



St EDWARD

KING & MARTYR

Asceticism and Advent

The practice of asceticism developed early in Christian tradition especially through the Desert Fathers and Mothers in the 3rd to 4th century AD. Its growth as a Christian discipline took root in the monastic life but was also practised by laypeople. It is characterised by self-denial for the growth of the soul. As Augustine writes, 'Fasting cleanses the soul, raises the mind, subjects one's flesh to the spirit, renders the heart contrite and humble, scatters the clouds of concupiscence, quenches the fire of lust and kindles the true light of chastity' (*Sermons on Prayer and Fasting* LXXII). Asceticism is about disciplining the body to draw near to Christ. Therefore, Christian practices encourage prayer, meditation, charity, and good works. In the season of Advent, as we prepare for Christ's coming, you may want to take up some/all of these ancient disciplines as we recall the heritage of the Christian church and maintain its ways to proclaim the gospel to today's culture.

Mind:

- Reading: read a theological book
- Journaling: use a real pen/paper to write down thoughts and/or prayers
- Unplug: instead of going online, make time for silence, reflection or reading. Give up social media, tv or internet use apart for work reasons
- Attentiveness: be attentive to creation and give thanks at least 3x a day. Think about how your daily choices might be affecting the environment

Body:

- Diet: decrease snacking/comfort eating, focus on mealtimes with family/friends
- Fasting: omit meal(s) twice a week, fast before the eucharist, reduce amounts of food intake, cut out all alcohol
- Exercise: (outdoor) exercise 4x a week minimum half an hour of duration
- Rest: 7 hours of sleep minimum and earlier to bed if possible (before 10:00pm)

Spirit:

- Read: Scripture for at least 10 mins in the morning/evening (Bible in One Year, C of E or BCP Daily Office)
- Silence: 20 minutes of silence/meditation every morning
- Prayer: commit to morning/evening prayer times, find someone to pray with
- Fellowship: meet weekly for worship/eucharist, find accountability partner/group
- Simplify: Think of ways to simplify your life, cut out non-essential purchases, organise your schedule, create homemade gifts for Christmas