

Lent reflection: Easter falls early this year – April 4th to be precise, so Lent begins sooner after Epiphany than it might. Its threshold is Ash Wednesday, 17th February: an austere name for an austere season? Maybe...& maybe not. Lent is an old English word which means Spring. In a Christian context, it was the time of preparation for those being baptised at Easter. Later, its 40 days were identified with the period Jesus spent in the wilderness before his short, earthly ministry began. So for some, it is a time of self-denial and soul-searching: an opportunity to have a spiritual spring clean. Not very celebratory in flavour then, given, historically, people would have eaten up the last of the rich foods like eggs on Shrove Tuesday?

Looking at it another way, though, here is a period, in a season of burgeoning natural growth. to discover our own metaphorical growth points; to exercise our freedom to be who & what we are intended to be.

The season of Lent in the church calendar prepares us for the events of Holy Week when we remember again how Jesus was put to death, like a criminal, in an apparently terrible fall from grace with the authorities, only to be raised from the dead on Easter Day so that all might have life in & through him: a life which has the potential to release the seeds of self-transformation, hope, human flourishing - something to celebrate, indeed, this year of all years.

Suggested Lent reading:

- *The Little Book of Lent* Arthur Howells, £2.99, some used on Amazon
- *The Art of Lent* (A painting for every day of Lent with meditation) Sister Wendy Beckett 2017 £6.99
- *Lent and Easter* Henri Nouwen, compiled by Judy Bauer 2005
- *Holy Week, A Series of Meditations*, St Vladimir's Press 2018
- *Rooted in Love* Bishop Sarah Mullally, SPCK 2020 £8.19
- *Show me the way, daily Lenten readings* Henri Nouwen, only Kindle £9.54
- *God with us* Rowan Williams
- *History of the Bible* John Barton
- *Anam Cara* John O'Donohue
- *The God of Surprises* Gerard Hughes
- *Unapologetic: Why despite everything, Christianity can still make surprising emotional sense* Francis Spufford
- *Let me Go There: the Spirit of Lent* Paula Gooder, Canterbury Press
- *Say it to God: in Search of Prayer* Luigi Gioia, Bloomsbury
- *You are Mine* David Walker, BRF
- *The Heart's Time: a poem a day for Lent & Easter* Janet Morley, SPCK
- *The Things He Carried: a Journey to the Cross for Lent & Holy Week* Stephen Cottrell