

The Archbishop joined Scott Mills on BBC Radio 2 Breakfast this morning to deliver a Pause for Thought. This follows in full.

Today is Pancake Day. Shrove Tuesday. The last day before Lent. Time to give things up. In much of the world, called Mardi Gras, which delightfully translates as 'Fat Tuesday'.

'Shrove' comes from the old English word 'shriven', meaning 'sorry' and 'forgiven', which reminds Christians that Lent is mostly about getting real. About ourselves. Our obsessions. Our weaknesses. Our failings. And resetting the compass; seeking better ways.

Until recently Lent was a proper season of fasting, where certain foods were not eaten at all, and on the night before Lent, you'd use up all the leftovers that weren't going to be allowed and have one last blow out. Hence the Mardi Gras. The pancakes.

And it's good to celebrate. I look forward to cooking and eating pancakes later today. I'm looking forward to the celebrations of Easter. But I also know I need to change, and one of the best ways of doing this is to restore a bit of balance to my life.

By going without. By giving things up. Christians not only remember that everything we have is gift and that we ought to approach every meal and every mouthful, even every breath, with great thankfulness. It also means, that come Easter, we return to these things with even greater joy. The feast is more fabulous because it has been balanced by the fast.

Most of us in this country – though not all of us – should give thanks that we have a choice in these things.

We can choose to go without. We can choose to fast. We know there'll be a feast around the corner.

This is not the case for so many in this country and in this world.

As I cook pancakes and contemplate Lent, I will try to ensure that my thankfulness for the things we enjoy overflows in greater service and deeper compassion for those who have so little.

Listen to the programme on BBC Sounds

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