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**We are half way through Lent and what do we call today?**

Today is known by several names.

Very simply - The Fourth Sunday of Lent.

Another one is Mothering Sunday. In the United Kingdom, they celebrate Mothers’ Day on this day. Many people rejoice and give thanks for their mothers and the blessings they have brought to them. There are others who have suffered because of their mothers. We must treat this day sensitively and with care.

Not only do we give thanks for our mothers, we also give thanks for our mother church, the Cathedral. For those who belong to an episcopal church the question is, “Do we give thanks for our Cathedral and those who staff the Cathedral? It is my view that is aspect of Lent 4 is rapidly becoming irrelevant. What do I you think? This question could lead to a great discussion.

Sometimes Lent 4 is referred to as Refreshment Sunday. For those who are fasting and for those who think they will struggle to maintain their Lenten discipline, Lent 4 allows them to live it up for the day so that we come to Easter with joy.

In the United Kingdom, this day was not only respite from the Lenten demands. It was an occasion for those who undertook domestic work or were working in factories to visit home and to see their families and care for their mothers. So I offer the simnel cake recipe. It is sweet as a contrasting symbol for those who have struggled because of the bitterness of life.

For us today, it reminds us that there is sweetness if there has been any bitterness in seeking to keep our Lenten disciplines.

Simnel Cake - A recipe

(Christian Ford sees it as “The recipe”)

(The words “simnel” means bun or bread of fine flour.)

Prep 30 mins plus cooling

Cook 2 hours 20 minutes

Serves 12.

Ingredients:

icing sugar to dust

500 g marzipan

225 unsalted butter, softened

1 cup of caster sugar

5 eggs

2 lemons, zested

2 oranges, zested

11/2 cups plain flour

2 tsp ground cinnamon

11/3 cups sultanas

2/3 cup of currents

1/2 cup glazed cherries, halved

2 tbs apricot jam.

Method:

Reheat oven to 150 C/130C fan forced

Lightly grease a 20cm tin (5 cms deep)

Line base and side with baking paper.

Lightly dust a clean surface with icing sugar, then roll out 1/3 of the marzipan to a 5mm thick, 19cm circle. Set aside.

Use an electric mixer, beat the butter and sugar in a large bowl until well combined. Add four eggs, and the zest of a lemons and oranges. Beat until well combined. Add, flour and cinnamon, then beat until just combined. Stir in sultanas, currants, and cherries.

Spoon in half the mixture into the pan and level the surface. Cover with marzipan circle, then top it the remaining mixture and level to the top.

Bake for 2 hours 15 minutes until the the cake is well risen and firm to touch.

Cool in the pan for about ten minutes and turn out on wire rake and let the cake cool completely.

Place apricot jam in microwave for 40 seconds or until runny.

Brush top of the cake with the jam.

Roll out the remaining marzipan to a 20 cm circle. Place on top of the cake and press firmly and then use fingers to to crimp the edges to decorate.

Mark marzipan in a Criss cross pattern with the back of a knife.

Roll the remaining marzipan into eleven balls

Lightly beat the remaining egg in a small bowl.

Brush marzipan layer with egg.

Place the marzipan balls around the egg of the cake, then brush with egg.

You use a blow torch to to brown the top of the cake and marzipan or brown in the oven

This recipe comes from The Reverend Christian Ford of Lismore. It can also be found on page 77 of “Fresh Ideas”, April 2021 magazine.

As an aside, when it comes to fasting during Lent, there are some who do not fast on the Sundays in Lent as Sundays are not one counted among the days of Lent. Others believe that while that is true, our Lord fasted forty days in the wilderness and was tempted, so breaking your fast each Sunday is luxury. What do you think?

**How is your prayer Life?**

This is a question that is asked at the end of the “Let’s Kick Start” section on page 31 of “Conversations with our Awesome God”.

We all need to reflect to make sure that we have not become too mechanical in our prayer life. From time to time it is helpful to read or re-read books or booklets on prayer that have been helpful in the past.

**Families:**

While Lent 4 has a focus on mothers and families, the Gospel reading focuses on males, doing your own things, expectations not being met and tensions between parent and child and among siblings In the Action Plan, spend time reflecting on the photograph.

Both the video clips worth watching.

The nature of family life in this country and across the globe continues to change.

In some instances, there is more openness about the realities of modern family life. A question each faith community needs to ask is: “How do we support and minister to families in our changing world?”