

Daily Reflections for Lent and Holy Week

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Introduction

Please use these short readings and reflections through Lent as a part of your Lent studies and reflections. They are taken from lots of different places and People and readings are for every day beginning with the reading for Ash Wednesday. Take a few minutes each day during this period. Think about the brief quotations, and your own thoughts and response

During this Lenten period take time to reflect on your life and pray for the future... Lent is a time of reflection and cleansing - it is a time and an opportunity to get closer to God.

Contents

Introduction	2
Week 1	4
Week 2	5
Week 3	7
Week 4	9
Week 5	11
Week 6	13
HOLY WEEK.....	15
EASTER	17

Week 1

Ash Wednesday (March 2nd)

Dust you are and to dust you shall return — Genesis 3: 19

Without God our lives are meaningless. In this period of Lent we are challenged to examine our faith and our commitment to God, and to seek to get closer to Him, not just for this period, but for all eternity!

March 3rd

When you have a Liverpool shirt on your back as part of the squad, you will do anything to preserve what it stands for — Gerard Houllier (Former Liverpool FC manager)

Stamped with the cross of Christ on our foreheads, a symbol more powerful and life changing than any other, what are we prepared to do to preserve and spread that message? Throughout our Lenten journey this year, and beyond as well, pray for guidance, and strength to live as God wants

March 4th

Jesus of Nazareth was far more challenging in his own day and remains far more relevant to ours than the Church has dared to believe, let alone preach
— Bishop Tom Wright (Former Bishop of Durham)

Where is Jesus challenging us today? Where should we be making him more relevant in our lives and in our Churches?

March 5th

Presumed familiarity of Jesus and his message has led to unfamiliarity, unfamiliarity has led to contempt and contempt has led to profound ignorance
— Philosopher and theologian Dallas Willard

Pray for the desire to know God better, to learn more about his word, and to pray more often. Pray also for the Sunday School and young people and for those who are trying to teach the children about Jesus and his message.

Week 2

March 6th

Every one of us has a story that begins in the beauty, blessing and abundance of God. No matter how much damage and distortion....

— Gerard Kelly - The Prodigal Evangelical

That's how God loves us. He created us, and sees us as beautiful. Sadly we don't always look at ourselves like that. He says to each of us 'I love you, just as you are'... God has given everything for us, just because he loves us—what is our response?

March 7th

So here's what I want you to do, God helping you. Take your ordinary life—your sleeping, eating, going to work life, and place it before God as an offering. Don't become so well adjusted to your culture that you fit into it without even thinking. Instead fix your attention on God. You'll be changed from the inside out — Romans 12 (from the Message Bible)

It's easy for us to fit in with what the world expects of us, but this may be different to what God wants or expects of us. Reflect on your life and your relationship with God. Does he appear as a priority or as an after thought in our daily living.

March 8th

I stand, I look, I listen, I draw near....

— George Macdonald - A book of strife in the form of the diary of an old soul

Sometimes we stand at a distance from God but God invites us ever closer to him. He invites us to get to know him in prayer and the Bible and in fellowship with others... He invites us to gaze around us at his awesome power, and recognise that, he knows us and he loves us. Spend some time just standing, looking, listening, drawing near to God...

March 9th

If you do not know how to pray, just keep coming to the Lord. If you do not know the words to say, just keep coming. If you do not seem to have the right heart, just keep coming
— Gary Wilkerson, The Divine Intercessor

Sometimes it is hard to pray. At times like that just open yourself up to God, tell Him it's hard and tell Him your thoughts. Never give up. Never be afraid that God has abandoned us - he never will!

March 10th

Some people, like me, are born idiots, but many more become stupider as they go along
— from the film 'Forrest Gump'

How are you progressing in the Christian life journey? Do you feel closer to God now than you did this time last month, last year etc.? What are the things that still separate you from God and from other people? Pray for the desire and the strength to overcome those things.

March 11th

... I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and daughters will prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams
— words of the prophet Joel quoted by St Peter in Acts 2: 17

May we all dream dreams and see visions of a brighter future whilst constantly seeking to find out our part in building that brighter future wherever we are...

March 12th

One day youngsters will hear words they don't understand... Children from India will ask 'What is hunger?'... Children from Alabama will ask 'What is racial segregation?'... Children from Hiroshima will ask 'What is an atomic bomb?'... Children at school anywhere will ask 'What is war?...

You will answer them, you will tell them; these words are not used any more. Like stage coaches, galleys and slavery - they are words that are no longer meaningful
— Martin Luther King

There is so much to depress us as we look around at a world so often broken by violence, fear, war, abuse, hate and so on, but Christ offers hope of something better. A world of no more mourning, no crying, no pain or tears.

Pray for this world to come, and remember to ask God to show you your part in making it happen!

Week 3

March 13th

Being a Christian is more about celebrating mystery than conquering it...

— Rob Bell - Velvet Elvis

I don't know about you, but the more I get to know God, the more questions I have ! Learning to treasure those questions even when they seem unanswered is learning to journey deeper with God and recognise that if we understood him and if we could explain him, then he simply wouldn't be God and so we just give thanks for the incredible love and mercy that God shows us each day and never stop asking the questions

March 14th

The Church should consist of communities of loving defiance. Instead it consists largely of comfortable clubs of conformity

— Ronald J. Sider ('Rich Christians in an age of hunger')

How comfortable is our Church and our own role within it? What more could or should we be doing for God?

March 15th

Pray through the STOP form of prayer - S represents being SORRY for the things we have done wrong, or things that we have failed to do which we should have done. T represents our THANKS for all the good things God gives us. O is our prayer for others, and P is for PLEASE - our prayers for ourselves

March 16th

God created man in his image – unfortunately man has returned the favour !

— George Bernard Shaw.

Do you ever expect that God will be just like you, think the same as you do, make the same judgements and loving or perhaps even condemning the same people as you do... It's easy to do. We're conditioned to think our way is right, even the only way sometimes. Take time to recognise that there are things we may not agree about with people and even that we may (just occasionally!) get things wrong... It's about respect, it's about tolerance, it's about humility, but ultimately it's about love

March 17th

Jesus was crucified not in a Cathedral between two candles, but on a cross between two thieves — George Macleod, the founder of the Iona community

We cannot and should not soften the cross. It was brutal torture. One that was borne for us willingly by Jesus because he loves us... What do we offer in return?

March 18th

Evangelism means to carry Jesus in your heart and to give the presence of Jesus to someone else. They see God in us and we also see God in them. But to give Jesus to a person, you must have Jesus yourself — Mother Theresa of Calcutta

Christ commanded us to share our faith with others. It is not easy to do! How do we do it? Pray for opportunities and courage to share our faith with others...

March 19th

Peace without justice is an empty kind of peace.

Too often we restrict our thoughts to our own community, but the Christian life is about being involved in fighting for peace and justice.

Week 4

March 20th

When the Christian speaks of confidence, he does not mean a kind of starry-eyed optimism based on a theory of human progress and perfectibility. Rather he means hope based on the resurrection victory of Jesus — Archbishop Donald Coggan

Where are we placing our hope? Is it in the world, in money, in family, in cars or holidays, in our jobs etc. or is it in Christ? Is our Church a symbol of hope and light in our community?

March 21st

Young people will respond if the challenge is tough enough and hard enough. Youth wants a master and a controller. Young people were built for God, and without God as the centre of their lives they become frustrated and confused, desperately grasping for and searching for security — Billy Graham

Pray for the young people in our community today, and for our local schools.

March 22nd

If God is for us, who can be against us — Romans 8: 31

With God at our side, nothing can ever defeat us!

March 23rd

It's easy for Christians to forget how baffling a single Bible verse can be to someone who didn't grow up in the Church. Our evangelistic efforts should leave non-believers contemplative, not confused!

So many things we do in Church are quite confusing. They mean something to us, but we must be a welcoming Church for all. Pray for guidance in seeing ways in which we can improve the welcome we give to people in Church. Pray for those who contribute to the leading of worship in the Church.

March 24th

Unless the Church reaches out, it passes out... Anyone who is not prepared to pass on the gospel to others, knows not the first thing of the Christian faith.

It's easy to find excuses for not sharing our faith, particularly in the politically correct society we live, but there is no excuse. We are all the church of today. We have duties and responsibilities and we have the incredible privilege of serving God and loving his people.

March 25th

Part of a famous sermon heard and retold by Tony Campolo says, 'It's Friday but Sunday's coming! It was Friday and Mary was crying her eyes out. The disciples were running in every direction, like sheep without a shepherd. But that was Friday and Sunday's coming! It was Friday. The cynics were looking at the world and saying, 'As things have been so they shall be. You can't change anything in this world; you can't change anything.' But those cynics didn't know that it was only Friday, and Sunday's coming! It was Friday and Pilate thought he had washed his hands of a lot of trouble. The Pharisees were strutting around, laughing and poking each other in the ribs. They thought they were back in charge of things, but they didn't know that it was only Friday and Sunday's coming!'

So often we forget the victorious message of Christianity, that, on Good Friday when things seemed so hopeless, things were just beginning - God was about to defeat death once and for all!

Give thanks for the message of Easter, the message of victory over death, the message of the life transforming power of God!

March 26th

Jesus calls us all, every one of us, to come! To learn! To live differently! And to share in God's transformation of the world...

— Bishop Michael Curry - Crazy Christians

Do we try and fit in with the expectations of the world or are we thinking that maybe Jesus calls us to be a bit different? Is he calling you to be part of transforming the world for the better? How are you answering that call?

Week 5

March 27th

Every time we say 'I believe in the Holy Spirit', we mean that we believe that there is a living God able and willing to enter human personality and change it

— J.B. Phillips

We must also accept that WE are asking to be changed by this power - the power of God within us.

March 28th

There is too much defeatism in the Church - look at the New Testament model of Church. It began with 11 people on a mountain top with Jesus saying 'GO!' and they went...

The Church is growing today in many parts of the world. Pray for (and be part of) that growth where we are!

March 29th

If the American railroad companies had been interested in the transportation of people in the 1930's they would have invested in aeroplanes but they weren't! They were interested in maintaining the railroads and many went out of business

— Sandy Millar (Former Rector of Holy Trinity, Brompton)

What lessons are there to be learnt by the Church? What are we doing to maintain rather than invest? Pray for guidance and inspiration about what we need to change in order to invest!

March 30th

Lent is a time to get closer to God - it is a time to reflect on our relationship with Him and with other people.

If we are serious about a relationship with God then we need to be serious about trying to remove from our lives things that separate us from Him. We cannot compartmentalise our faith - Christianity is a life, not just a hobby that we can pick up whenever we feel like.

March 31st

Jesus said, 'I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life.' — John 8: 12

We think of those walking in darkness daily, whether through illness, grief, loneliness, addiction or conflict of any kind. Think of someone you know and pray for them today - pray that they may know the presence of God with them at all times.

April 1st

We must grow until our arms get right around the world
— General Booth, the Founder of the Salvation Army

That saying is equally true today. Our family and friends need to know they are loved, the person we sit next to in Church needs to know, our neighbour needs to know, our community needs to know, our world needs to know... Pray for all organisations helping to bring love and care to people.

April 2nd

On arriving in New York a former Archbishop of Canterbury was asked, 'Will you be visiting any night clubs in the City?' to which he replied, 'Are there any night clubs in New York?' The headline the following day was 'Archbishop gets off plane and asks, "Are there any night clubs in New York?"'

Our words can so easily become distorted. Pray that God will always give us the right thing to say, particularly in situations when we are witnessing to his glory.

Week 6

April 3rd

The Church is confronted today, as in no previous generation, with a literally world-wide opportunity to make Christ known

— Edinburgh Missionary Conference in 1910

Well, the opportunity is still there! We, as Christians, are missionaries in the mission field that is this country. To survive we will need the strength of God and the support of fellow Christians - what are we doing to seek that strength and support? Let's not let opportunities pass us by!

April 4th

Then Jesus took the 12 aside and said, 'See we are going up to Jerusalem, and everything that is written about the Son of Man by the prophets will be accomplished. For he will be handed over to the Gentiles; and he will be mocked and insulted and spat upon. After they have flogged him, they will kill him, and on the third day he will rise again.' But they understood nothing about all these things.....

— Luke 18: 31-34

Have we become immune to the suffering? Have we become so familiar with the message that we fail to recognise the true horror of the killing of Jesus, and the incredible depth of his love for us? Pray for a greater awareness of the love of God, and ask to be shown ways in which we can respond to that love.

April 5th

He who wants to enjoy the glory of the sunrise must live through the night

— *Anonymous*

Being a Christian isn't always easy! It is a faith which overcomes darkness and pain, not removes it completely

April 6th

One Sunday in an Irish village, 3 Protestant women visited a Roman Catholic Church. Recognising them and wishing to welcome them, the Priest whispered to the server, '3 chairs for the Protestant ladies.' Immediately the server jumped to his feet and said, '3 cheers for the Protestant ladies.' The congregation rose, responded heartily and the service continued!

The Church is broken and divided by so many denominations. Pray for a greater understanding between them, and that, united by the bond of Jesus Christ, we may proclaim his good news together.

April 7th

Prayers travel faster when said in unison — Latin Proverb

We need to pray regularly and that will often mean praying alone, but there are times to meet with others and pray together. United prayer is powerful prayer! What opportunities are we missing to pray together?

April 8th

The Church is the only society on earth that never loses a member through death! As a Christian I believe not just in life after death, but in life through death
— Anglican Priest David Watson, speaking whilst suffering from terminal cancer.

April it may be but this is no fool! As Christians we grieve when we lose someone we care about, but we can also celebrate and give thanks for the fact that the person is now at rest and at peace in a place of no pain, no torment, no suffering or misery. Give thanks for our loved ones - those still here with us and those whom we no longer see but have entrusted to God's eternal care.

April 9th

The test of a preacher is that his congregation goes away not saying, 'what a lovely sermon!' but 'I will do something!'

Sometimes we can blame others for apathy, but there is really no excuse! What do we do, and what are we prepared to do for our Church and, more importantly, for the sake of the gospel of Jesus.

HOLY WEEK

Palm Sunday (April 10th)

The next day the great crowd that had come to the festival heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem. So they took branches of Palm trees and went out to meet him shouting, 'Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!' — John 12:13

On Palm Sunday we recall Jesus' triumphant entry into Jerusalem. Yet, a short time later, where were those crowds? Had they changed sides, or were they just silent as Jesus went to his trial and death? It was probably a bit of both - how often do we fail to carry through our words in our lives? At times silence can be a pretty big sin too!

April 11th

There's nothing we can do to make God love us more, and there's nothing we can do to make him love us less — Author Philip Yancey

Reflect on that incredible truth, that God loves us - whoever we are and whatever we've done or been - he simply asks us to love him back...

April 12th

The following lines were scratched on the wall of a bomb blasted air raid shelter in Germany after the 2nd World War - 'I believe in the light, even when the sun doesn't shine. I believe in love, even when it isn't given. I believe in God even when his voice is silent.'

During Holy Week we look towards the cross. We see the darkness of humanity all too obviously and painfully... but we have a fuller picture, we have the faith and see the light of Easter Day!

April 13th

All too often a clear conscience is merely the result of a bad memory!

— Ancient Proverb

For many centuries some have blamed the Jews for the death of Jesus, but let's make no mistake - each time we sin we are hammering a fresh nail into Jesus, even today... Let's clear up our sins, praying for strength to overcome the things we get wrong in our lives, and try and live as Jesus wants us to live...

Maundy Thursday (April 14th)

As Jesus came and saw the City, he wept over it....

— Luke 19: 41

Think about our communities today - Is Jesus still weeping? Pray for the Holy Spirit to move people around us and pray for the spiritual healing of our nation

Good Friday (April 15th)

If you want to understand the Christian message, you must start with the wounds of Christ

— Martin Luther

Be moved by the cross - be moved by the pain and suffering Jesus accepted on your behalf... Think of the nails, the beating, the torture, think of the agony of the body stretched on the cross...

Recognise the love he felt, and feels today, which drove him to accept such punishment...

How do we, how can we, respond?

Holy Saturday (April 16th)

... Could you not keep awake one hour? — Mark 14: 37

These words are out of date order - spoken by Jesus in Gethsemane to the disciples who had fallen asleep. But they are words to reflect on for us as well - sometimes we fail to recognise priorities - there is a time to sleep, just as there is a time to work, but there is also a time to just spend in the presence of God. Do we make that time? As we approach the resurrection celebration, let's commit ourselves to not tiring ourselves out on other things, but on making that time for God...

EASTER

Easter Day (April 17th)

Jesus said, 'I am the resurrection and the life. If anyone believes in me, even though they die, they will live, and whoever lives and believes in me will never die!' — John 11: 25

CHRIST IS RISEN - ALLELUIA!

May that be the joyful and triumphant message that inspires us daily!!

A final thought!

**The resurrection of Jesus is the launching of God's new world...
— Tom Wright, Simply Good News**

We're invited on that journey...!

