



Anglican Catholic Church



Diocese of the United Kingdom

Catholic Faith † Orthodox Worship † Apostolic Order

February 2019

My dear friends and colleagues,

Lent will soon be here. It is meant to be a “wilderness experience”: the wilderness of temptations. Not the temptations of chocolate or biscuits or gin and tonic, but the temptations of pride and arrogance and the assumption that we are in control, that we have complete power over our lives and our destiny. Those were the temptations through which Jesus passed, and as he resisted them – the temptations, ultimately, of naked power – so he was shaped and moulded by his Father. The devil challenged him to imagine that he could take control and remain in control, just as half the pages of a magazine tempt you to imagine that you can take control over your life, your looks, your health and your longevity. Jesus refuses every one of these power temptations, because he trusts that what God is working in him will be sufficient. And when the devil leaves him he is ministered to by the angels.



From the Archdeacon's desk

Each of us has been shaped and moulded and formed by God. Equally, each of us has sinned and fallen away, not once, not twice, but a thousand times. Lent is simply a time to acknowledge that truth, to face up to that reality. We are broken, and yet we live. Something precious is still alive in us, because we have not only been made, and kept, but we have also been redeemed by God. We long to become what in his sight we already are: we long to become whole. Lent is a time to articulate that longing and to let it be known both to our conscious selves and to our God. And as we surrender the false picture of ourselves which we so cherish – the picture of ourselves in the driving seat of our lives, in total control, the masters of our own fate, the captains of our destiny – so we surrender the pretence that we can manage on our own, that we need no help from God nor anyone nor anything else in all creation. And then, as we surrender our pride and our pretence, at last God can do something with us. At last his Spirit can move within us. At last, quietly and gently, he can heal our brokenness, and put us together again. And for that, thanks be to God.

May your Lent be richly blessed

Fr. Raymond Thompson

Archdeacon

Mobile: 07443 438465 Email: rthompson@anglicancatholic.org

Diocesan website: <http://www.anglicancatholic.org.uk/>

Email: diocesanoffice@anglicancatholic.org.uk

Indifference

When Jesus came to Golgotha
They hanged Him on a tree,
They drove great nails through hands and feet,
And made a Calvary.
They crowned Him with a crown of thorns;
Red were His wounds and deep,
For those were crude and cruel days,
And human flesh was cheap.

When Jesus came to Birmingham
they simply passed him by.
They never hurt a hair of him
they simply let him die.
For men had grown more tender
and they would not give him pain.
They only just passed down the street
and left him in the rain.

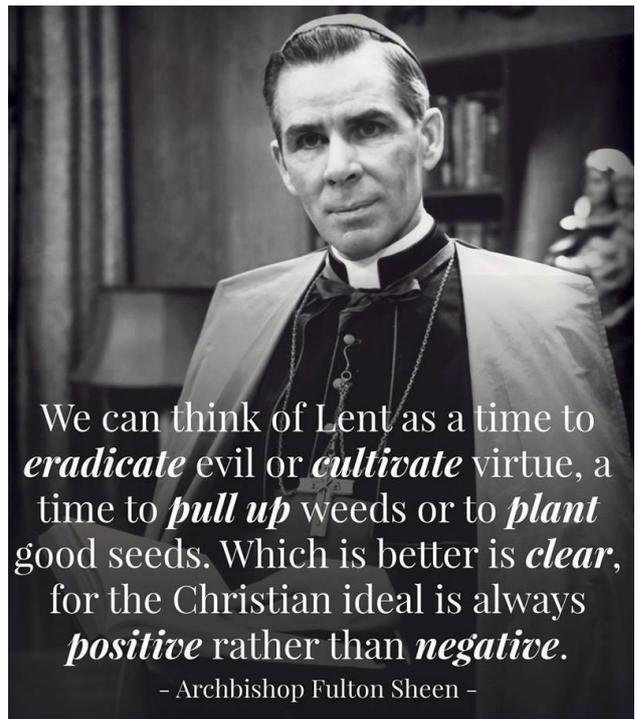
Still Jesus cried, 'Forgive them, for they
know not what they do.'
And still it rained the wintry rain
that drenched him through and through.
The crowds went home and left the streets
without a soul to see.
And Jesus crouched against a wall
and cried for Calvary.

Geoffrey Studdart-Kennedy (1883-1929)

As Christians, members of the priestly body of the Church, we have been called to offer to God the world as it is, the whole world and not merely our own local community. In a sense today we take upon ourselves, and become, all that is good and all that is dreadful in the world. We become the terrified pregnant teenager who is afraid to tell her parents; we become the man who is abusing his family; we become the Syrian orphan, we become the Sudanese family hiding in fear as they hear drunken, gun toting hooligans. We embrace the foolishness of governments and the bigotry of the ignorant. In Lent, as Christians, we confess that we have not sought out those who need our fellowship, we have not cared for those who have lapsed, and we have not loved those with whom we disagree. We have fought and divided (but always for the noblest of reasons, we try to convince ourselves).

We bring our own shortcomings, which we alone can name, if we dare to do so. All these things we offer to the God who has suffered, and in whose Son continues to bear the sins of the world. That's perhaps all we can manage. Perhaps our offering is hesitant. Perhaps we can hardly believe that God cares. Perhaps we *have* experienced the caring God in the midst of our own misery?

All this sounds very doleful. We are used to celebration in our worship and fellowship. But this is the beginning of a yearly journey with Jesus into betrayal, suffering, and death.



(At the risk of self-indulgence I will often use as a "desk picture" some Isle of Sheppey scenes photographed "from my desk", from the garden, or within a few minutes of it!)