



COWLEY ST JOHN
CHRIST AT OUR HEART

The Art of Lent



The Magdalen Reading
Rogier van der Weyden

Lent Resources 2021

Introduction from Fr Phil

Rogier van der Weyden's painting of the Magdalen reading appears at first to be a very suitable picture for Lent, it shows a woman wrapped up in her reading – Lent as a time when we forget the world around us focusing entirely on our interior life of prayer and reading. However, this painting was part of a much bigger altarpiece known in Italy as a *sacra conversazione* – an informal grouping of saints around the virgin and child. So, although the woman in the painting looks isolated, she is actually part of a group of people surrounding Mary and the Christ child.

This year we have chosen Sister Wendy Beckett's book *The Art of Lent* to be our guide. It is a book which gives us a painting for every day of Lent. The continuing Lockdown has left many of us, me included, feeling disconnected and occasionally isolated. So, the invitation this Lent is to seek God in the fullness of God's created world. When we begin to recognise the 'givenness' of the natural world then we can begin to wonder and delight in a cosmos which everywhere proclaims God's presence.

Christopher Irvine, a former vicar of Cowley St John writes:

"If the artistic project can be described in these terms of drawing out and revealing of form in their work of art, then we can see it as being analogous to what we mean when we speak of the art of God, of God making and renewing men and women in his image and after his likeness...Christians, Tertullian said, were made not born, and our becoming Christian is a process of formation".

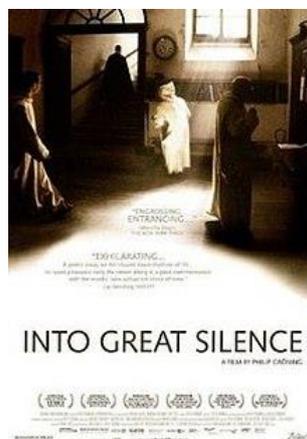
So, this Lent as we come together to journey with Christ through his passion and death to the glory of his resurrection let us do so remembering that we were made in the image of God who is creator. Basil of Caesarea (330-79) once described the created world as "God's Studio". As creatures of God's studio let us this Lent share in a *sacra conversazione*, being formed in the likeness of Christ who came to save us.

Films for Lent

Happy as Lazzaro (Italian: ***Lazzaro felice***) is a 2018 Italian drama film directed by Alice Rohrwacher. I haven't seen this film myself yet but it has been warmly recommended. It has plenty of biblical references and is a film concerned with Christian themes.

Into Great Silence (German: *Die große Stille*) is a 2005 documentary film directed by Philip Gröning. This is a very beautiful film with, as the title suggests, no words. It's about the carthusian monks of the Grande Chartreuse high in the French Alps.

Babette's Feast (Danish: ***Babettes Gæstebud***) is a 1987 Danish drama film directed by Gabriel Axel. A beautiful film about art, faith and cooking.



Books for Lent

The Church Times always recommends a list of books for Lent, two that caught my eye are:

A Cross in the Heart of God - Reflections on the death of Jesus - Samuel Wells (If you want a highly accessible, thoughtful and theological book which isn't afraid to tell personal stories then this is it)

The Way of Julian of Norwich - A Prayer Journey through Lent - Sheila Upjohn

Prayer Labyrinth

A labyrinth is simply a place to walk and pray. It gives you the freedom to walk around while focusing your mind on God – and not worry about getting lost.

A labyrinth contains a single walking path to the center and then back out again. It has many turns but, unlike mazes, does not have dead ends. In Christian usage, the purpose of the labyrinth is personal and spiritual transformation. One way of approaching it is:

- Purgation (Releasing) ~ A releasing, a letting go of the details of your life. This is the act of shedding thoughts and distractions. A time to open the heart and quiet the mind.
- Illumination (Receiving) ~ When you reach the center, stay there as long as you like. It is a place of meditation and prayer. Receive what is there for you to receive.
- Union (Returning) ~ As you leave, following the same path out of the center as you came in, you enter the third stage, which is joining God at work in the world. Each time you walk the labyrinth you become more empowered to find and do the work for which you feel your soul is reaching.

If you are able you can come and walk the labyrinth in the churchyard of SSMJ. Alternatively you could use this finger labyrinth at home.

adapted from: grace.org/labyrinth & gracecathedral.org/our-labyrinths/



Prayers for the Day in Lent

O God, make speed to save us.

O Lord, make haste to help us.

Hear my prayer, O Lord, and give ear to my cry;
hold not your peace at my tears.

PRAISE

Jesus, like a mother you gather your people to you;
you are gentle with us as a mother with her children.
Despair turns to hope through your sweet goodness;
through your gentleness we find comfort in fear.
Your warmth gives life to the dead,
your touch makes sinners righteous.
Lord Jesus, in your mercy heal us;
in your love and tenderness remake us.
In your compassion bring grace and forgiveness,
for the beauty of heaven may your love prepare us.

Anselm (1109)

Jesus said, 'There will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous people who need no repentance.'

Luke 15.7

RESPONSE

Silence, study, song, or words from Scripture, such as
Blessed are the merciful,
for they will receive mercy.

PRAYERS

Prayers may include these concerns

- ¶ *Those preparing for baptism and confirmation*
- ¶ *Those serving through leadership*
- ¶ *Those looking for forgiveness*
- ¶ *Those misled by the false gods of this present age*
- ¶ *All who are hungry*

Teach us, good Lord, to serve you as you deserve;

to give and not to count the cost;
to fight and not to heed the wounds;
to toil and not to seek for rest;
to labour and not to seek for any reward,
save that of knowing that we do your will. **Amen.**

THE LORD'S PRAYER

CONCLUSION

May God bless us and show us compassion and mercy.
Amen.

Good Jesu,
too late have I loved thee,
nor ever yet have I wholly followed thee;
make me now at last wholly to love thee,
and out of the fullness of thine infinite love
give me all the love I might have had, had I always loved thee.
O dearest Lord, too late have I loved thee, too late have I loved thee,
too late is it always, not always to have loved thee wholly.
Now, too, I cannot love thee as I would.
O dearest Lord, who art love,
give me of thine own love,
that therewith I may wholly love thee.

Edward Bouverie Pusey