



THE ARCHBISHOP  
OF YORK

Archbishop Stephen gave the Pause for Thought on [BBC Radio 2 Breakfast](#) programme today, Shrove Tuesday

It's Shrove Tuesday today. Also known as Mardi Gras – which is French for 'Fat Tuesday' Or maybe you know it as pancake day, but aren't sure where the making pancakes today comes from. Or perhaps, for you, it's just the 21st of February!

Well, let's stick with the pancakes for a moment. And Fat Tuesday; a title I rather like. It relates to the fast that Christian people keep in Lent – which starts tomorrow. Years ago people used up their rich fatty foods today because they weren't allowed again till Easter.

That's why we make pancakes. We're using up the eggs.

And now I'm thinking of a wonderful picture by the great English painter, Stanley Spencer. It's called, Consider the Lilies. A very large looking Jesus squats on all fours, gazing in wonder at a field of daisies.

And he is - how can I put it politely – very large. As if he may have eaten many pancakes . He is replete with the goodness of the good creation that he contemplates in delightful wonder.

And although the painting's called Consider the Lilies, it is not the regal lily that Jesus is admiring, but the humble daisy. And that's all he's doing; nothing the world thinks important, economic or productive. He's just giving time to the simplest beauty, those daisies and dandelions that grow in the lawn.

So, back to the pancakes. Shrove Tuesday, Fat Tuesday, today, is a day to feast. Ash Wednesday, Lent, tomorrow, a time to fast. That is the Christian tradition. Which is why Lent is often spoken about as a time to give things up.

So, if you do eat pancakes today - and they're very easy to make: sift four ounces of flour into a bowl with a little pinch of salt, whisk in two eggs, seven fluid ounces of milk and three fluid ounces of water, then fry on a high heat with a little knob of butter and serve with... well, just about anything from sweet chocolate spread to spicy chana dhal - remember why. We are enjoying them today because we might be giving them up tomorrow. And the reason Christians give things up is so that we can return to them with increased joy, and a renewed appreciation that everything we receive in this life, each mouthful of food and each lung-full of air, is gift. And that might be good for all of us.

By recognising that some things just are, and that they happen without me doing anything, I might also learn to live more lightly on the earth and recognise my place as a steward of creation not its master nor its owner. And even gaze at daisies.

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