

A Carbon Fast for Lent

Lent is a time of repentance and fasting, of turning away from all that is counter to God's will and purposes for his world and all who live in it. This year, I invite you to focus your Lenten 'acts of love and sacrifice' (of which our Ash Wednesday speaks) on our contribution to climate change, and those most impacted by it.

Often we give something up, such as chocolate or alcohol. This year, focus your giving up (or making changes to your lifestyle), to reduce your 'carbon footprint' – your total impact of environmentally damaging greenhouse gas emissions, usually measured in carbon dioxide equivalent, hence the name.

A traditional Lenten observance is 'Fish on Fridays'. Why not also have a 'Meat-free Monday' – or some other day, if on Mondays you usually eat Sunday's leftovers? Did you know that 'a kilogram of steak could be responsible for as many greenhouse gases as driving a car for three hours while leaving all the lights on at home' (D Fanelli, New Scientist, 2007, 2613:15)?

We all need to 'reduce, reuse, recycle'. Below are suggestions to take you from Ash Wednesday to Palm Sunday. Each week focusses on a different part of our carbon fast, encouraging us to live more simply, conserve water, cut down on electricity, and reduce our use of petrol.

Let us 'return to the Lord with all our heart; leave the past in ashes and turn to God with tears and fasting, for he is slow to anger and ready to forgive' (APB, p.164).

May God grant us all a blessed and holy Lent.

Archbishop Thabo Cape Town

Ash Wednesday – A Lenten Prayer

O Lord, who hast mercy upon all, take away from me my sins,
and mercifully kindle in me the fire of thy Holy Spirit.
Take away from me the heart of stone,
and give me a heart of flesh,
a heart to love and adore thee,
a heart to delight in thee,
to follow and to enjoy thee,
for Christ's sake. (Ambrose of Milan, c 339-97)

God, in this world that moves at such a quick pace, help me to slow down. Let me savour the food and community you've blessed me with and spend time with you and not fall prey to the busyness our culture aspires us to. Amen.

- Thursday 14th February: This Valentine's day why not give a home-made gift or card made with love? Wrap your gift in re-cycled paper or re-use a gift bag.



- Friday 15th February: More than 150 billion litres of bottled water are sold worldwide every year. This contributes significantly to landfill and transport emissions. Say no to bottled water today and drink tap water – buy a refillable washable bottle to use instead. **Serve fish today!**
- Saturday 16th February : Snub plastic bags. Get into the habit of taking your rucksack to the supermarket or go retro with a trolley. Ask your supermarket to remove unnecessary packaging.

First Week of Lent- Live more simply so that others may simply live

Reading for the week:

Colossians 3:12: Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience

Prayer for the week

Lord, give me a heart for your people already affected by climate change around the world. Help me to understand their needs and do my part to reduce their suffering, through lifestyle choices and political action.

Actions for the first week of Lent: Reduce, re-use, recycle

- **Sunday 17th of February** : Compost. Put the nutrients from food waste back into the soil – not into a methane-emitting landfill.
- Monday 18th February: Re-use an item you would have thrown away – whether that's jam jars, envelopes or ice-cream containers. **Choose a vegetarian dish for today.**
- Tuesday 19th February: Avoid buying products that have lots of packaging. Choose loose products and buy refillable containers where possible.
- Wednesday 20th February: Go through your clothes cupboard and give away any unused clothing you haven't worn for more than a year
- Thursday 21st February: Organise recycling at your church or office
- Friday 22nd February : Make do and mend. Do you have clothes you could wear longer if you gave them a little TLC? Spend some time doing some sewing and mending. **Eat fish today!**
- Saturday 23rd February : When you do your grocery shopping, buy simple foods and purchase some items to give away to those in need.

Second week of Lent: Water the source of life

Prayer for the week:

Father, thank you for providing us with plentiful water to drink and meeting all our basic needs. Help us not to take any blessing for granted, but instead be faithful stewards of your earth's resources. As we make changes that may be inconvenient, we draw from your well of living water that never runs dry, and remember that everything we have comes from you.

Reading for the week

Psalm 104:10-13

He makes springs pour water into the ravines; it flows between the mountains. They give water to all the beasts of the field; the wild donkeys quench their thirst. The birds of the air nest by the waters; they sing among the branches. He waters the mountains from his upper chambers; the earth is satisfied by the fruit of his work.

Actions for the week: focussing on water

- **Sunday 24th February**: Turn the tap off when washing and brushing your teeth
- **Monday 25th February**: Find out where the water comes from that is used for baptism at your church. Consider getting involved in cleaning that river. **Meat-free Monday!**
- **Tuesday 26th February**: Mend any dripping taps at church and the home
- **Wednesday 27th February**: Take a shower instead of a bath: you'll heat and use less water.
- **Thursday 28th February**: Check your flush. Fill a two liter bottle with water and put it in your cistern to reduce water flow. Or consider installing a two way flush system.
- **Friday 1st of March**: Only fill your kettle with as much water as you need. **Eat fish today!**
- **Saturday 2nd of March**: If you need to add cold water when you fill the sink or run a bath, then your hot water thermostat is too high – try setting it at 55 degrees.

Third week of Lent: The reality of climate change

Prayer for the week

Father, thank you for being a God who searches out the poor and vulnerable. Help me to put a face to climate change, so that it is not just an issue, but it's about a person who You created. Remind me of these people impacted by climate change whenever I feel unmotivated to make changes in my life.

Reading for the week

Isaiah 24:4-6

The earth dries up and withers, the world languishes and withers, the exalted of the earth languish. The earth is defiled by its people; they have disobeyed the laws, violated the statutes and broken the everlasting covenant. Therefore a curse consumes the earth; its people must bear their guilt. Therefore earth's inhabitants are burned up, and very few are left.

Actions for the week – focussing on electricity

- **Sunday 3rd of March**: Say goodbye to standby. Check that all electrical equipment is switched off when not in use. The TV alone will save a hefty 20kg of carbon dioxide per year.
- **Monday 4th of March**: Replace your missing bulb with an energy-saving light-bulb. Over its lifetime, you will save 60kg of carbon dioxide per year. **Meat-free Monday!**
- **Tuesday 5th of March**: Have a discussion with your family about installing a solar water heater
- **Wednesday 6th of March**: Unplug your mobile phone charger: it uses electricity even when it's not charging.
- **Thursday 7th of March**: Switch off lights as you leave the room.
- **Friday 8th of March**: when you replace old electrical appliances look out for energy-efficient models, they could save a third of the energy.
- **Saturday 9th of March**: Only run your washing machine when you have a full load.

Fourth week of Lent: tread lightly

Prayer for the week :

Lord, teach us how to leave more than carbon footprints behind us; teach us how our daily choices and actions can be a part of your eternal interaction with the world. We want our imprints to make you proud, not sad.

Reading for the week

Rev 22:2 'The leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations'.

Actions for the week – focussing on emissions

- **Sunday 10th of March:** Tread lightly – try to travel by foot, bike, or public transport whenever possible.
- **Monday 11th of March:** Drive more calmly. Aggressive driving, which includes excessive acceleration and frequent braking, wastes petrol. Go with the flow of traffic, and don't try to always pass other cars. Not only is this safer, but it can improve your mileage by up to a third on the highway. **Remember meat-free Monday!**
- **Tuesday 12th of March:** Follow the speed limit. Most cars reach their optimal efficiency at around 90km per hour. Efficiency decreases rapidly above this. You'll save money, too!
- **Wednesday 13th of March:** Double up journeys: do shopping on your way home from work, school or somewhere else you have to go today. Share lifts with friends or try to do all your errands together.
- **Thursday 14th of March:** Don't idle, especially if you'll be waiting in one spot for more than a minute. Idling for 10 seconds uses about as much fuel as it takes to restart the vehicle, so it's more efficient to turn off the engine while you wait
- **Friday 15th of March:** Turn off the air conditioning. Use your automobile's flow-through ventilation system or open the windows at lower speeds. Running the air conditioner can reduce your mileage by up to 20 percent. **Enjoy some fish today!**
- **Saturday 16th of March:** Check your tire pressure once a month. Inflate your tires to the pressure listed inside the driver's side door or in the owner's manual. Do not inflate to the maximum pressure printed on the tire itself. Properly inflated tires last longer, are safer and can improve gas mileage by about 3 percent.

Fifth Week of Lent: Our daily bread

Prayer for the week:

O God, may we use the gift of our senses to see, smell, touch and taste your goodness shown in the daily bread we share. Bless us as we live our lives with awareness of your loving gift of the natural world. May we always be mindful of the hungry who share the earth with us and may we be generous in providing for their needs. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen

Reading for the week:

John 6:12 When they had all had enough to eat, he said to his disciples, "Gather the pieces that are left over. Let nothing be wasted."

Actions for the week – focussing on food

- **Sunday 17th of March:** Buy food that's being grown or produced locally using local shops and farmers markets where possible avoid packets and tins that are imported from faraway places.
- **Monday 18th of March:** Eat by candlelight. How many rooms do you light in the evenings? Turn out the lights and enjoy a candlelit dinner! **Meat-free Monday today!**
- **Tuesday 19th of March:** Cook for free. Electric hotplates or ovens take a long time to cool, so why not turn them off earlier so your food finishes cooking for free?
- **Wed 20th of March:** Treat your fridge to a good de-icing to make sure it's running efficiently.
- **Thu 21st of March:** Consider purchasing or making a wonder box
- **Friday 22nd of March:** . Put a lid on it. Put a lid on pans when cooking. **Fish for Friday !**
- **Saturday 23rd of March:** Cook your food in a microwave. They use significantly less energy than a conventional oven.