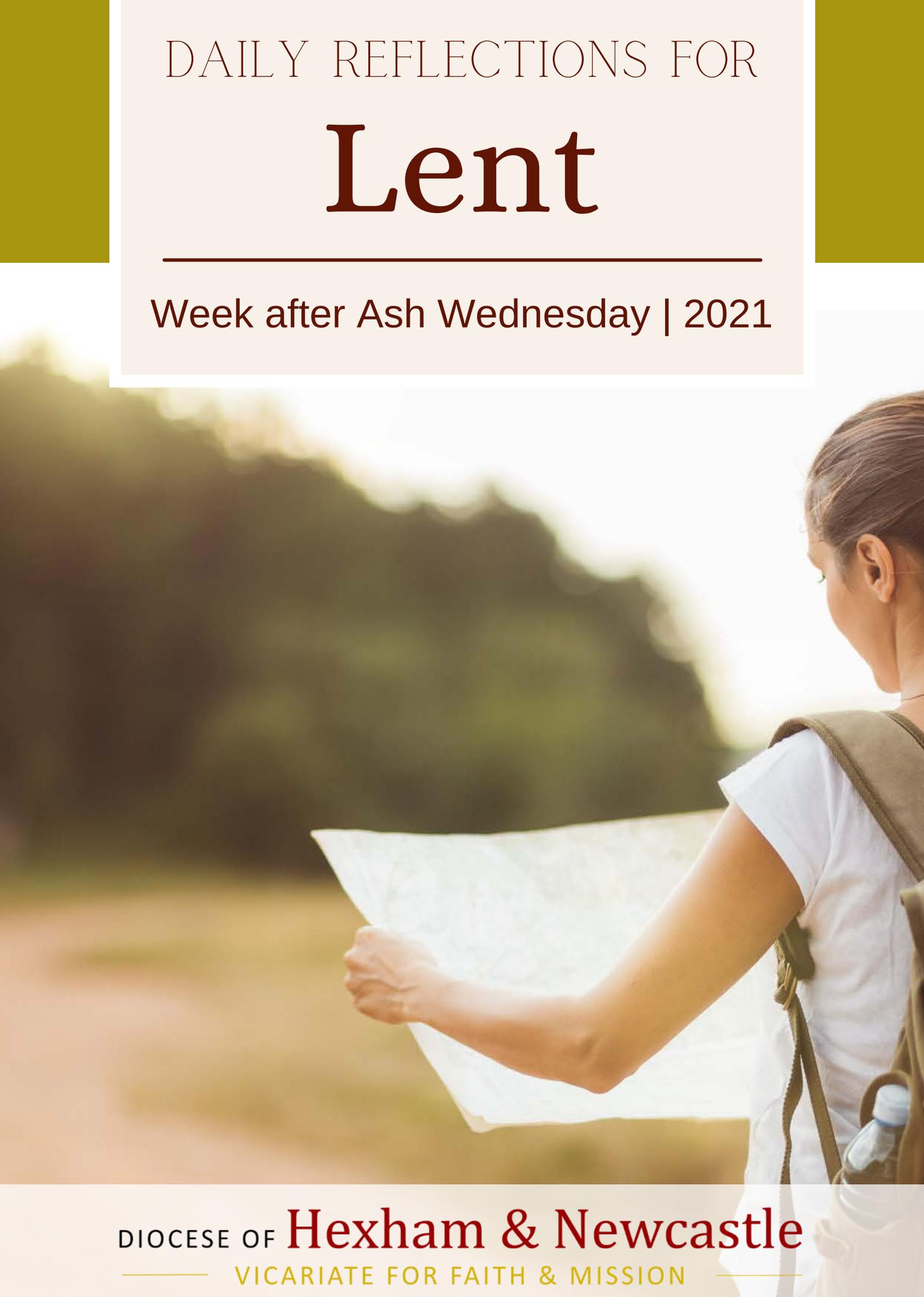


DAILY REFLECTIONS FOR

Lent

Week after Ash Wednesday | 2021

A woman with a backpack is shown from the side, holding a large map in a field. The background is a soft-focus landscape with trees and a bright sky, suggesting a sunset or sunrise. The overall mood is peaceful and contemplative.

DIOCESE OF **Hexham & Newcastle**
— VICARIATE FOR FAITH & MISSION —

Introduction

Lent means spring, the lengthening of the days, growing light and thawing ground. The earth is grimed with the tidemarks of winter and needs a good bath. Our homes and ourselves need a good clean. The months are named after purification - February - and war - March.

Winter doesn't leave without blustery battles that push things over and mess things up. If we honestly face Lent's fury, it will leave the landscapes of our lives littered with the debris of ourselves.

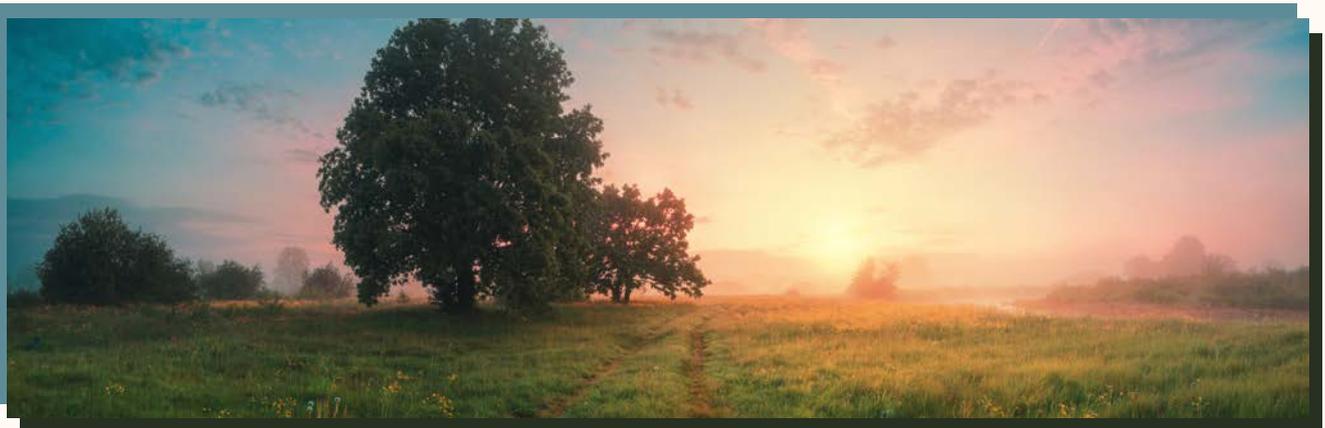
Lent isn't tidy. We start with blessed ash to show we are dust. We promise to pray, fast and give alms to show all is God's grace. We walk the 40-day journey marked with the Cross of Christ, a tree of life to beckon us back to Eden, a compass to show the way to sanctuary, a bronze serpent to save us from death in the desert.

Those of us who are baptised keep Lent in sympathy with the 'elect' -the catechumens chosen for baptism at Easter. We sympathise because we're not that different. What baptism began in us can easily be undone -and probably has been. That's why we seek penance, contrition, forgiveness, amendment. That's why, despite the present lockdown we again seek healing and wholeness, the warmth of God's mercy and the touch of his Son.

These resources are provided to stir our souls and settle our minds, to challenge new direction and shed tears of hope and reassurance. This Lent, we look to renewing our commitment to being missionary disciples as our parishes look beyond the lockdown. Thanks to those who have so generously contributed to them.

Monsignor Andrew Faley

Episcopal Vicar for the Vicariate of Faith & Mission



A Daily Prayer for Missionary Discipleship

Heavenly Father,
when your only begotten Son Jesus Christ
rose from the dead,
he commissioned his followers
to “Go and make disciples of all nations”
and you remind us that through our Baptism
we are made sharers in the mission of the Church.

Empower us by the gifts of the Holy Spirit
to be courageous and enthusiastic
in bearing witness to the Gospel,
so that the mission entrusted to the Church,
which is still very far from completion,
may find new and effective expressions
that bring life and light to the world.

Help us make it possible for all peoples
to experience the saving love
and mercy of Jesus Christ,
who lives and reigns with you
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
One God, forever and ever.

Amen.

Feast Days during Lent

Monday, 22nd February	The Chair of St. Peter, Apostle
Monday, 1st March	St. David Bp, Patron of Wales
Wednesday, 17th March	St. Patrick, Apostle of Ireland
Friday, 19th March	St. Joseph, Husband of the Blessed Virgin Mary
Saturday, 20th March	St. Cuthbert Bp, Patron of the Diocese
Thursday, 25th March	The Annunciation of the Lord
Sunday, 28th March	Palm Sunday of the Passion of the Lord

Wednesday, 17th February 2021

ASH WEDNESDAY

Joel 2:12-18, Ps. 50:3ff, 2 Cor. 5:20-6:2; Mt. 6:1-6, 16-18

“We are ambassadors for Christ,” so St Paul tells us this at the beginning of today’s Second Reading. Do you remember before going out on a school trip or going to a sports event the headteacher saying, “Remember when you go out of here you are ambassadors for the school”?

An ambassador is someone who represents the country or organisation that s/he is from. As far as the world is concerned we are Christ. Our example will either attract others or put them off Christ’s message.



The call to repentance in our First Reading and the familiar disciplines of prayer, fasting and good works that we take up in Lent, are

designed to help us become more like Christ, to be good ambassadors. Notice that all three are daily, regular disciplines. We are expected to pray every day of our life; to be disciplined in our eating, drinking, and indeed every aspect of our life, every day; and reaching out to others in their need is fundamental to our faith, every day.

In Lent, however, we are invited to pay particular attention to these things and to think what more we might do. Perhaps, in thinking about what we might do this Lent we might think, if we are to be better ambassadors for Christ, of what we might begin in these forty days and sustain into the future even after Lent is over.

Whatever we decide to do, the words of St Teresa of Avila will help us focus on our calling to be ambassadors, “Christ has no body now but yours. No hands, no feet on earth but yours. Yours are the eyes through which he looks with compassion on this world. Yours are the feet with which he walks to do good...”

Sean Hall, St Mary’s, Forest Hall

“ *Christ has no body
now but yours.* ”

Thursday, 18th February 2021

Deuteronomy 30:15-20; Psalm: 1:1-4,6; Luke 9:22-25

As we set off on our Lenten journey, let's pick up the cross that will lead us to victory. We know what a cross is not. It is not submitting to a bully who thereby never gets corrected. It is not a seasonal fast amongst the year-long binge. The cross we carry as we follow Christ is the sum of our hearts' resistance to his call. Confessional regulars know full well what niggling little habits trip them up on their way to holiness. Up they will pick that stumbling block and turn it into a cross.

Christ's burden is light but our sin is heavy so, as we carry our cross along his path, there's no need to beat ourselves up. The world will do plenty of that. Even our Lord fell three times under the weight of our sins, but he got up again, and so must we. Repent and try again. Neither should we flatter ourselves, for God alone can raise us from the dead. Daily, we must put to death our worldly instincts and habits, so we can live more fully as children of God and help to bring about his kingdom.

Keep proclaiming the truth, sharing the love and being the light. For us sinners, it is hard enough. And eat the chocolate, because we're all gonna need it.

Frederique Gill, Blessed Edmund Duke Parish, Coxhoe/Sedgefield/Trimdon

Friday, 19th February 2021

Isaiah 58:1-9; Psalm 50:3-6, 18-19; Matthew 9:14-15.

I don't really like fasting. Yet, it's interesting what we can learn about ourselves when we fast. Not all of it good. Sometimes in the past, when I've been fasting during Lent, people have said that they are going out for a meal with friends. My immediate response was "Lucky you!" as the hunger pangs echoed around my stomach. That, I suppose, is envy. On other occasions, my reaction to people going out for a Lenten get-together has been indignation: "Going out for a meal? During Lent?!" So, sadly, envy and indignation are both facets of who I am. But do I, perhaps, see traces of something similar in today's gospel passage when the disciples of John the Baptist ask of Jesus: "Why is it that we and the Pharisees fast, but your disciples do not?" Might this too be envy, or indignation, or something else?

Fasting cannot be an end in itself. It shouldn't lead either to envy or to feeling virtuous. Fasting is about choosing to go without things we don't actually need so as to focus more deliberately on those things we do need. So, what do I need? What is good for me, better for me - at every level? What are the things I know, deep down, that I am challenged to do to enable the Good News of Jesus to become more real for others? And what things, instead, do I tend to be drawn towards to satisfy my comfort rather than my need or my mission? What are the things from which I need to fast this Lent so that I can focus more deliberately on my calling as a '2021 disciple' of Jesus?

Fr. David Coxon, Parish of St John Boste, West Durham.

Saturday, 20th February 2021

Isaiah 58: 9-14 Psalm: 86: 1-2; Luke 5: 27-32

Have you ever judged a person based on how they look, what they do or where they are from? Have you ever internally judged how good a 'catholic' a person is? If we are truly honest with ourselves, most of us probably have. In today's Gospel reading, the Jewish religious leaders are flabbergasted at the fact that Jesus calls Levi the tax collector to follow him and that he chooses to dine with the outcasts. Why? Because the Pharisees and Sadducees expected Jesus to dine with them, after all they were the ones who had followed all of the 613 commandments, whilst at the same time ostracising all those who couldn't like the sick, the prostitutes, the shepherds, the tax collectors and those who were ill.

A great priest once told me that 'if you can't find Jesus in the homeless man at the door of the church, you will never find Christ in the Chalice on the altar'. Growing up, my late brother and I were polar opposites. He had many demons; drug addiction, regular involvement with police, one priest even jokingly offered to exorcise him to try and free him from his troubles. But whenever we went to church he was the first to seek out the homeless people on the streets in the town outside, he was the first to give them what little he could actually afford, he was the first to seek out the broken, the outcasted and the marginalised and share a smile, a joke or a cup of coffee, whilst I shamefully was the first to go in and find 'our' pew where we had always sat for many years. When I looked at my brother, I saw the love of Christ radiating through him. A broken and deeply troubled soul through no fault of his own who, to many might not have fulfilled the criteria of being a 'good Catholic', found it within himself to live out Jesus' two most important commands, namely; to 'love God with all your heart' and to 'love thy neighbour'. So, inspired by today's Gospel, let's embrace the call to truly be catholic, i.e. to be universal, welcoming and inclusive of all those on the fringes. Let's live out God's love rather than try to chart how deserving of it we are. As a universal Church, if we are to truly move forward, we need to ensure we do not judge, we do not try and keep score of how many rules we obey but ensure that we share Christ's love with all those we meet, wherever they are and whatever they have done. God bless you all and I wish you a spiritually refreshing Lent. Amen.

Andrew Young, St. Joseph's Catholic Academy and the parishes of Hebburn and Jarrow.





DIOCESE OF **Hexham & Newcastle**
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