

DEANERY “STATION MASSES” DURING LENT

Beginning on Thursday 23 February, the Archbishop will travel around the Deaneries during the forty days of Lent to conduct a series of “Station Masses” as a communal Lenten exercise for priest and people in the Diocese.

The “Station Mass” originated in Rome under the auspices of Pope Gregory the Great (590 – 604). They were conceived as a daily pilgrimage in the footsteps of the martyrs and saints. Pilgrims and penitents visited forty churches in Rome on foot and performed penitential exercises and celebrated Mass in each “stopping place” or “station”. In doing so, they were also following the example of Jesus who went out into the desert and fasted for forty days and forty nights in preparation for his mission. It is this “journey” which forms the spiritual background to the forty days of Lent and the journey each of us has to make into the desert of our own hearts and lives.

Jesus was tempted by Satan to rely on worldly things and assume worldly power. The temptations faced by his followers are similar. During Lent we follow him in a special way as he makes his final journey to his passion and death at Jerusalem. In following his footsteps, in making our own journey of faith, we reject what is false and sinful. The ashes we put on our forehead remind us that we are dust and shall return to dust. They also invite us to “Repent and believe in the gospel”. Our Lenten penances, prayers, fasting, abstinence and works of charity are all expressions of our desire to follow in the footsteps of the Lord in dying to sin and rising to new life in Him.

The tradition of Lenten “Station Masses” was re-invigorated by Pope John X111 in 1960 and has grown from strength to strength in the last fifty years. The dates and venues of these Masses in the Archdiocese of Cardiff are given below. Whilst it may be too much to walk from church to church in order to make this Lenten pilgrimage, we can all make the journey within to that dry place in our lives which needs nourishment, healing and forgiveness.