



“Food, glorious food”

For those of us who at some time in our education were taught Maslow’s hierarchy of needs, we will remember that right down at base level are the physiological needs which enable us to survive – and amongst them is Food.

But as well as being core to basic survival, food has traditionally also been central to those activities and pursuits which feature rather higher up Maslow’s hierarchy of needs. Food is interwoven with identity, with community and culture and belonging. Food feeds relationships and friendships as well as stomachs, and helps us mark the moments, the milestones and the momentous celebrations along the way.

In our modern-day world, where we have all been influenced by cultures and traditions which may not initially have been our own, the dietary preferences we display and the culinary habits we follow can be very varied and rich indeed! Along with that rich and ever accessible ‘pick and mix’ from which we draw, can come a distancing from the messages and the meanings which different ‘dishes’ once conveyed.

On Tuesday 4th March some of us may reach for our frying pans and pancake mix. **Pancake Day, or Shrove Tuesday**, originally involved people using up all the eggs, milk and fat – foods considered to be rich and indulgent – in order to make way for the plainer fare of the Lenten season. Having prepared their pantries and bodies for consuming less, people then sought to be ‘shriven’ (hence the term ‘Shrove Tuesday’), which meant to confess, and to be forgiven for, those other everyday behaviours and habits which were excessive, unhealthy or unhelpful, whether to self, or to others.

We still retain elements of these once, rather stronger, Lenten traditions. Many of us will enjoy a pancake (or two!) and for some there will also be that sense that we really should ‘**give something up**’ for the weeks ahead. If you are one such person, you may be driven towards some sort of mini health drive or alternative expression of self-discipline (likely a **giving up** of something you eat or drink), or to some act of charitable giving and service (undertaken as a **giving up** and **an offering of** time and money).

The season of Lent has at its heart the invitation to a period of ‘**Fasting**’. Whether taken literally or metaphorically it is a time for not only feeling personal hunger for the things we desire, and usually too easily allow ourselves to have, but a time also for appreciating and responding to the hungers of others whose desires are not so readily met, and whose needs might be as basic as they come.

Let’s not forget that “**Food, glorious food...**” was an anthem sung by the hungry and deprived, not the provided for and satisfied...

How can you and I, in some sense this Lent, experience **the simplicity of Fasting**, so as to help someone else know **the blessing of “Food, glorious food” - and Feasting!**

Carolyn (Vicar)