

Lent

What will you do?

Each day during the season of Lent, we will provide 3 different small acts that you could do to make a difference. This Lent is your chance to do something extra, instead of giving something up.

Choose one? Do all 3? It's up to you!

#pray

#fast

#give

Faith

at

St Mary's

"Do not withhold good from those to whom it is
due, when it is in your power to act."
(Proverbs 3:27 NIV)



LENTEN
REFLECTIONS

Part Four

Bringing one soul close to
God by repentance is much
better, in the eyes of God,
than all other offerings, for
there is nothing in the world
better for God than the
human soul, for everything
in the world will perish
except the soul because it is
eternal.

St John Climacus

www.orthodox.org



Ash Wednesday

& Thursday, Friday, Saturday

*The beginning of Lent,
a time of fasting and abstinence,
a time to renew our lives...*

Lord,

Be my strength as I take on
the challenges of this new Lent.
Give me a willing heart
so I may keep Lent faithfully.
I ask you to bless me
and to be my encouragement.

In your goodness
help me in these first days
to turn my heart to you
in a spirit of penance.

Grant me a steadfast focus
as I seek to please you,
a resolve to overcome my faults,
to persevere in prayer
and good deeds.

May you spur me on
to make the most
of these first days,
to make this a precious time
in my life, a time
to grow in your friendship.

I know you will be my strength.
Amen.

Week One

*The first Sunday of Lent
moves us into the first week,
a week to step out in faith,
to put our trust in the Lord...*

Lord,

Be my strength as I enter
the first full week of Lent.
Guide me in my thoughts, my
words, my actions this week.
I ask you to bless me
and to be my support.

In your goodness
help me this week
to turn my heart to you
in a spirit of self-denial.

Grant me a readiness to forgive
as you forgive me,
considerate to others,
generous to the poor
and the needy of our world.

May you support me
throughout this week
as I try to do my best
to make this Lent special,
turning my heart to you
in trust and confidence.

I know you will be my strength.
Amen.

Week Two

*Week Two, getting to grips
with what I am doing this Lent,
and with the kind of person
I wish to be...*

Lord,

Be my strength as I continue
to move into Lent.
This week be at my side
in my resolve to do your will,
I ask you to bless me
and to be my guide.

In your goodness
help me this week
to become the kind of person
I wish to be.

Grant me the grace
to feel free in my heart
to turn to you with confidence,
knowing you love me,
wanting our friendship to grow.

May you guide me
throughout this week,
so that in spite of the demands
and all the distractions
that come each day this week
I may keep a spiritual focus.

I know you will be my strength.
Amen.

Week Three

*Week Three, the middle of Lent,
the week when our resolve
can be sorely tested.
This is the week not to give up...*

Lord,

Be my strength as I seek help
with the efforts of this week.
May I put my trust in you,
and in your love for me.
I ask you to bless me
and to be my hope.

In your goodness
help me this week
not to lose heart and give up
but to persevere in my resolve.

Grant me the wisdom
to see the best in others
rather than being judgmental
about their failings,
for you see the best in me.

May you encourage me
throughout this week
with the power of your love,
so that I may never forget
all the blessings you give me
as I seek to keep close to you.

I know you will be my strength.
Amen.

Week Four

*Week Four, week to hold firm,
week to strive forward in hope,
knowing that our smallest effort
is precious to the Lord...*

Lord,

Be my strength as I continue
my Lenten observance this week.

May I turn to you
with confidence.

I ask you to bless me
with the joy of your presence.

In your goodness
help me this week
to cast off my old ways
as I strive to please you.

Grant me a steadfast spirit
as I seek to hold firm
to my resolve to overcome
my faults and failings,
and to persevere in prayer.

May you be with me
throughout this week
as I learn to lean on you,
trusting that you will catch me
even if I should fall,
and help me start again.

Week Five

*Week Five, week of expectation,
looking forward to Easter,
week of thanksgiving for the joy
and graces received...*

Lord,

Be my strength as I go about
the activities of this week,
in any good deeds for others
and in my prayer and denial.

I ask you to bless me
my Lord and my God.

In your goodness
help me this week
to grow strong
under your protection.

Grant me a thankful heart,
that I may always praise you
for all your kindnesses to me,
all the graces you pour on me,
graces I do not merit.

May you inspire me
throughout this week,
to listen to your promptings,
and to grow in love of you
and of others.
I thank you for all your blessings.

Holy Week

*Holy Week, holiest week of all,
week of solemn devotion,
of sharing with the Lord
in all that he suffered for us...*

Lord,

Be my strength as I enter
into the spirit of Holy Week
to share with you
in your Passion and Death.

I ask you to bless me
in my prayers and devotions.

In your goodness
help me this week
to understand more fully
all that you suffered for me.

Grant me a trusting heart,
knowing that through your
Passion and Death
you take our faults on yourself
to free us and bring us joy.

May you forgive me
as I bring to you my faults
in thought, word and deed.
Pour your Spirit upon me,
so that I may rejoice
in your Resurrection.

**Lord,
Be My
Strength**

**Lent
Week by
Week**

“Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men.”

Philippians 2: 5-7

#pray – Lord, help us to follow your example. Give us the courage to choose to love and to serve others.

#fast – think of others today, and ‘give up’ thinking of only yourself. Why not do a random act of kindness for someone else?

#give – treat anyone who serves you today with dignity and courtesy. In the canteen, in shops, the cleaners around school, the bus driver! Make eye contact. Show genuine gratitude. Smile!



'You will always have the poor among you, but you will not always have me'

John 12:8

#pray – take a moment to thank God for all that you have in your life; the things and people who are important to you.

#fast – try your best not to take the things you have for granted today.

#give – take a person sleeping rough something to eat or drink/
donate to your local food bank.

Faith

at

St Mary's

“Never be in a hurry; do everything quietly and in a calm spirit. Do not lose your inner peace for anything whatsoever, even if your whole world seems upset.”

St Francis de Sales

#pray – take some time just to be in silence and talk to God today, maybe visit the Oratory to help you do this.

#fast – ‘give up’ some of the noise and bustle today – maybe remove yourself from the canteen, turn your music down or slow your pace down, even for a little while.

#give – allow someone else to have some calm today – do something that will give them a bit of extra time or perhaps bring someone a drink if they are flustered, or a hug if they need it.



'Know the true value of time; snatch, seize, and enjoy every moment of it. No idleness, no laziness, no procrastination: never put off till tomorrow what you can do today.'

Phillip Stanhope

#pray - thank God for the different things you have achieved during your life so far.

#fast - spend today avoiding procrastination and being more proactive.

#give - encourage a friend in something they are doing.



"Take good care of creation. St. Francis wanted that. People occasionally forgive, but nature never does. If we don't take care of the environment, there's no way of getting around it."
Pope Francis

#pray – thank God for the beautiful world in which we live and ask the Lord to help us to better care for all He has made.

#fast – don't take the easy option, make an effort to recycle, reuse and save energy today. Turn off lights.

#give – why not find out about what the Eco Committee are doing this term and see if you can help in any way.



"I call on you, my God, for you will answer me; turn your ear to me and hear my prayer."

Psalm 17:6

#pray – the psalm writer is reminding us all that when we are troubled, God is still there. Reflect on the troubles you want to leave with God today.

#fast – is there someone you know you have caused trouble or hurt for? Maybe use today to turn around that troubled situation and work towards making it right again.

#give – try to support someone today; ease their troubles or lighten their load a little.



'Peter asked, "Lord, why can't I follow you now? I will lay down my life for you." Then Jesus answered, "Will you really lay down your life for me? Very truly I tell you, before the rooster crows, you will disown me three times!"'

John 13:37-38

#pray – Peter will deny he even knows Jesus, but after the Resurrection, he will be reconciled. We all get things wrong at times. Ask God for forgiveness and for the courage to forgive others.

#fast – spend today 'giving up' all those grudges you hold and any negative thoughts you may have towards others.

#give – Forgive someone you know or maybe even yourself. Tell that person, focus on positive relationships today.



'On the day I called, you answered me, O Lord...'

Psalm 137

#pray – 'I called, you answered me...' bring your needs and the needs of others before God today in prayer.

#fast – Turn potentially negative comments today into positive ones.

#give – Look out for anyone who is down today and give them an encouraging word.



"When he had finished washing their feet, he put on his clothes and returned to his place. "Do you understand what I have done for you?" he asked them. "You call me 'Teacher' and 'Lord,' and rightly so, for that is what I am. Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. "

John 13:12-15

#pray – spend some time today in quiet taking in the story of Jesus' arrest, trial and crucifixion.

#fast – give something up today and experience a little self sacrifice. Maybe leave out meat, caffeine or treats.

#give – give whatever you can to a charity today, or maybe donate some food or an Easter Egg to a local food bank.



'Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest...'

Matthew 11:28

#pray –Go out and appreciate nature, relax and reflect on the gift of creation.

#fast – give up staying up late, even just for today, so that you can be well rested and revived for tomorrow.

#give – do something for someone else today that will relieve their stress or allow them a moment of calm in the business .



'One gives freely, yet grows all the richer; another withholds what he should give, and only suffers want. Whoever brings blessing will be enriched, and one who waters will himself be watered.'

Proverbs 11:24-25

#pray – thank God for all He has generously provided you with in your life and for those who are generous to you.

#fast – try not to rush today- be the last to help themselves at the dinner table, or let someone go before you in a queue.

#give – be generous today, hold a door open for someone, say good morning (or afternoon!) to someone you don't know, smile at someone as you pass them by...



#pray – pray today for those who will not be celebrating Easter with us this year but rather enjoying new life in Heaven.

#fast – fast wasting time today and instead, focus on giving your time to those who need it. Maybe a listening ear or giving some advice to a troubled friend.

#give – if you have lost a loved one, go and visit their favourite place or visit their grave this week and remember the happy memories you shared with them.



Faith

at

St Mary's

'Peacemakers who sow in peace reap a harvest of righteousness.'

James 3:18

#pray – remember today those who live in war torn nations and pray that with their leaders they may be able to work towards peace.

Perhaps consider prayers for Syria, Ukraine or Iraq.

#fast – is there someone you have argued/fallen out with? Maybe use today to 'give up' that negative situation and work towards making it right again.

#give – why not visit www.paxchristi.org.uk and see what you could do to promote peace on a local or national scale.

'A word after a word after a word is power'
Margaret Atwood

#pray – take some time today to read a passage from scripture or a prayer book that is important to you or to your faith.

#fast – take today to spend time reading the written word from a book or magazine rather than a digital screen.

#give – why not write a note, anonymous or not, to someone you know and would like to say something special to.



'Technology is supposed to make our lives easier, allowing us to do things more quickly and efficiently. But too often it seems to make things harder, leaving us with fifty-button remote controls...and cars with dashboard systems worthy of the space shuttle'

James Surowiecki (American Journalist)

#pray – why not download the 'pray as you go' podcast and spend some time with the Lord in a different way.

#fast – give up one kind of technology, even if it is just for today and have yourself a 'digital detox'.

#give – spend some time with someone rather than texting or calling them. Make an effort be with the person rather than a screen!



'Keep your life free from love of money, and be content with what you have, for he has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you."'

Hebrews 13:5

#pray – spend some time in prayer thanking the Lord for what you have; the things He has provided.

#fast – why not have a day off from premium brands and stick to the supermarkets/shops 'basics' range? You could even give the difference to a charity...

#give – donate some things to a charity shop that you don't really need- clothes, books, shoes etc.



"Social, economic and environmental well-being are indivisible. Together they define gross global happiness."

Ban Ki-moon (UN Secretary General)

#pray – we find it easy to ask God for things when times are hard, but sometimes forget to praise him for the good. Thank God for the joy and happiness in your life today.

#fast – have a day off from negativity, if you catch negative thoughts creeping in do something to combat it.

#give – make an effort to bring some happiness to other people today!

Random acts of kindness are a great start you could visit

www.dayofhappiness.net for countless suggestions! Or search

#internationaldayofhappiness on Twitter.

ACTION FOR HAPPINESS

Faith

at

St Mary's

"Darkness cannot drive out darkness: only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate: only love can do that."

Martin Luther King Jr.

#pray – thank the Lord for those you love and who love you. Ask that we are able to show that love and appreciate those around us more.

#fast – give up that 'darkness' and hate today, try to drive them out with 'light' and love.

#give – go that extra mile for someone you love today, let them know how important they are in your life. Send them a text, call them, give them a hug...it's up to you!



'One of them asked Jesus this question: "Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?" Jesus replied: "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbour as yourself.'

Matthew 22:35-39

#pray – pray today for those in the world who are refugees, those who have lost their homes, families and neighbours.

#fast – give up negative attitudes to refugees and instead, look up the story of one refugee in the UK to understand their situation.

#give – Go that extra mile and smile, wave or say, 'hello' to a neighbour of yours today.



The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it.
Genesis 2:15

#pray – pray that people be more caring towards the environment in which they live. That politicians, planners & developers seriously consider environmental issues when making decisions.

#fast – try to avoid buying things with too much packaging and plastic, make a more environmentally friendly choice in the supermarket/shops.

#give – give something to your community today by picking up any litter you spot and popping it into a bin. Alternatively, why not try to do more recycling, either at school or at home.



‘The trade in human persons constitutes a shocking offence against human dignity and a grave violation of fundamental human rights.’

John Paul II

#pray – pray today for those who are affected by modern slavery or human trafficking.

#fast – think about the freedoms you enjoy and spend today remembering not to take your independence for granted.

#give – find out about the work of an organisation working to end slavery or trafficking, such as Medaille Trust. Visit www.medaille.co.uk and find out if you can do anything to help.



The teachers of the law and the Pharisees brought in a woman caught in adultery. They made her stand before the group and said to Jesus, "Teacher, this woman was caught in the act of adultery. In the Law Moses commanded us to stone such women. Now what do you say?"
...When they kept on questioning him, he straightened up and said to them, "Let any one of you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her."

John 8:3-5,7

#pray – pray today that you can be more like Jesus in this story, ask for compassion for others and not to judge.

#fast – make a conscious effort not to judge others today, and remember that we all make mistakes from time to time.

#give – why not reach out to someone today as Jesus does in the passage, offer some support or a helping hand to someone you might not ordinarily approach.

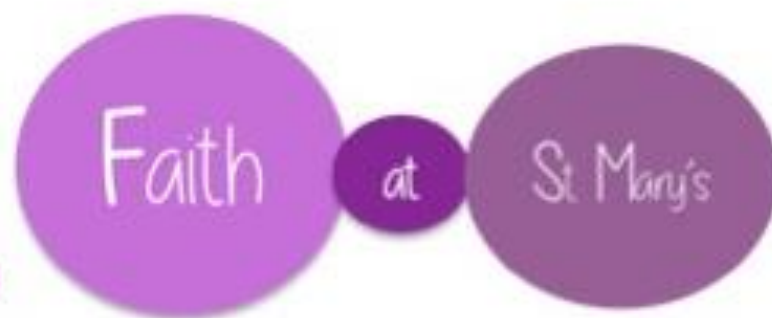


But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moths and vermin do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.
Matthew 6:20-21

#pray – Ask God to show you anything in your life that you're clinging onto too tightly, and to help you use it for others.

#fast - can you live with less? Might you even find freedom in it? Think about how you might start living more lightly...

#give – give away one of your favourite things. It could be anything: a book, DVD, your favourite bobble hat... Give it to someone you know will really appreciate it or need it.



"Give generously to them and do so without a grudging heart; then because of this the Lord your God will bless you in all your work and in everything you put your hand to."

Deuteronomy 15:10

#pray – thank God for the skills you possess and ask him to guide you in using them for the greater good.

#fast – rather than buy something new today, why not mend/use something you already have. Sew a button onto a shirt, re-read a book you haven't read for a while or have last night's leftovers for lunch.

#give – fix something quick and simple for someone today. Change a light bulb, mend something you know how to, or teach someone a few shortcuts on the computer.



Faith

at

St Mary's