

We have now entered the season of Lent. The flowers are gone from the church; our seasonal colour has become purple (or violet); the Gloria is not said or sung in our Sunday morning services; the “Hallelujah” has been buried – not to be uttered until the first service on Easter morning; and we marked the transition in the most profound way – the reminder of our Baptismal mark – but not with fragrant oil, but with ash, accompanied by the reminder that “you are dust, and to dust you shall return”.

All of this goes to remind us of the solemnity of the season. But it is also important to remember that this is all done in a right spirit of penitence and remembrance – **not**, however, in a self-deprecating or self-flagellating manner. As I tried to stress in my Ash Wednesday sermon, this is not a season that seeks to make us “good enough to earn God’s love”, but an opportunity to deepen our relationship. Already made right through Christ.

All of this was on my mind when I read an article during the week by Dominique D. Gilliard, an American Pastor. She wrote about *lament*, and had this to say: “A strange word to modern ears, “lamentation” feels inherently ancient. It brings to mind images of an overwrought demonstration of mourning -- sackcloth and ashes, “wailing and gnashing of teeth” of biblical proportions. More than the mere expression of sorrow and regret, however, lamentation is a powerful act, one that the church desperately needs to reclaim. In our world of nonstop news and social media, lamentation is an essential and even revolutionary act.

Scripture suggests that lamentation is a liturgical act that reorients and transforms us. Lamentation is uncensored communion with God -- visceral worship where we learn to be honest, intimate and humble before God. Lamentation is both an acknowledgment that things are not as they should be and an anguished wail, beckoning the Lord to intervene with righteousness and justice.”

Dominique goes on to outline the four aspects of lamentation - *remembrance, reflection, confession* and *repentance*. And as I read these, I saw a correlation between the season of Lent and of the act of lament. Because a Lenten journey will also incorporate these steps, as we stand honestly before God, remembering, reflecting, confessing, and repenting, so that we might have our eyes and our hearts opened to the truth that God loves us, and desires that we say “yes” to the reconciling love and grace that God freely offers...

May Perpetua and her companions, John of God, Sister Emma, SSA, and all the Saints walk with you this week...
Sam