



# **Journey through Lent with the Six Welsh Cathedrals**

**from Pancakes to Palm Crosses**



**Lent Course 2026  
Lent Three**

## **Journey through Lent with the Six Welsh Cathedrals from Pancakes to Palm Crosses**

**Bangor – Preparation and Pancakes**

**St Davids – Persistence**

**Brecon – Penitence**

**Llandaff – Praise**

**Newport – Passion**

**St Asaph – Palm Sunday**

**Epilogue – Easter Day**

### **Bible Reading**

#### **Matthew 3. 1-3**

In those days John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness of Judea, proclaiming, 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near.' This is the one of whom the prophet Isaiah spoke when he said,

'The voice of one crying out in the wilderness:

"Prepare the way of the Lord,  
make his paths straight." '

*New Revised Standard Version  
Anglicized Edition*

## Reflection

The hills and mountains around Brecon provide good vantage points to survey the road behind and the road ahead. This Lenten journey began with pancakes and being shriven. Now we have another moment to pause, to look back and to look forward in hope. Here we find the aim of being penitent, a crucial part of what Lent is about. The call from John the Baptist is to “repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near”. It’s to look back at where we began, to reflect internally about how we got here, to atone, and to consider the future.

Brecon Cathedral has a history rooted in penitence and prayer. It used to be a Benedictine Priory, a place where the solitude of its location amongst the hills mirrored the solitude of the people who lived and worshipped there.

Reflecting through prayer in the sanctuary of an ancient building, where Christians have worshipped for over 900 years, can be a very profound experience. Think about all those Benedictine monks, how different their lives were to ours, and how similar, as well. They, too, will have had to reckon with repentance, grappling with the harm they’ve caused or harm that they’ve experienced. As we reflect on this third week of our Lenten journey, this spiritual pilgrimage, how have we been diverted on our journeys with God? Who have we injured on the way? Who’s injured us? What relationships have been damaged or broken? Out of repentance, can there be reconciliation?

Reconciliation is not easy. It requires daring to hold out a hand to another, possibly the one who has injured us, or one whom we have injured, and seeking to be honest with compassion and care. The other will only respond well if they think we genuinely care about them. If we don’t, they will probably spot this, and chances are it won’t work.

In some cases, if the relationship that is damaged was abusive, this may be about coming to terms with what has happened, recognising that we are not to blame, and going forward with renewed blessing. That may be the best we can achieve.

‘Making paths straight’, as John the Baptist says, requires nothing short of the grace of God. But it starts with the humility that recognises I am a sinner in need of God’s healing grace, and so is the other. The kingdom of heaven we seek is one where these injuries and conflicts have no place. So, if we are to recognise it has come near, there is a challenge to seek reconciliation, forgiveness, and healing.

Look for the signs of hope that come with the new day’s promise.

## Interview

### The Reverend Dr Cass Meurig Thomas

#### Mike (the monk from the medieval period)

**Cass**



**Cass:** Well, I'm glad to say that here in Brecon Cathedral, we've actually got a special guest. And this is Mike the monk from the medieval period. How are you doing, Mike?

Well, today is all about penitence. We've been looking at the theme of repentance, and that can be quite uncomfortable for us today. I understand that back in the Middle Ages, this was quite a core practice of the monks. Can you tell us a bit more about the monks' practice of penitence and repentance?

**Mike**

**Mike:** Yes. The monks were here pretty much from when the priory was built. It was built by Bernard de Neufmarché in the 11th century. And they've been here since that period, up until the Reformation. Now, the monks' message was work and prayer. That comes from the Benedictine rule, and that's what the monks here followed. They were Benedictine monks. They wore all black cowl. And that rule essentially was work and prayer. The prayer they constantly prayed throughout the day. At all times they would be praying. So even when they were working, the work was dedicated to God. The work itself was a prayer, and one of the most important things about prayer is to effectively open your heart to God, and that's to tell God what you've done wrong and where you have strayed. Where you have strayed from God's path. And the monks did that through their prayers, throughout their praying.



**Cass:** And how about fasting? Was fasting also a part of their practice?

**Mike:** Yes. The monks in the medieval period actually ate very well; they ate much better than the population that lived around them. But fasting was very, very important. And fasting, of course, comes from Jesus' sojourn in the desert when he fasted. Monks generally fasted on a Wednesday or a Friday. Today we recognize this as a fast day and we still have Fish Friday. And effectively the monks, they had to abstain from meat and dairy products, but they could eat fish. So when the mini fasts every week came, then they would only eat fish on a Friday. During Lent, everyday was a Friday and they had to fast throughout.

**Cass:** So there's that sense of journey throughout Lent then, and of letting go of their sins, I suppose, of that moving on in the journey.

**Mike:** Yes, yes it is. It was definitely like that. And of course they would have been reading the scriptures. They would have followed Christ's journey. And as I say, Ash Wednesday, that would have been the start of the fast. They would have been thinking about Christ in the wilderness, and they would have followed his journey then to Jerusalem. And of course, the monks knew what was going to happen. Unlike the disciples, the monks knew what was going to happen. And I think that that would have added an extra poignancy to them. They could

reflect on that. They could reflect on the sacrifice that Christ gave and then think about what they can sacrifice. And of course, it's not just their own repentance, it's forgiving those who repent against them as well. There had to be accord in the monastery, and of course on the Sunday service, even though we give the peace before we go up for communion. And that's what the monks would have done. You had to be in peace with your neighbours, which meant that you'd forgiven all sin.

## Questions

- † Draw a line on a piece of paper – a path. Imagine this represents your life so far. Plot on it significant moments and people. What does the journey of your life look like now? What has led you to this point?
- † Where are the points of blessing?
- † What might need to change for the journey ahead to be different? How might that happen?
- † Who have we injured? Who has injured us? Who do we need to forgive, be reconciled with?
- † Is there anyone that you need to leave at this place of reflection and repentance so that they can't hurt you anymore?
- † Can you see signs of hope for the new day as your pilgrimage through life continues?

## Notes