

## Order of Service

Call to Worship: Generous God, throughout this day, lighten our tasks and shine through our speaking. May we reflect your love in our lives, your presence in our world, and our hope and trust in you. Amen.

Hymn: Forty days and forty nights

Prayers of Adoration and Confession: Loving Lord, beyond all time, we praise and worship you. You are the one who came, who comes, and who is to come. You came to us in Jesus, revealing your love and compassion, your power, your truth and your nature, which wholly and ceaselessly gives of yourself.

You come to us in the presence of the Holy Spirit leading us to Jesus, empowering us for service, granting us precious gifts, keeping us in your peace and being ever faithful to us.

Lord you know that there are times when we have not been what you desire for us – our fractured lives and relationships, our unloveliness, our

forgetfulness of your presence and all sustaining love - we are sorry and ask that, out of your great mercy, we may receive your forgiveness. In Jesu's name we pray.

Listen up: here is good news. Christ Jesus came into the world to forgive us in our failure, to accept us as we are, to set us free from evil's power and make us what we were meant to be. Through Him, God says to each one of us: you are accepted, you are forgiven, I will set you free. Thanks be to God. Amen

Let us say together The Lord's Prayer:

The Lord's Prayer:        **Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy Name; thy kingdom come; thy will be done; on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.**

Reading: Luke 4 v1-13 (NEB) {Mark's Gospel gives a much abbreviated account of Jesus in the wilderness stating (*Chapter 1 v12&13*) '*At once the*

*Spirit made him go into the desert where he stayed forty days, being tempted by Satan. Wild animals were there also, but angels came and helped him.(Good News Bible) }*

Full of the Holy Spirit, Jesus returned from Jordan, and for forty days was led by the Spirit up and down the wilderness and tempted by the Devil. All that time he had nothing to eat, and at the end of it he was famished. The Devil said to him, 'If you are the Son of God, tell this stone to become bread.' Jesus answered, 'Scripture says, "Man cannot live on bread alone.'"

Next the Devil led him up and showed him in a flash all the kingdoms of the world. 'All this dominion I will give to you,' he said, 'and the glory that goes with it; for it has been put in my hands and I can give it to anyone I choose. You have only to do homage to me and it shall all be yours.' Jesus answered him, 'Scripture says, "You shall do homage to the Lord your God and worship him alone.'"

The Devil took him to Jerusalem and set him on the parapet of the temple. 'If you are the Son of God,' he said, 'throw yourself down; for Scripture says " He will give his angels orders to take care of you", and again, "They will support you in their arms for fear you should strike

your foot against a stone.” Jesus answered him, ‘It has been said, “You are not to test the Lord your God.”’

So, having come to the end of all his temptations, the Devil departed, biding his time.

### Reflection:

It was only five weeks ago that we celebrated “it”.

What’s “it”? Forgotten already? Forgotten Shrove Tuesday aka Pancake Day?

What is it? Why is it? How is it?

- What is it?

Shrove Tuesday, sometimes called “Pancake Tuesday” or “Fat Tuesday” historically marks the final day before the season of Lent in many Christian liturgical calendars. The term “Shrove” derives from the old practice of being “shriven,” meaning to receive absolution through confession and repentance.

Although Scripture does not name “Shrove Tuesday” specifically, this day arose out of a centuries-old tradition in which believers examined

themselves, confessed sins and prepared for the solemn period of fasting and reflection leading up to Resurrection Sunday.

From early church practices, Christians observed times of fasting and prayer, anticipating significant feasts like Easter. Over the centuries, faith communities developed the custom of dedicating this Tuesday to repentance and readiness for Lent, paralleling biblical principles on confession and humility.

- Why is it?

Shrove Tuesday holds significance as a transitional day. It serves as a meaningful threshold between ordinary time and the disciplined introspection of Lent. The day underscores the believer's call to acknowledge personal sinfulness, embrace divine forgiveness, and approach the upcoming season with a repentant heart.

Scripture repeatedly highlights the importance of repentance and spiritual preparation. Joel 2:12-13 proclaims, *"Even now," declares the Lord, "return to Me with all your heart, with fasting, weeping and mourning."* In this context, Shrove Tuesday mirrors the larger biblical emphasis on turning away from sin and returning fully to God before entering a deeper period of reflection and discipline.

Shrove Tuesday marks the conclusion of ordinary days and ushers in a 40 day (excluding Sundays) period of Lent – traditionally a time of fasting and reflection on Christ’s suffering and resurrection. Throughout the Bible, fasting is portrayed as a way to humble oneself before God. While the New Testament never commands the observance of Lent, it does commend prayer and fasting as avenues to draw closer to the Lord. Many communities historically used Shrove Tuesday to consume remaining rich foods like fats, eggs, and butter before the Lenten fast. This practice led to the tradition of making pancakes. Though predominantly a cultural development, it resonates with the biblical concept that times of feasting often precede or follow times of fasting.

- How is it?

Central to Shrove Tuesday is heartfelt confession of sins and a commitment to spiritual renewal. Confession is consistently affirmed in Scripture as a vital practice for restoring fellowship with God. Psalm 32:5 reflects, *“Then I acknowledged my sin to You; I did not hide my iniquity. I said, ‘I will confess my transgressions to the Lord,’ and You forgave the guilt of my sin.”*

In many Christian traditions, individuals seek to be “shriven” – disclosing sins to God in prayer and trusting in the promise of forgiveness through

Christ. As 1 John 1 v9 records *“If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”* Although the name and specific customs of Shrove Tuesday are not found in Scripture, the day’s essence aligns with biblical calls to reflect on Christ’s sacrifice and anticipate His resurrection. Set at the brink of Lent – which culminates in Christ’s passion, crucifixion and glorious resurrection – Shrove Tuesday helps establish a posture of humility and gratitude for the work of the Saviour.

Romans 5:8 reminds believers, *“But God proves His love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”* This core message undergirds the observance of Shrove Tuesday and the subsequent Lenten journey, leading to the celebration of the resurrection on Easter: the heart of the gospel message.

Churches and believers observe Shrove Tuesday differently across cultural and denominational contexts. Some give to charity or perform acts of service recognising that repentance involves tangible steps of love toward others. Others emphasize communal or private confession, prayer meetings, or Bible reading focused on repentance and grace. In many settings, the day also includes joyous communal meals, symbolically “using up” sweet or fatty ingredients before the fast.

Regardless of the specific customs, the theme of drawing near to God remains paramount. Through confession, believers seek to clear every hindrance separating them from deeper fellowship with the Lord. Though not mandated by Scripture, Shrove Tuesday's enduring value lies in its invitation to a deeper pursuit of God's holiness, mercy and redeeming power – themes that remain central to Christian life and worship.

Today we near the end of our Lenten journey. Sunday is Palm Sunday, for us a celebration of that triumphal ride into Jerusalem, - for Jesus, the start of a nightmare scenario. Pain, bloodshed, abandonment by God, by his disciples, and death by crucifixion still to come.

I don't know how many of you went to see Mel Gibson's 'The Passion of the Christ'. I guess that if you did, the scenes portrayed in all their bloody goriness would have left a long-lasting memory. Holy Week could never be the same again. I went to see it with a group from my Church. The film ended and the audience sat quietly, in stunned silence, the silence remaining with them even as they left the auditorium. We had only watched a film but it was like watching an action replay.



- VICIOUS, (capital letters and underlined), moment by bloody moment.
- Hammers striking nails that tore through flesh - how could you forget.

- How could you forget such spine-chilling enactments.
  - Oh yes, only an enactment, but for a moment in time so, so real.
- There is a book of photographs shot during the filming. For some years I have read the book as part of my Lent pilgrimage, the stark imagery displayed never losing its power to shock. The depiction of the raw suffering of Christ.
- Only a film, some would say, only a film. But - if I am true to my faith, that depiction in all its gory carries with it the inescapable message - Jesus suffered that - for me. *For me!* Amen.

**Prayers of Intercession**      Will you pray with me?

We ask for your comforting hand on those who feel desperate, who struggle to hold onto routine, rhythm or hope, on all whose health is failing, on those who feel their powers to be waning as they become more dependent on others. Give each of us, and those around us, the courage to act with grace, clarity and humanity.

Living, loving God, guide us this day, that we might be a part of your kingdom, a piece in your puzzle, a player in your story.

Loving Lord, beyond all time, we praise and worship you.

You are the one who came, who comes, and is to come.

- You came to us in Jesus revealing your love and compassion, your power, your truth, and your nature, which wholly and ceaselessly gives of yourself.
- You come to us in the presence of the Holy Spirit leading us to Jesus, empowering us for service, granting us precious gifts, keeping us in your peace and being ever faithful to us.

We pray for your Church around the world, a world which today knows many tensions and conflicts.

- A Church that so desperately needs to look and pray for harmony.....
- May your Church and its leaders respond to the cries of people around the world longing for peace.
- We pray for those areas in the world where your people are still persecuted because of their faith.
- Where within your Church there is division and we, your people, need to be reconciled to you, our God.

Lord, we remember at this time those known to us who need our prayers.

- Those being cared for at home....
- Those in Nursing Homes....
- In hospitals....
- Those who are sole carers, particularly if they are elderly looking after elderly....
- Those who mourn the loss of a loved one....
- Our trans siblings in this country who are fearful about life in the aftermath of the Supreme Court, particularly the disputed subject of Puberty Blockers.

Draw them to yourself, enfolding each in the arms of your unconditional, unfailing love.

Finally, Lord, we pray for ourselves and our loved ones. Support us in our moments when we are troubled, anxious, lonely or distressed. Those difficult times when we are lost for words and prayer is hard. May the power of your Holy Spirit lift us and carry us through....

Now in the quietness of this moment we bring to you the silent prayers that we carry in our hearts.

*Pause*

Lord in your mercy, **Hear our prayer.**

We offer these, and all our prayers through Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen

**Song**            Lord I lift Your Name on high

**Closing Prayer & Blessing**    Let us pray:

Grace flows from this moment, and from this space, Grace that changes everything, even me and even you. Go from this gathering place, to see God's grace at work in the world around you, and take the love of Christ with you in your hearts.

Let us bless each other with the words of the Grace:

**The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all, now and for ever more. Amen.**