Assembly/Class Reflections

**Week 1**

Ash Wednesday – the first day of Lent – fell this year during our mid-term break.

Lent is an old word that means Spring … and traditionally, as the sun gets stronger and the days get longer we think of ‘spring cleaning’ our homes after the long dark winter.

For Christians Lent is a time during which we take time out of our busy, noisy lives to prepare for Holy Week and Easter – the high point of the Church’s year. It is a time for ‘spring-cleaning’ our hearts!

Ash Wednesday marks the beginning of this time of penance – a time when we make an effort to take stock of our lives; to recognise that we are not perfect, that there is always room for improvement and to make an effort to live as better people.

We will reflect on this as we remember that we are now in the first full week of Lent.

Let’s just take a moment to be still and quiet. *(Pause)*

In last Sunday’s Gospel we heard that Jesus went out into the wilderness and remained there for forty days. If you were to think of leaving behind all the busyness of your life – even for a day or two – what would you have to let go of? What would you have to cancel? How would you cope without your mobile phone? Would you find it hard to be alone for even a day? Would you find it hard to be silent for a day?

Realistically we can’t just walk away from our lives. However, we can decide to do something that makes us think more deeply about our lives and that might help us to be better people.

What can you do for this week? Make a resolution to do something positive ….

* Switch off or put away your mobile phone for a little while each day this week and be really present to your friends or family.
* Give up the bag of crisps or the chocolate or the sugary drink … and put the money you would have spent on that into your Trocaire box.
* Take a few minutes of quiet time in the morning or evening … try to listen to what it is that God is asking of you today … what is in your heart? …
* Resolve to do something today for someone else.

*We pray:* Lord, we ask you to give us the strength this Lent to genuinely think about the deeper things in our lives, to make time to grow spiritually and to live each day being more aware of the people around us and how we are with them in each moment. Amen.

**Week 2.**

 During the second week of Lent we are reminded that:

### Jesus said to his disciples: “Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful. Do not judge, and you will not be judged; do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven; give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap; for the measure you give will be the measure you get back.”

###  *Luke 6:36-38*

Imagine a world in which no one judges or condemns others; a world full of forgiveness. A world in which everyone cares for the needs of others and in which no one goes hungry.

This was the world envisioned by Jesus when he spoke of the Kingdom of God.

Pause for a moment and consider:

*Can I think of a time when I have been unkind to someone else?*

*Can I think of a time when I have been too angry to forgive someone?*

Now:

*Think of a time someone has been kind to me.*

*Think of a time when someone has forgiven me.*

*How did I feel?*

Now: Resolve to be kinder this week.

 “Do unto others as you would have them do unto you”. *Luke 6:31*

*We pray:* Lord, we ask you to give us the strength this Lent to genuinely think about the deeper things in our lives, to make time to grow spiritually and to live each day being more aware of the people around us, particularly the members of our families, and how we are with them in each moment. Amen.

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**Week 3:**

The reading from St. John’s Gospel on Sunday told the story of Jesus’ anger when he went into the Temple and found people selling their animals and the money changers sitting there too.

“He drove them all out of the Temple … scattering the moneychangers’ coins, knocked their tables over and said to the pigeon sellers *“Take all this out of here and stop turning my Father’s house into a market”.*

We see here an angry Jesus. Jesus wanted to change what was happening here in his Father’s house. He wanted to change the attitude of people to this sacred space.

In our world today we seem to be constantly busy; there is so much going on in our lives that sometimes we too become totally caught up in everyday events, in the commercialism that surrounds us. At this time of the year there are Easter eggs in all the shops … but are we preparing for Easter in our hearts? Or have we forgotten that during these weeks of Lent we should be preparing to celebrate the resurrection of Jesus - the moment that gives us the hope that is central to our faith as Christians?

Lent is a time for change; a time for spiritual growth; a time to explore what it is we need to change if we are to become better people.

What things in my life do I need to change?

* Instead of complaining start being grateful. Take a moment each evening to think of one thing that happened during the day for which you are thankful – and thank God for it.
* Instead of criticising other people take a deep breath and say something positive.
* Instead of worrying trust in God. Ask Him to take charge of the things you are anxious about and believe that all will be well.

*We pray:* Lord, we ask you to give us the strength this Lent to genuinely think about the deeper things in our lives, to make time to grow spiritually, ‘to develop an attitude of gratitude’ being thankful for all the blessings we receive each day. Help us to live each day being more aware of the people around us, particularly the members of our families, and how we are with them in each moment. Amen.

******Week 4:**

In Sunday’s Gospel we were told that “God loved the world so much that he gave his only Son so that everyone who believes in him may not be lost but may have eternal life”. (John 3: 16)

How often do we feel lost? Are there times when we are afraid that we may not be included if we don’t always agree with our friends or classmates? Are there times when we are not sure what choices to make?

It is easy to get lost in the dark. Everything looks different. In the darkness we look for the light to show us the way.

Jesus’ is ‘the Light of the World”; his teaching is the light that shows us the way. During Lent it is often difficult to keep up our Lenten resolutions it needs strength and commitment to do that.

This Lent let us pray for the courage to live by the values we believe in. By really trying to be faithful to whatever it is that we have undertaken during these weeks – either giving something up – or resolving to do something for Lent – we hope to develop strength of character which will always help us to live always in the light.

*We pray*: Lord, we ask you to give us the strength this Lent to genuinely think about the deeper things in our lives, to make time to grow spiritually, to develop ‘an attitude of gratitude’ being thankful for all the blessings we receive each day. Help us to live every day in your light, becoming more aware of the people around us, particularly the members of our families, and how we are with them in each moment. Amen.

**Week 5**

In Sunday’s Gospel reading this week Jesus said “Now the hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. I tell you most solemnly, unless a wheat grain falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single grain; but if it dies, it yields a rich harvest. (John 12:24)

We are nearing the end of our Lenten journey. Jesus is telling us something of the death that is approaching. He is using the analogy of the seed that is planted and the growth that can only take place when it is buried in the earth. It was through Jesus’ death on the cross that he rose again on Easter Sunday.

St. Paul tells us that “If Christ has not been raised your faith is in vain”. (1 Cor. 15:17). The resurrection is central to our faith. it is because Jesus rose from the dead that we know for certain that we too will share in his resurrection. The resurrection gives us the hope that we will once again see those we have loved in this life who have gone to God before us.

During Lent we do our best to fast and to pray; next week we will remember the last days of Jesus’ life – the evening of the Last Supper, his arrest in Gethsamane, his trial, his journey carrying his cross to Calvary and his crucifixion. Jesus, who taught us that the most important thing in this life is to love one another, was crucified because the powerful people of his time saw him as a threat; treated him as a criminal. His death appeared to be the end.

But it was only the beginning! If we truly believe this, then Easter should be a time of enormous celebration. Our 40 days of fasting during Lent should be followed by 50 days of rejoicing that Christ is truly risen! The Church marks Eastertide with 50 days – but we often forget this. This year let us all resolve to remember, next week - Holy Week - the events of the last days of Jesus life – and then, not only to celebrate Easter, but to REALLY celebrate the whole of Eastertide.

*We pray*: Lord, we ask you to give us the strength this Lent to genuinely think about the deeper things in our lives, to make time to grow spiritually, to develop ‘an attitude of gratitude’ being thankful for all the blessings we receive each day. Help us to live every day in your light, becoming more aware of the people around us, particularly the members of our families, and how we are with them in each moment. Lord we ask you above all to increase our faith, to make us people of hope and joy and to give us the grace to live in your love. Amen.