

COMPANIONS OF BARNABAS

Six Lenten Practices

'Lent' is the Old English word for Spring, the season that ends Winter and in which new life begins again. Drawing on the ancient Celtic tradition of these islands, these six Lenten practices that will help us to prepare for the feast (of Easter) by focussing on nature, learning and the ordinary. In this, we will be accompanied by a number of Saints whose lives embodied these practices.

The six practices are:

1. Giving
2. Planting
3. Noticing
4. Connecting
5. Learning
6. Sending

The popular misconception of Lent is that it is about giving up pleasure in order to become more holy. Our Celtic forebears knew that it was about a much deeper search for true pleasure and satisfaction which could only be found by removing distractions and becoming attentive to the God who dwells in the ordinary and the simple. It is a rediscovery of (or reorientation to) the things that truly matter: beauty, truth, hope and love.

There will be a blog post and podcast each week to guide us and help us to focus. The pattern will be the same each week:

- Entry into stillness
- Introduction to our saintly companion
- Listening to Scripture
- Waiting for the Word
- Practicing Lent
- Blessing

Week 1 - Giving

Entry into stillness

O Lord, let my soul rise up to meet you:
as the day rises to meet the sun.

**Glory to God, Source of All,
Word of Truth, Breath of Life,
as it was in the beginning, is now,
and shall be for ever. Amen.**

Canticle

Christ, as a light
illumine and guide me.

Christ, as a shield
overshadow me.

Christ under me;

Christ over me;

Christ beside me

on my left and my right.

This day be within and without me,
lowly and meek, yet all-powerful.

Be in the heart of each to whom I speak;
in the mouth of each who speaks unto
me.

This day be within and without me,
lowly and meek, yet all-powerful.

Christ as a light;

Christ as a shield;

Christ beside me

on my left and my right.

(Northumbria Community)

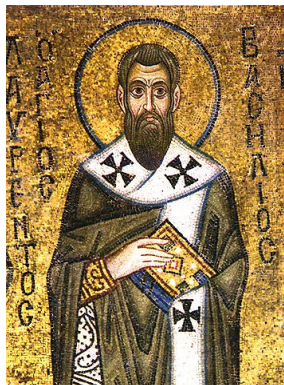
Introduction to our saintly companion

We are focussing on GIVING this week, when others may be distracted by GIVING UP. Part of the ancient Christian tradition of Lent involved the giving of alms to those in need, reminding ourselves not only of the needs of others but also our own need for others.

Lent is about assessing what we really need to survive - and thrive - and what is getting in the way, or surplus to requirement. In a society driven by consumption, Lent offers us a chance to build our resilience against the cult of acquisition.

St Basil of Caesarea (330-379?)

Basil, along with Gregory of Nazianzus, and Gregory of Nyssa are collectively referred to as the Cappadocian Fathers. A bishop in modern day Turkey, he was renowned as a theologian and recognised as a Doctor of the Church. But he was also passionate about justice for the poor. His “distributive mandate” argued that whatever is “extra,” over and above one’s actual needs, should be given to those who have less. Basil describes this process with a beautiful Greek word, **epanision**, which literally means “to restore the balance.” The distributive mandate is essentially a responsibility to observe the commandment of love by sharing with others.



“The bread you are holding back is for the hungry, the clothes you keep put away are for the naked, the shoes that are rotting away with disuse are for those who have none, the silver you keep buried in the earth is for the needy.”

(On Social Justice)

Listening to Scripture **Isaiah 58:3-8**

“Why do we fast, but you do not see? Why humble ourselves, but you do not notice?” Look, you serve your own interest on your fast day, and oppress all your workers. Look, you fast only to quarrel and to fight and to strike with a wicked fist. Such fasting as you do today will not make your voice heard on high. Is such the fast that I choose, a day to humble oneself? Is it to bow down the head like a bulrush, and to lie in sackcloth and ashes? Will you call this a fast, a day acceptable to the LORD? Is not this the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of injustice, to undo the thongs of

the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke? Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, and bring the homeless poor into your house; when you see the naked, to cover them, and not to hide yourself from your own kin? Then your light shall break forth like the dawn, and your healing shall spring up quickly; your vindicator shall go before you, the glory of the LORD shall be your rear guard.

Waiting for the Word

We spend some time reflecting and listening for the Word.

Practicing Lent

This week why not:

- clear a patch of weeds in your, or someone else’s, garden or prepare a pot for planting?
- put a box aside for stuff you no longer need that you can give to a neighbour or charity shop
- instead of simply donating to a foodbank, make contact to thank them for their work or to volunteer some time?

Blessing

Circle us, Lord

Keep strife without, keep peace within;

keep fear without, keep hope within;

keep pride without, keep trust within;

keep evil out, keep good within.

May we walk in the hope of your

presence;

fill us with your light and love;

be with us all through this day

Source, Word and Spirit.

Further reading

John Wesley - *Sermon on the Use of Money*

Ronald Sider - *Rich Christians in an age of Hunger*

Haley Stewart - *The Grace of Enough:*

Pursuing Less and Living More in a

Throwaway Culture