



**St Andrew's Parish Church Guernsey**  
**A Service for Sunday 21 February 2021 – the First Sunday of Lent**  
**'Spring-cleaning of hearts, minds and spirits'**  
**Compiled by Rev Juliette E C Robilliard**

**Welcome to worship**

Whatever time of day you are joining this service, God's peace be with you.

**Music**

The hymns and anthem are sung by the St Martin's Voices of St Martin-in-the-Fields Church, London. The music can be accessed from the mp3 links provided. If your device is unable to open the links, I invite you to choose an alternative from the range available on the Internet.

**Introduction**

Today we begin our journey through Lent. Lent often gets a really bad press, as being the kill-joy church season because part of the focus is penitential. Tim inferred last weekend that with lockdown, we might all feel that we have suffered sufficient penitence already! Let us, therefore, live Lent more lightly: for a start, Lent actually means 'spring season'. We know that spring weather can be taciturn until it finally shakes off the winter gloom, however, by the signs of spring flowers we know we are moving in the right direction. Why not apply the same logic to spring-cleaning our hearts, minds and spirits? The opening hymn links to today's Gospel reading: it starts in sombre mood but moves us forward to the eternal spring season of Eastertide.

**Opening Hymn 'Forty days and forty nights' George Hunt Smyttan (1822-1870), Francis Pott (1832-1909)**

	Forty days and forty nights thou wast fasting in the wild; forty days and forty nights tempted, and yet undefiled.	4	And if Satan, vexing sore, flesh or spirit should assail, thou, his vanquisher before grant we may not faint nor fail.
2	Sunbeams scorching all the day; chilly dew-drops nightly shed; prowling beasts about thy way; stones thy pillow, earth thy bed.	5	So shall we have peace divine; holier gladness ours shall be; round us too shall angels shine, such as ministered to thee.
3	Let us thine endurance share, and awhile from joys abstain, with thee watching unto prayer, strong with thee to suffer pain?	6	Keep, O keep us, Saviour dear, ever constant by thy side; that with thee we may appear at the eternal Eastertide.



Forty\_days\_and\_forty\_nights.mp3

## Introduction to confession

Does anyone enjoy admitting to having done something wrong? Let's think of confession as making a positive out of a negative. Spiritual spring-cleaning is seeking forgiveness of our sins to restore our relationship with God. Pope Francis, in his Ash Wednesday address gives a guide for turning negatives into positives, which I quote now:

**'Do you want to Fast this Lent?** *Word by Pope Francis*

Fast from hurting words ... and say kind words.  
Fast from sadness ... and be filled with gratitude.  
Fast from anger ... and be filled with patience.  
Fast from pessimism ... and be filled with hope.  
Fast from worries ... and have trust in God.  
Fast from complaints ... and contemplate simplicity.  
Fast from pressures ... and be prayerful.  
Fast from bitterness ... and fill your hearts with joy.  
Fast from selfishness ... and be compassionate to others.  
Fast from grudges ... and be reconciled.  
Fast from words ... and be silent, so you can listen.'

While we reflect on those words, let's pause to listen to the anthem which petitions for God's mercy and forgiveness - '*Lord for thy tender mercies sake*' by *Richard Farrant 1530-1580*



Lord\_for\_thy\_tender\_  
mercys\_sake\_Farrant.n

## Confession

We come to God as one from whom no secrets are hidden,  
to ask for his forgiveness and peace.

Wash away all my iniquity  
and cleanse me from my sin:  
Lord, have mercy.

Against you, you only have I sinned  
and done what is evil in your sight:  
Christ, have mercy.

Create in me a pure heart, O God,  
and renew a steadfast spirit within me.  
Lord, have mercy.

## Absolution

Be assured of God's forgiveness by the words that I offer:

May the God of love and power  
forgive you and free you from your sins,  
heal and strengthen you by his Spirit,  
and raise you to new life in Christ our Lord. Amen.

## **Old Testament Bible Reading: Genesis 9: 8-17**

### **God establishes a covenant with Noah**

<sup>8</sup> Then God said to Noah and to his sons with him, <sup>9</sup> 'As for me, I am establishing my covenant with you and your descendants after you, <sup>10</sup> and with every living creature that is with you, the birds, the domestic animals, and every animal of the earth with you, as many as came out of the ark. <sup>11</sup> I establish my covenant with you, that never again shall all flesh be cut off by the waters of a flood, and never again shall there be a flood to destroy the earth.' <sup>12</sup> God said, 'This is the sign of the covenant that I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for all future generations: <sup>13</sup> I have set my bow in the clouds, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and the earth. <sup>14</sup> When I bring clouds over the earth and the bow is seen in the clouds, <sup>15</sup> I will remember my covenant that is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh; and the waters shall never again become a flood to destroy all flesh. <sup>16</sup> When the bow is in the clouds, I will see it and remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is on the earth.' <sup>17</sup> God said to Noah, 'This is the sign of the covenant that I have established between me and all flesh that is on the earth.'

### **Reflection: Part 1**

Who doesn't love a rainbow? When we look up, we pause and wonder. During the lockdowns, rainbows have been a sign of our covenant of togetherness seeking the common good through the pandemic. Now we know why God chose the rainbow to be a sign of his covenant promising preservation of life. The words that stand out for me are "God said, 'This is the sign of the covenant that I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for all future generations:'" God, therefore, has made his covenant with all people, in perpetuity, to seek their preservation without asking for anything in return. Our life is a gift without condition: how do we respond to the magnitude of such love?

## **New Testament Reading: 1 Peter 3: 18- end**

### **Christ suffering for doing right**

<sup>18</sup> For Christ also suffered for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, in order to bring you to God. He was put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit, <sup>19</sup> in which also he went and made a proclamation to the spirits in prison, <sup>20</sup> who in former times did not obey, when God waited patiently in the days of Noah, during the building of the ark, in which a few, that is, eight people, were saved through water. <sup>21</sup> And baptism, which this prefigured, now saves you—not as a removal of dirt from the body, but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, <sup>22</sup> who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers made subject to him.

### **Reflection: Part 2**

The above extract parachutes us midway through the Peter's letter.

**Who was the letter written to?** To Christians who had been dispersed throughout parts of the Roman Empire fleeing persecution in Israel.

**What was it trying to achieve?** Those Christians were needing encouragement to stay faithful despite their sufferings. The letter compares their trials to the trials of Christ, who triumphed and so, saves them.

**What encouragement does it give us?** In making reference to the time of Noah, it reminds that God gave even the wilful every opportunity to be saved from the flood had they chosen to be saved. Despite all

provocation, God preserved a faithful remnant. Although the time of Noah is long gone people continue to survive; God's covenant still stands. Further, through Christ's sacrifice of his life for the life of others, all have the chance to accept his offer to be alive in the spirit eternally. Our eternal life is a gift offered without condition: how willingly do we respond to such love?

While we contemplate that question, let us share another hymn.

**Gradual Hymn: 'O for a closer walk with God' William Cowper (1731-1800)**

	O for a closer walk with God, a calm and heavenly frame, a light to shine upon the road that leads me to the Lamb.	3	The dearest idol I have known, whate'er that idol be, help me to tear it from Thy throne, and worship only Thee.
2	Return, O holy Dove! return, sweet messenger of rest! I hate the sins that made Thee mourn, and drove Thee from my breast.	4	So shall my walk be close with God, calm and serene my frame; so purer light shall mark the road that leads me to the Lamb.



O\_for\_a\_closer\_walk\_with\_God.mp3

**Gospel Bible Reading:** Mark 1: 9-15

### **The Temptation of Jesus**

In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. <sup>10</sup>And just as he was coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens torn apart and the Spirit descending like a dove on him. <sup>11</sup>And a voice came from heaven, 'You are my Son, the Beloved, with you I am well pleased.'

<sup>12</sup>And the Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness. <sup>13</sup>He was in the wilderness for forty days, tempted by Satan; and he was with the wild beasts; and the angels waited on him.

<sup>14</sup>Now after John was arrested, Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God,<sup>15</sup> and saying, 'The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news.'

### **Reflection: Part 3**

**Yves St Laurent would not be impressed!** In my Midweek Musings, which I circulated last Tuesday, I quipped that my lockdown wardrobe had become more grunge than haute couture! Perhaps I am not alone. I wonder what other habits we may have slid into during lockdown? In terms of 'rainbow togetherness', let's have even more but what of those bad habits that are all too easy to acquire but so much harder to erase?

**From the spotlight to the wilderness:** In the reading, Jesus has left the security of his home in Nazareth and stepped into the spotlight at the Jordan on the cusp of beginning his ministry: then, 'the Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness.' There, we learn, he was tempted by Satan for forty days and nights.

**Why was Jesus in the wilderness?** When undertaking anything significant I am sure we all pause, take stock and assess our capabilities for the task. Only once we have planned, prepared and committed, do we begin.

God had sent his Son into the world setting aside his divine power to become like us one of us, to love us enough to die for us, in order to provide the means for our redemption. By contrast Satan tempted Jesus to conquer the world by wealth, power and the blood-shed of humanity. Jesus resists all temptation and in triumphing, confident of his moral and spiritual strengths, he sets to work.

**Personal wildernesses:** Does lockdown feel like our own personal wilderness being cut off from our former routine, family, friends, entertainment and freedoms? Left in our own company for any period of time, we become introspective. We may look back at our lives and think of our actions/inactions of which we are not proud. Perhaps, also, the abusive actions of others that drove us to take certain measures becoming an uncomfortable fit through life: we try hard to ignore this but it's always there. Where can we find help?

**Finding the way out of the wilderness:** A Lent spring-clean of hearts, minds and spirits, safe in God's company, can set us free. He already knows everything about our personal clutter so we do not need to try to present ourselves in a more positive light. Offloading to him is not the excoriating judgemental process we might fear it to be. After all, as we read God's own Son was tempted so he knows exactly what we face on a daily basis. God is not requiring perfection; improvement is encouraged because it is liberating to live in Christ's light.

**Freedom from the wilderness:** In taking time with God, he can reach through the protective layers with which we wrap ourselves. He will support us as we clear the dross that life has imposed on us or, of our own making. That may seem very daunting and easier to live with ourselves as we are, even though we don't love some parts of what we have become. It all comes down to trusting that God really does love and value us, as perhaps we have never felt valued by others or, truly valued ourselves. Living a burdened half-life is no rainbow. How much better to fill our hearts, minds and spirits with the dazzling light of Christ and live lightly. St Mark gives us the simple key to unlocking God's freedom 'repent and believe in the good news.' With God's love it is possible to see that the covenant of his rainbow rests over us. How often do we look for it?

### **Prayers for the week ahead**

In penitence and faith let us make our prayers to the Father and ask for his mercy and grace.

For your holy people,  
that they may triumph over evil and grow in grace'  
we pray to you, O Lord:

For the leaders of nations,  
that you will guide them in the ways of mercy and truth,  
we pray to you, O Lord:

For the needy,  
that they may not be forgotten,  
nor the hope of the poor be taken away,  
we pray to you, O Lord:

For the sick in body, mind and spirit,  
that they may know your power to heal,  
we pray to you, O Lord:

For the poor in spirit,  
that they may inherit the kingdom of heaven,  
we pray to you, O Lord:

Let us commend the world, for which Christ suffered,  
to the mercy and protection of God.

### **The prayer for the first Sunday in Lent**

Almighty God,  
whose Son Jesus Christ fasted forty days in the wilderness,  
and was tempted as we are, yet without sin;  
give us grace to discipline ourselves in obedience to your Spirit;  
and, as you know our weakness,  
so may we know your power to save;  
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,  
who is alive and reigns with you,  
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
one God now and forever.  
Amen.

### **The Lord's Prayer**

Trusting in the compassion of God,  
let us pray with confidence as our Saviour has taught us

Our Father, who art in heaven,  
hallowed be thy name;  
thy kingdom come;  
thy will be done;  
on earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread.  
And forgive us our trespasses,  
As we forgive those who trespass against us.  
And lead us not into temptation;  
but deliver us from evil.  
For thine is the kingdom,  
The power and the glory  
for ever and ever.  
Amen.

Before closing this service, it is my privilege to offer you God's blessing:

### **The Blessing**

God,  
who from the death of sin raised you to new life in Christ,  
keep you from falling and set you in the presence of his glory;  
and the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son,  
and the Holy Spirit be among you and remain with you always.  
Amen.

**Closing Hymn** 'Guide me, O thou great Redeemer'

*Arglwydd arwain drwy'r anialwch William Williams (1717-1791) Translated by Peter Williams (1727-1796)*

Guide me, O thou great Redeemer,  
pilgrim through this barren land;  
I am weak, but thou art mighty,  
hold me with thy powerful hand:  
bread of heaven,  
feed me now and evermore.

2 Open now the crystal fountain  
whence the healing stream doth flow;  
let the fiery, cloudy pillar  
lead me all my journey through:  
strong deliverer,  
be thou still my strength and shield.

3 When I tread the verge of Jordan  
bid my anxious fears subside;  
death of death, and hell's destruction,  
land me safe on Canaan's side:  
songs of praises  
I will ever give to thee.



Guide\_me\_O\_thou\_gr  
eat\_Redeemer.mp3

**Closing Prayer**

God of our journey,  
as we walk with you on your path of obedience,  
sustain us on our way and lead us to your glory;  
though Jesus Christ our Lord.  
Amen.

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