



## Biblical Figures

The 1<sup>st</sup> reading that we read on Ash Wednesday is always taken from the book of the prophet **Joel**. Joel is one of the 12 minor prophets who are referred to as *minor* not because they are less important than the major prophets but because their writings are much shorter. He was originally from the southern kingdom (Judah) and the dating of his book is still debated by scholars. His writings however indicate that he wrote during the post-exilic period ie. after 6 BC. Some of his major themes are the Spirit who brings about an internal change; the final judgement and the strong theme of *metanoia* (change of heart) which he launched through a strong penitential liturgy.

## Did you know?

1. Lent starts on Ash Wednesday and ends before the Mass of the Last Supper on Holy Thursday. The 40 days of Lent do not include Sundays nor the Triduum as these 3 days (Holy Thursday, Good Friday and Holy Saturday) are their own liturgical season. On Ash Wednesday we are marked with ashes, which remind us of our mortality. We also fast and abstain from meat. During the 40 days of Lent we prepare our hearts and minds before the joy of Easter. We also reflect upon, and participate, in the sufferings that Christ endured for our salvation.
2. Before Vatican Council 2, Catholics observed *Ember* and *Rogation Days* as special times of penitence. These days arose from the agrarian lifestyle of European Catholics and were linked with the planting and harvest of certain crops. They were observed 4 times per year for 3 days over the course of a week. The Ember days associated with Lent are the Wednesday, Thursday and Friday after the 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday of Lent. Historically tied to agriculture, these days were for giving thanks to God for the seasonal harvest and the Lenten ember days were offered for the flower harvest and recalled baptism.

## Tip of the week!

With Lent only a few days away it would be good to create a general atmosphere in our home that makes Lent feel *different* from other times of the year. Here are some suggestions:

- Prepare a prayer corner which can be decorated with a crucifix, cacti and small rocks.
- Lenten sacrifice beans: keep track of all the good deeds the kids do and the small sacrifices they make during Lent by putting a tin of dried purple kidney beans next to an empty jar and each time the kids (or even adults!) make a sacrifice/do a good deed they get to put a bean in.
- Print a Lent calendar as since Lent is quite a long season it would help to cross off each day that passes and which brings us closer to Easter.