mirror gaze of deep understanding, unjudging.  
That face, in extremis, would have clenched its teeth  
In a grimace not shown in even the great crucifixions.  
The burden of humanness (I begin to see) exacted from Him  
That He taste also the humiliation of dread,  
cold sweat of wanting to let the whole thing go,  
like any mortal hero out of his depth,  
like anyone who has taken herself back.  
The painters, even the greatest, don't show how,  
in the midnight Garden,  
or staggering uphill under the weight of the Cross,  
He went through with even the human longing  
to simply cease, to not be.  
Not torture of body,  
not the hideous betrayals humans commit  
nor the faithless weakness of friends, and surely  
not the anticipation of death (not then, in agony's grip)  
was Incarnation's heaviest weight,  
but this sickened desire to renege,  
to step back from what He, Who was God,  
had promised Himself, and had entered  
time and flesh to enact.  
Sublime acceptance, to be absolute, had to have welled  
up from those depths where purpose  
Drifted for mortal moments.

**Denise Levertov**

# Salvator Mundi

## via crucis



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