

"Invocations" (Laud 91)
B 12P Pch OCHR
TAPE

3. 3. 69
16. 3. 72V
14. 3. 74V

LENT PREFACE

Ps 90

FADE.

(ANGELUS)

(St Michael's)
R48

"The Lenten season has a two-fold character: 1) it recalls baptism or prepares for it; 2) it stresses a penitential spirit. By these means especially, Lent readies the faithful for celebrating the paschal mystery after a period of close attention to the Word of God, and more ardent prayer. In the liturgy itself and in liturgy-centred instructions, these baptismal and penitential themes should be more pronounced.... During Lent, penance shd. not be only internal and individual but also external and social... In any event, let the paschal fast be kept sacred. It should be observed everywhere on Good Friday and, where possible, prolonged throughout Holy Saturday, so that the joys of the Sunday of the resurrection may be visited on uplifted and responsive spirits." That's what the bishops of the world had to say about this time of Lent, in one of the documents of the 2nd Vatican Council. It's rather different from the notion of Lent that long-time Catholics will have been familiar with; and it's very much like what the original observance of Lent was - an emphasis on baptism, the celebration of Easter, and spiritual renewal in preparation for this... a period marked by penance, prayer and fasting, but without ^{the} emphasis on this last feature which many of us may remember. And originally, it wasn't a strictly set period, either - the exact 40 days notion only came in later when, precisely, the emphasis had already shifted onto fasting and away from baptism + Easter. Fasting, of course, is not an end in itself, though it tended to be thought of as such when it

was a strict Lenten obligation. It's an external sign of an attitude of heart and mind wanting to express itself - you can see the same thing in a politically- or nationalist-inspired hunger-strike. What's important is not how much food you eat or don't eat, but how your heart lies. And Lent is the time to ensure that, before entering the joyful celebration of Christ's rising from death and his saving of us through his suffering and death, our hearts lie right towards God. And that entails a conversion - in the original sense of the word - a change of heart, which is what repentance, penance, really is. To turn away from and to turn towards: the fundamental turning is of course the acceptance of God in faith and its sealing in the sacrament of faith, Baptism. That's how Lent became a penitential, fasting-time - it was prescribed for those who would be receiving Baptism in the Easter celebration of redemption. But we also need a constant effort to reform ourselves in the image of Christ, to turn away from the compromises, the enticements that prevent our faith being a whole-hearted submission to God's love in everything we are and do. That's why we need to recall the meaning of being baptized, why we must fast, not necessarily from food, but from anything that's not in keeping with the commitment of our baptism. To see our way, to make the contact with God which will make us able to see requires an attitude of prayer, and prayer. So, let's listen now to (an old chant for Lent, which is based on litania + prayers from the Mozarabic Rite: "Attende Domine et miserere" - turn your ear to us O Lord - have mercy on us.)

Poulenc "Inv."
RHX
ANG/10 69

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Attende
(Chant of Chant 1553)

MUSIC, PRAYERS.

Mt. 6¹⁶⁻¹⁷ (Pyc, 66)

The kind of fasting Jesus was condemning is the external observance without any interior spirit — exactly what Isaiah & other prophets also reiled against [— the kind of thing Robert Herrick pilloried in a poem on Lent wh. you may have heard in a R.H.K. program a few weeks ago.] All the slow, observances in the world are worth nothing (they're merely their own rewards) unless there's an inner spirit behind them. The real fasting to be aimed at is, ^{the poet felt} as Herrick put it, ^{in a poem on Lent} a fast from sin. To achieve this, a self-discipline, with the grace of God is required — a self-discipline wh. is helped by deliberate attention on our part to doing the kind of things our love & faith shd. lead easily & naturally to, tho' they're sometimes a bit difficult for weak humanity — care, concern, love for all our brethren in Christ: helping the poor, almsgiving, living the kind of way Christ lived and the way He wants us to live.