

## Sunday before Lent

With Pancake Day on Tuesday – Shrove Tuesday – we know that Lent is near. Ash Wednesday marks it's start.

40 Days and 40 Nights of the season of Fasting..Many of us will be thinking about how we are going to mark Lent and use this season.

40 Days and 40 nights – u all know why Lent is this number of days? ???????

Number 40 special number in the Bible..marks a long period of time.. whether days or years..enough time to really think through things and make a change.

The Bible recounts how for 40 years God's people wandered in the wilderness after they had escaped in the Exodus from slavery in Egypt... for 40 days Jesus was with his disciples after his Resurrection and before his Ascension.

Today's Gospel Reading features 2 others who in the Old Testament spent memorable 40 days and 40 nights. [can you remember who they were?]

### Moses and Elijah

Moses was the one who led God's people to freedom from Egypt he spent 40 days and 40 nights on the top of mount Sinai before coming down the mountain with the 2 tablets of stone engraved with the 10 Commandments..He is the figure who represents The O.T Law...Law which points us to God's Moral Authority and Holiness.

Elijah is the Great prophet of the OT who alone stood up against the injustices and immorality of unfaithful Kings of Israel and Judah. King Ahab seen in the OT as the worst kind of King – unjust to his people and turning his back on God, worshipping idols instead. Elijah spends 40 days and 40 nights walking through the wilderness to Mount Horeb where he is to meet with God not in the earthquake, wind or fire..that had been so much of the background to Moses experience on Sinai..but in the still small voice.. or sound of sheer silence..He then goes on to bring Ahab's reign to an end. The Prophetic call and action coming from that mystical, contemplative encounter.

In the Gospel story of the Transfiguration we see Jesus towards the end of his ministry on his way for the last time to Jerusalem to face his betrayal, trial and death on the cross.

Before he faces all of this he and his closest friends have this vision of his Glory..together with Moses and Elijah –

Jesus is transfigured and seen to be the one who completes and fulfils all the Law and the Prophets.

Jesus disciples will record his words of the Great Commandment he gives to them and us..

“Hear O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord and you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and soul and with all your mind and strength. This is the first commandment and the second is like it: you shall love your neighbour as yourself. There is no other commandment greater than these. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.”

Jesus transfiguration shows not just his own glory but the possibility of that we too might share in and with him that glory God wants for us.. A Holy people with justice and mercy at the heart of all we are and do.

And we are given each year in Lent an opportunity to reflect on Jesus life and work, his suffering and death in preparation for celebrating Easter.

40 days and 40 nights – plenty of time to reflect, to think, to change.

This morning on the early Sunday morning programme brought to us by Mark Tully.. I heard the poem by Robert Herrick

TO KEEP A TRUE LENT.

by Robert Herrick

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.

In the coming 40 days of Lent we have plenty of time to think again what is at the heart and meaning of our faith..to give some time to prayer and fasting, giving and learning and in doing so we might just get a glimpse of the glory of the transfiguration of Christ..that light of God that shines in everyone of us.