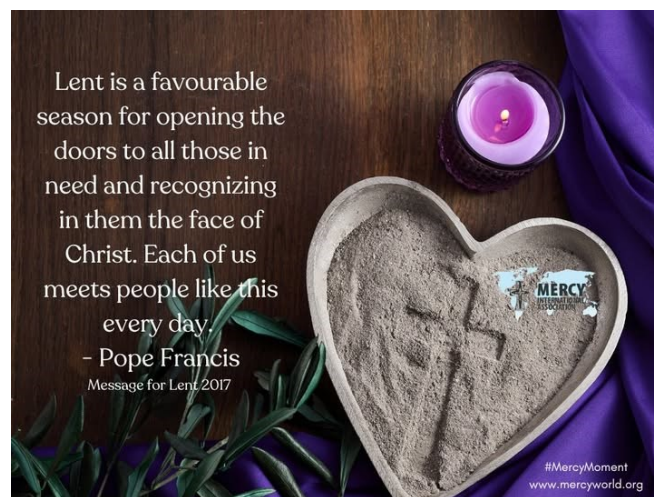


Letting This Lent Be God's

Yet even now, says the Lord,
return to me with all your heart,
with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning;
rend your hearts and not your clothing.
Return to the Lord your God,
for he is gracious and merciful,
slow to anger, abounding in steadfast love.

Joel 2:12-13



What if this Lent we didn't approach the practices of prayer, almsgiving, and fasting with an eye to what we can do to transform ourselves, but rather with an eye to what God wants to do in order to transform us?

Too often we approach Lent as though it were a series of New Year's resolutions: to give up a particular bad habit, or share more with the poor, or be more faithful to prayer. But Lent is not about self-improvement. Lent is a time of conversion in which God is in charge of our conversion. Not us.

After all, Lent is a preparation for the season of Easter, and in Easter we see that Jesus comes to save us, despite ourselves. Peter swears up and down that he will never betray Jesus, but then he does. A thief on the cross ends up being the first to be in Heaven with Jesus, a most unexpected consolation. Women go to the empty tomb to mourn and end up being missioned by Jesus, resurrected. Jesus reconciles with Peter despite the betrayals and then gives him a central place in Church leadership. Easter is full of the unpredictable. Easter is a lot of crazy, beautiful surprises with the Resurrection at its heart.

If this is true, then Lent is not a project of self-improvement. Rather, it's a time of allowing God to transform us. Lent is a time of intentional cooperation with God's graces, where God leads and we follow, like a good dance partner. We can choose to follow or not, but God is always in the lead.

What might this look like in practice? The answer will be individual for each one of us, and so a Lent of following God's lead must be grounded in prayer. We can listen for the voice of God and let ourselves be surprised by what the call in Lent might be. Perhaps we not only contribute to our paper rice bowls with alms for the poor, but also feel God calling us to undertake service work where we build relationships with a community of people outside our comfortable social circles. Or maybe fasting this year means not only the obligatory fasts, but also fasting from judgment when I do not know the inner workings of another's heart. Perhaps God is calling me to add in a different form of prayer: a few minutes of silence on my lunch break at work, or [praying as a family](#) just before the children are tucked into bed.

Or perhaps we will feel the call of God out of the blue in Lent to follow God into some new place. Are we open to letting this Lent be God's and not our own?

Marina Berzins McCoy

https://www.ignatianspirituality.com/letting-this-lent-be-gods/?utm_source=ActiveCampaign&utm_medium=email&utm_content=Living%20Lent%20Daily%3A%20Monday%20of%20the%20First%20Week%20of%20Lent&utm_campaign=living-lent-daily-yoc26-week1-10124-yoc-feb23

We pray:

Lord, help us move through this Lenten season at your pace.

Not rushing from post to post, not having time to stop and reflect, feeling stressed and hassled.

Help us to slowly contemplate the mysteries of your Word.

Help us set aside time to be with those we love.

Help us to reach out to those in need, following in the footsteps of Catherine McAuley.

Help us to be people of Mercy: **For time and eternity.**



BLESSING THE DUST

All those days
you felt like dust,
like dirt,
as if all you had to do
was turn your face
toward the wind
and be scattered
to the four corners
or swept away
by the smallest breath
as insubstantial—
did you not know
what the Holy One
can do with dust?
This is the day
we freely say
we are scorched.
This is the hour
we are marked
by what has made it
through the burning.
This is the moment
we ask for the blessing
that lives within
the ancient ashes,
that makes its home
inside the soil of
this sacred earth.
So let us be marked
not for sorrow.
And let us be marked
not for shame.
Let us be marked
not for false humility
or for thinking
we are less
than we are
but for claiming
what God can do
within the dust,
within the dirt,
within the stuff
of which the world
is made
and the stars that blaze
in our bones
and the galaxies that spiral
inside the smudge
we bear.

Jan Richardson

*Circle of Grace: A Book of Blessings for
the Seasons* janrichardson.com/books



Keeping Lent



During Lent 2026, I am choosing to keep the season in a simple, tangible, and reflective way. On a quiet space in my home sit two jars. One is labelled 'Acts.' The other is labelled 'Blessings.' Together, they hold my intentions for these forty days.

The 'Blessings' jar is a reminder to pay attention. Each day, I will try and pause to notice the gifts already present in my life - a kind word from a friend, a moment of peace, strength on a difficult day, laughter, forgiveness, provision, or unexpected joy. I will write each blessing down on a slip of paper, fold it up and place it in the jar, allowing gratitude to grow steadily, slip by slip.

The 'Acts' jar calls me to action. During Lent, I am mindful of the ways I practice love, offer mercy, make sacrifices, and choose kindness. Whether it is a small hidden act, a moment of patience, a word of encouragement, or an intentional act of penance, I record it and add it to the jar. It becomes a quiet testimony of effort, growth, and grace at work in me.

At the end of Lent, I will open both jars. I will read through the blessings I received and the love I tried to give. Together, they will tell the story of how I have walked through Lent in 2026 - not perfectly, but prayerfully, gratefully, and with a heart more attentive to both giving and receiving grace.

Brenda Drumm, Head of Communications,
Mercy International Centre, Dublin (Facebook post)