

CEIST

Catholic Education  
An Irish Schools Trust



## Resources for Lent 2021



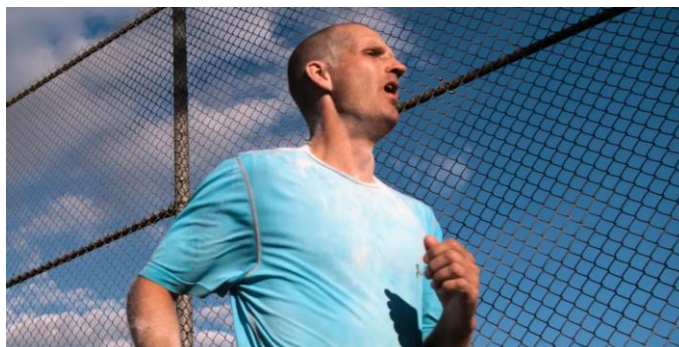
## Introduction

This Lent we invite you to L.E.N.T.! Let's Everyone eNdure Together!

It seems like a strange concept - endurance. We think of long roads, of endurance athletes, ultramarathon runners, triathletes, cyclists. We think of men and women pushing themselves to their absolute limits and coming out the other side exhausted but satisfied; a competition won, a personal best achieved or at least a race that was completed!



Sanjay Rawal's recent film, *3100 Run and Become* explores endurance running as a spiritual as well as a physical practice. For endurance runners the goal is to transcend earthly annoyances, and even downright physical pain, and find some kind of enlightenment. Rawal explores the spirituality of endurance running as it's experienced around the world; that ability to tap into something more powerful than simply the pounding of feet. "It was this idea that running could be a prayer," he says. One of the main subjects of Rawal's film, a Finish runner called, Ashprihanal Aalto, pictured below, puts it very simply, "'For some people it is spiritual music or great singers that gives their joy, their inspiration, for some people art. For me running long distances is my way of making progress, that is what keeps me motivated. As the years go by the more it is an inner thing. It is still a race but there is a kind of joy in it.'" For him endurance is not simply about surviving, it's actually about thriving. (See <https://www.theguardian.com/film/2020/apr/16/it-is-part-of-my-spiritual-life-the-people-who-take-running-to-the-extreme>)



St Paul, writing thousands of years ago had a similar understanding of endurance, and often used running and endurance as analogies of a spiritual struggle. To the Corinthians, he wrote, “Everyone who competes in the games trains with strict discipline. They do it for a crown that is perishable, but we do it for a crown that is imperishable. Therefore, I do not run aimlessly; I do not fight like I am beating the air”. To Timothy he wrote, “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.” In St Paul’s Letter to the Hebrews, we read, “let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us”. And in the Old Testament, in the book of Isaiah, we read “but those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary; they will walk and not be faint.” In the book of Psalms, “I run in the path of your commands, for you have broadened my understanding”.

This Lent, as a CEIST school we invite you to participate in Let’s Everyone eNdure Together; to rise above the challenges of these times and to see God’s plan for peace, for joy, for hope and for love in your life. In this context, endurance isn’t just about surviving, it’s about thriving and it’s even about joy. Christianity is never an invitation simply to survive, it is an invitation to thrive! We hear in John’s gospel Jesus’ call, “I have come so that you may have life and have it in abundance!” (John 10:10)

There is no doubt that COVID-19 continues to have a huge impact on us all as we battle to keep the virus at bay. Right now, we are all experiencing unprecedented demands on our lifestyle choices as we live within the Level 5 restrictions and in accordance with current government guidelines.

While remote teaching and learning have become the new normal, at the heart of each and every school the focus continues to be on the health and wellbeing of our staff and students. Never has it been more important to work together and to support each other through this difficult time.

In many ways, the invitation in Lent is always the same even if the circumstances this Lent feel very different. “Haven’t we done enough penance! Isn’t there enough hardship!” we hear you say and very understandably.

But fasting, prayer and almsgiving (or giving to those who are made poor by our systems and structures) are all part of this spiritual work we’re called to do so that we can endure, rise above the challenges we might face and make of our lives everything God wants them to be. Prayer, fasting and almsgiving are our spiritual exercise.

In our L.E.N.T. challenge, we are also focused very much on the words, ‘everyone’ and ‘together’. In the CEIST charter, we read of the special care CEIST schools take to ensure everyone is brought along together, that everyone belongs and thrives. Each person’s unique and individual giftedness is respected and celebrated. In CEIST schools, building community is another key value. As we endure, as we rise above current challenges, we do so together and as a community. Because of this part of this resource proposes some

activities that might serve to unite your school community. You are already doing so much so obviously take them as you wish. An attempt is also made to make some cross-curricular links so Lent this year, as it always is, can be a really whole school reality.

Finally, a comment on the word, 'Let's'. This is a key word in our theme, 'Let's Everyone Endure Together'. Because in it there is both a call and a decision. It's an invitation to the whole school to really come together to help everyone get the most out of themselves over these weeks. It's also a decision, a resolution, a challenge. The process of making a decision to turn and try a new direction or a different path is a key aspect of the spiritual journey that is Lent. The traditional word is 'repent'. Lent is a time focused on looking at oneself honestly and seeing where perhaps new growth is possible.

This resource also seeks to connect to the readings presented to us at Mass every Sunday of Lent. These readings are like our coaching manual, reminding us of what the finish line looks like and how we can get there. And speaking of the finish line. For us as Christians, the finish line of Lent is Easter. It is in Easter resurrection and joy that our ultimate hope lies. It is on that prize that we keep our eyes firmly focused as we journey through Lent, especially in these challenging times.

### **Structure of the Resource**

Every Monday of Lent (once the February mid-term is over) you will receive a weekly PowerPoint (one for Juniors and one for Seniors) on a theme related to L.E.N.T (Let's Everyone Endure Together). You can use them at any time during that week. They are set out below by way of a summary. Each PowerPoint will contain suggested prayers, readings and music suggestions. They'll also suggest some activities. They can be led by you the Principal, a Deputy Principal, a Year Head, a Class Tutor or a RE teacher. As always adapt as you see fit. Your RE team will be invaluable in assisting you to do this of course.

We're conscious that Lent begins this year during the Mid-term break. For this reason, week 1 of our resource speaks back to that a little bit. However, if you wish you could also share with students a simple prayer for Shrove Tuesday and Ash Wednesday (see below) for their own reflection during the week they are off. Adapt as you wish. But that is entirely at your own discretion; you'll be best placed to you if that is realistic or not. You can also, of course, particularly for senior students include the above reflection on endurance.

	Activity (sample)	Theme of reflection
Shrove Tuesday/Pancake Tuesday (16 <sup>th</sup> Feb)	See short reflection below that can be sent to students as you see fit.	
Ash Wednesday (17 <sup>th</sup> Feb)	See short reflection below that can be sent to students as you see fit.	
Week beginning 22 <sup>nd</sup> February	Walking meditation (daily) and meditation journal	<b>Let's</b> – the Holy Spirit guiding us during these times
Week beginning 1 <sup>st</sup> March	Gardening moment (daily) or alternative	<b>Let's</b> – choosing what gives us life, being open to God's call to live our lives well and with joy.
Week beginning 8 <sup>th</sup> March	Fundraising moment	<b>Everyone</b> – All of creation and all people. In our own struggles, we're called to reach out to others who are suffering.
Week beginning 15 <sup>th</sup> March	Artwork or music	<b>Endure</b> – Recognising these times are difficult, exploring what does it mean to 'endure'.
Week beginning 22 <sup>nd</sup> March	Sunrise moment	<b>Together</b> – celebrating the triumph of hope over adversity
Week beginning 29 <sup>th</sup> March	Holy Week begins on Passion Sunday (28 <sup>th</sup> March). Reflections for sharing with students will be sent to you to use as you wish.	

**A postscript:** Finally, for runners or athletes in your school, it might be worth putting in some miles together (but apart) over Lent. And using this as an opportunity to do some fundraising for Trócaire or another charity of your choice, following all health regulations of course.

## A Reflection on Shrove Tuesday/Pancake Tuesday

Did you know? Some interesting facts from Siucra research!



### What is Shrove Tuesday?

Shrove Tuesday is the day before Ash Wednesday, and it is observed in many Christian countries. Historically, Shrove Tuesday was the last opportunity to use up eggs and fats before embarking on the Lenten fast and pancakes are the perfect way of using up these ingredients. Shrove Tuesday or Pancake Tuesday is the day when final decisions are made around what sacrifices you might make for Lent. The words, 'What are you doing for Lent?' or 'What are you giving up for Lent', are commonplace in homes up and down the country!

### A prayer for Shrove Tuesday (you could say this prayer as you make your pancakes for Shrove Tuesday!)

*Allow yourself to quieten down and rest before you begin your prayer.*

God of feasting, God of fun, I give you thanks for everything in my life. Eggs, flour and milk may not be luxury items today, but I am aware of all the good things that I can appreciate and enjoy in my life. Bless us as we observe the joy of being your people. Help us as we celebrate Pancake Tuesday in these strange times. Bless my family. Bless my friends.

God of love, God of caring, I know the other side of life as well, the challenges and the difficulties, especially of the current times. Bless us as we face these challenges and as we seek to grow and learn through these challenges over the coming weeks of Lent. May these weeks be a time when we grow closer to one another, and to You, O Lord. I pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

## A Reflection for Ash Wednesday

**Did you know? Last Year's Palm Sunday Branches Used for Ashes.** The ashes for Ash Wednesday are traditionally taken from palm branches that were used for the previous year's Palm Sunday, stressing the theme of mortality that the Lenten service holds. How ecologically aware is that!



### Why Ashes?

Ash Wednesday is the first day of Lent. Ashes are applied to our forehead in the sign of the cross as the words, "Remember, you are dust and to dust you shall return" are spoken to us. The other formula which is used, "Turn away from sin and be faithful to the Gospel" emphasises our call to make changes to our lives and to become more loving and generous in how we live our lives. This act symbolises our mortality as well as our need for ongoing repentance. To repent means to turn away from behaviour and attitudes that harm ourselves, others or our relationship with God and to return to God for help.

### A prayer for Ash Wednesday

*Allow yourself to quieten down and rest before you begin your prayer.*

God, you made me, and you love me. Although Ashes don't rest on my forehead this year, silently and in my heart, I am very aware of the ways in which I don't always love others, love myself or love creation as much as you would like me to. I am not perfect; I try to do my best. You love me and accept me the way I am.

Lent this year will be different but maybe more important than ever. I probably don't really feel like another challenge, but I know it is in stretching myself that I will grow. I learn in PE and from the sports I watch and play, that when I push myself physically, I become stronger. In school I learn that in stretching myself academically I learn more. I know also that in stretching myself spiritually I will grow as well.

So, this Lent, I promise to try to (.....*insert your own Lenten resolutions/promises here*.....). Help me be strong in these Lenten promises. It's okay to be out of my comfort

zone when you are with me. I'm not going to do this on my own; in faith I lean on you this Lent. But by my resolve, I grow.

This Lent bless all my efforts. Bless me with strength and courage. This Lent bless me with the peace of knowing that even if I fail, I can try again. Your love never fails. In you all things are possible. Guide me in all that I do. Keep me going, help me as I grow.

Be with my friends in their efforts. Even though we are separated and apart from one another, I remember all of them in my prayers. I pray now especially for (*.....speak the names of the people you want to pray for....*).

Lord hear these and all the prayers of my heart. Amen.

