

SOME SUGGESTIONS FOR THE KEEPING OF A HOLY LENT¹

❖ **Fasting.** The weekdays of Lent (not the Sundays) are all fast days, meaning that the amount of food eaten is reduced. A good rule is no snacks, no seconds, no desserts and no alcohol. If you don't normally eat snacks or desserts or drink, you may want to consider giving up some favorite food. The idea is to undertake something sacrificial, yet not overwhelming. In addition, Ash Wednesday and Good Friday are strict fasts: one full meal in the evening, and a light meal or collation in the afternoon. All those whose health, work, and age permit should fast.

❖ **Spiritual Reading.** An ancient custom is to take a spiritual book for regular reading during Lent. This can be a book of Scripture, or one of the spiritual classics. If you are not sure what might be good, ask one of your priests.

❖ **Daily Prayers.** If you do not now read Morning or Evening Prayer from the Prayer Book (or have comparable daily devotions), Lent is a good time to start. It takes a little effort and discipline to get the habit established, but once it is there, it can bear great fruit. The regular prayers and Psalms and Scripture draw us out of our narrow spiritual views, and nourish us with the riches of the faith. Easy-to-follow instructions are available for those who are unfamiliar with Morning and Evening Prayer. Each office takes 15-20 minutes a day. Electronic copies of Morning or Evening Prayer are available by writing Fr. Jason (jsspatterson@embarqmail.com). Hard copies may be picked up at the church. A shortened version intended to be used in families is also available.

❖ **Confession.** A sacramental confession at the beginning and end of Lent is not only an opportunity for a thorough self-examination, but also a powerful weapon against the temptations which come our way in Lent. To schedule a time to make your sacramental confession, speak with one of your priests. If you have never taken advantage of the ministry of sacramental confession, or if it has been a long time since your last confession, instructions are available to help you in your preparation.

❖ **Service.** As well as "giving up" in Lent, some wish "to take on" some special service, such as visiting the sick or shut-in, volunteering at a hospital, taking special care for a neighbor who may need it, or some special work at church.

❖ **Abstinence.** Abstaining from flesh meat on Wednesdays in Lent as well as Fridays (as required by the Prayer Book throughout the year) is a common discipline for Lent. The ancient practice of the Church is to abstain from meat and dairy throughout Lent (except for Sundays).

❖ **Self-Denial.** You may want to give up some special pleasure or recreation for Lent (smoking, bowling, television, long soaks in the tub), and perhaps give what you would have spent on it (if anything) to the church. This can be done in conjunction with other practices: if, for example, you give up a half hour of TV every day, you might use the time to read Evening Prayer.

❖ **Scripture Reading.** Delving into the Word of God is never out of season. Lent is a good time to establish (or reestablish) the discipline of a daily time of Scripture reading.

¹ Much of what follows is based on a similar handout written by the Rev'd Dr. David Ousley and is used with permission.