

THE SHAPE  
OF **LENT**  
AT THE  
CHURCH  
OF THE  
ADVENT  
BOSTON  
2012

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*This year at the Advent we hope to  
recapture the communal nature of  
Lenten practice as a parish.*

*This booklet provides a description  
and schedule of what we will do  
together during this holy time.*

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# INTRODUCTION

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Lent, the forty-day period between Ash Wednesday and Easter (Sundays are excepted), was historically a period of preparation for “catechumens,” those persons seeking baptism into the life of the church at Easter. Quite soon, however, it became and it continues to be a time of self-examination, penitence and special devotion for all Christians as they prepare for the celebration of the Resurrection of Jesus.

Lent is more than just a season of fasting and abstinence; it is a positive opportunity for significant spiritual growth. The Orthodox theologian, Alexander Schmemmann, describes Lent as “the school of repentance which alone will make it possible to receive Easter

not as mere permission to eat, to drink, and to relax, but indeed as the end of the 'old' in us, as our entrance into the 'new' life we have in Jesus."

Lent, then, is rooted in an essential aspect of what it is to be a Christian: repentance, *metanoia* in Greek, turning one's life around, the putting off of the old self and the putting on of the new. It is an intensification of that movement which should be the spiritual rhythm of our lives: a continuous turning away from sin and reorientation toward God.

Lent is about *conversion*.

While we typically think of Lent as a time of fasting and self-denial, we should also approach it as an opportunity for the renewal of those things which form us as believers and strengthen our faith. When we become Christians, we assume

a variety of spiritual disciplines so that we will better follow Jesus - we go to Mass, say our prayers, study the Bible and other spiritual classics, make a regular confession, and devote ourselves to good works and reaching out to serve others. During Lent, we should re-dedicate ourselves to these disciplines and make them a bit more stringent as a means to restore vibrancy, life, and passion in our relationship with God. In short, we are hoping to make our hearts and souls bigger, to create more space for God in our lives.

In Lent, we follow Jesus into the wilderness where he was tempted, and we attempt through spiritual discipline to resist temptation ourselves. We pray and proceed with Jesus on the way to Jerusalem and to his Cross on Good Friday. Throughout Lent we focus also on our own wilderness of temptation while keeping an eye toward the Resurrection.

Again from Fr. Schmemmann, Lent is a time of “bright sadness.” *Sadness*, because we focus on the passion and death of Jesus and on the sins of us all which brought him to the cross. And *bright*, for the promise of Lent is the glory and joy of the Lord’s Resurrection at Easter.

One aspect of Lent which is rarely mentioned nowadays is the communal. In earlier times, Lent was a discipline taken on by the entirety of a community or even a society. It was something which everyone did together, and the rhythm of life in society was adjusted to support this common discipline. Everyone supported everyone else in the Lenten discipline, and society was so ordered as to make this mutual support possible. One might think of this as a kind of spiritual teamwork, and like anything done as a team it bound people together and helped create community.

In the 21st century world we live in, this has been completely lost. Christianity, since the Reformation, has become a plurality of “christianities,” not bound by common belief or practice. Society has become entirely secular, and the rhythm of contemporary life is most often counter to spiritual practice. The communal aspect of Lent has, again, been entirely lost.

This year at the Advent we hope to recapture the communal nature of Lenten practice as a parish. This booklet provides a description and schedule of what we will do together during this holy time.

# THE SHAPE OF LENT

## *Weekly Fasts*

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Fasting is linked with repentance throughout the Scriptures. When we fast we are reminded spiritually and even physically of our weakness, our finitude, and our need for God. Each week, we will fast from a particular pleasure. All Sundays are “feast” days when, in celebration of the Resurrection, we break our fasts. You may choose to do each of the suggested communal fasts for one week only; or you may let them build on each other, so that by the end of Lent you are doing all six weekly fasts at the same time.

## *Daily Readings*

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During Lent we will be reading a common set of Scriptures together. On each day we will read about twenty to forty verses. Read the Psalm for the week, and then read and meditate upon the reading given for the day. You may wish to incorporate this in the form for Morning Prayer, which is available in a second booklet. These readings will take us through salvation history, beginning with creation and moving towards the climax of God’s redemption and the beginning of the new creation through Jesus’ death and resurrection.

## *Easter Vigil*

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Our Lenten journey together will culminate in the celebration of Jesus’ Resurrection at the Great Vigil of Easter at 6:30 in the evening on Holy Saturday, April 7.

# OUR JOURNEY

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## ASH WEDNESDAY

February 22 - 25  
Fast on Ash Wednesday  
*The Psalms*

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## WEEK 1

February 26 - March 3  
Fast: Sweets & Treats  
*The Creation & the Fall*

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## WEEK 2

March 4-10  
Fast: Television/Media  
*The Patriarchs & the Exodus*

## WEEK 3

March 11-17  
Fast: Social Media  
*The Kings*

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## WEEK 4

March 18-24  
Fast: Unnecessary Spending  
*The Prophets & the Exile*

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## WEEK 5

March 25-31  
Fast: Coffee or Alcohol  
*The Life & Teachings of Jesus*

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## HOLY WEEK

April 1-7  
Fast: Food or Meals  
*The Passion of Jesus*

# ASH WEDNESDAY

*February 22 - February 25*

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<i>Thursday</i>	Psalm 103
<i>Friday</i>	Psalm 38
<i>Saturday</i>	Psalm 78

## *The Ashes*

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Lent begins with the imposition of ashes as a sign of our mortality and penitence for our sins. As we receive the ashes, we hear the words “Remember, O man, that thou art dust, and unto dust thou shalt return” (Genesis 3.19). The ashes are imposed in the form of a cross, pointing to our great hope in the grace of God through the Cross of Christ which grants us a sharing in the power of his Resurrection.

## *The Ash Wednesday Fast*

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Traditionally, the church has fasted from all food on Ash Wednesday to remind us that our physical hunger for food points to our greater spiritual hunger for God. If you are unable to fast for the entire day, then consider fasting from dinner.

# WEEK ONE

February 26 - March 3

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<i>Psalm of the Week</i>	104
<i>Sunday</i>	Genesis 1.1-2.3
<i>Monday</i>	Genesis 2.4-25
<i>Tuesday</i>	Genesis 3
<i>Wednesday</i>	Genesis 4.1-16, 25-26
<i>Thursday</i>	Genesis 6.1-8; 7
<i>Friday</i>	Genesis 8.9-17
<i>Saturday</i>	Genesis 11.1-9

## *Fast: Sweets & Treats*

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This week, resolve to deny yourself any type of sweets or dessert. This could mean no latte in the morning or no chocolate in the evening. Notice what happens inside when you are denied something you've become accustomed to or something you really want.

## *Reading: Creation & Fall*

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In the opening chapters of the Bible, we quickly move from a world where humanity and God walk harmoniously in close relationship, to a fallen world of rebellion, sin, pain, shame, and competition with God. As we make our way through this first week, note how God interacts with his creation and how we respond.

# WEEK TWO

*March 4 - March 10*

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*Psalm of the Week* 136

*Sunday* Genesis 12.1-3; 15; 22.1-19

*Monday* Genesis 37.12-28; 41.37-56;  
50.15-21

*Tuesday* Exodus 1.8-2.10; 3

*Wednesday* Exodus 7.1-13; 12; 14.10-31

*Thursday* Exodus 19.4-6; 20.1-21; 33.1-6

*Friday* Numbers 13.17-14.11, 26-35

*Saturday* Deuteronomy 30.11-20

## *Fast: TV & Media*

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This week, forego your usual television shows. Try to turn off the TV altogether, drive without the radio on, leave your iPod at home. What does it feel like to increase the silence in your life? Ask yourself what silence does for you, and spend the time listening for the voice of God.

## *Reading: The Patriarchs & The Exodus*

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As we saw in the story of the Tower of Babel, the world through pride has become divided. But God has not forsaken his creation. He has begun a rescue mission, a way of putting the world back to the way it ought to be. This began with the call of Abraham and the people of Israel. Focus this week on God's faithfulness to his people.

# WEEK THREE

*March 11 - March 17*

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*Psalm of the Week* 72

*Sunday* Joshua 1.1-9; 6; 24

*Monday* 1 Samuel 8; 10.17-27; 15

*Tuesday* 1 Samuel 16.1-13; 17

*Wednesday* 2 Samuel 7

*Thursday* 1 Kings 3.1-15; 8.22-26, 46-61

*Friday* 2 Kings 22.1-2; 23.1-26

*Saturday* 2 Kings 17.6-23; 24.10-17

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## *Fast: Social Media*

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This week, turn off Facebook, Twitter, blogs and internet news. Do your best to check and respond only to necessary work emails. What does it feel like to unplug and disconnect, not to obsessively check email, Facebook, etc.? Do you feel cut off . . . or free?

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## *Reading: The Kings*

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As we continue the narrative of salvation history, we see more clearly that the people God has called to participate in his rescue mission are themselves broken people. Israel calls a king, and we read the spectacular promises God makes to David. But as we see the failures of the kings, we ask “Whatever became of those promises?” It appears we need a wholly different kind of king.

# WEEK FOUR

*March 18 - March 24*

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*Psalm of the Week* 44

*Sunday* Hosea 2

*Monday* Amos 5.1-6.8

*Tuesday* Isaiah 1.12-31; 35

*Wednesday* Jeremiah 29.1-14; 31.31-37

*Thursday* Ezekiel 36.22-36

*Friday* Nehemiah 2.1-8; 8.1-12; 9

*Saturday* Zephaniah 3.9-20

## *Fast: Unnecessary Spending*

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This week, resolve to spend nothing on yourself except what is absolutely necessary. Buy no new clothes or gadgets, books or music; don't go to movies or buy coffee or snacks. Eat cheaply and save money. Live simply.

## *Reading: The Prophets & The Exile*

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As a result of their idolatry and social injustice, Israel has been sent into exile. They are in a foreign land not as tourists, but as an oppressed people. Listen to the prophets as they declare the sins of God's people. Are we guilty of some of those same sins? Listen also to the hope given by a gracious God who forgives sin and remembers his promise to rescue the world.

# WEEK FIVE

*March 25 - March 31*

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*Psalm of the Week* 2

*Sunday* Luke 2.1-21

*Monday* Mark 1.1-15

*Tuesday* Mark 4.1-20

*Wednesday* Mark 5.1-20

*Thursday* Mark 8.27-9.13

*Friday* Mark 9.43-50

*Saturday* Mark 10.17-45

*Fast: Alcohol or Coffee*

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Choose either coffee or alcohol and refrain from drinking it this week. If neither is something you regularly enjoy, choose another “staple” in your diet. Pay attention to what happens when you deny yourself something you routinely enjoy. Try to pray when you have the desire for the thing from which you are fasting.

*Reading: The Life & Teachings of Jesus*

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There is a tangible tension building throughout our readings. Israel is a broken nation. They have gone through the ups and downs of slavery, exodus, monarchy, exile and, finally, return to the land of Israel, although under Roman rule. Israel’s ups and downs mirror the ups and downs of the entire human race. But God’s rescue plan now takes a huge step forward as the Messiah is born.

# HOLY WEEK

*April 1 - April 7*

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*Psalm of the Week* 22

*Sunday* John 12.1-8, 12-26

*Monday* John 12.27-50

*Tuesday* John 13.1-30; 16.16-24

*Wednesday* John 14

*Maundy Thursday* John 17

*Good Friday* John 18.1-19.30

*Holy Saturday* John 19.31-42

*Fast: Food or Meals*

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Pick a type of food (like meat or carbs or even all “solids”) and fast from it for the week, or pick a meal to skip entirely on a daily basis. If you skip meals, spend the time you would have spent preparing and eating food to pray, read the bible or some spiritual classic, or serve others.

*Reading: The Life & Teachings of Jesus*

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Our journey through the narrative of salvation history slows to a crawl as we walk through the last week of Jesus’ life. In Holy Week, we experience the most solemn moments of the liturgical year, but our solemnity is transformed into jubilee as we enter into the fifty-day season of Easter. Take time to refocus and examine your life this week. Be fully present in this final week as salvation history reaches its culmination and fulfillment.

# A COLLECT FOR LENT

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Almighty and everlasting God, who hatest nothing that thou hast made and dost forgive the sins of all those who are penitent: Create and make in us new and contrite hearts, that we, worthily lamenting our sins and acknowledging our wretchedness, may obtain of thee, the God of all mercy, perfect remission and forgiveness; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

# PLEDGE

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I, \_\_\_\_\_  
pledge to join with fellow parishioners in  
taking upon myself the Corporate Lenten  
Discipline described in Lent at the Advent  
2012. This involves fasting and abstinence,  
daily worship, meditation, and the study  
of Holy Scripture. I pray that the Grace  
of God will enable me and those others  
who have taken on this discipline to grow  
spiritually and to be bound closer to one  
another in fellowship of Christ's Body at  
the Church of the Advent.

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