



Anglican Catholic Church



Diocese of the United Kingdom

Catholic Faith † Orthodox Worship † Apostolic Order

February 2024

Dear friends and colleagues,

Lent can surely be a time of new beginnings – for the individual and for the whole of creation. We are all looking for the meaning, the clarity of vision, which Jesus had as He journeyed through the days before His death. We need to ask ourselves what we want and what we are truly looking for. Those of us who might begin Lenten fasts on Ash Wednesday or who will give something up need to ask ourselves what we are genuinely hungry for, what really creates any emptiness we feel inside. This is a time when it is still cold and the ground is still hard, but the



daffodils are coming up, ready to open their golden carpet for the risen Lord. The birds are singing their new songs and the trees are forming buds. All creation is anticipating a new beginning. Are we? Too often our lives are busy and our attention is too distracted. We, the ones to whom God calls at this time of year “come back to me with all your heart!”, need to listen and to respond obediently and joyfully. We need to see more clearly and love God more dearly, to be aware of His individual and collective plan, to see our place in the holistic, perfect plan God has for all humanity and to thank *God* for fitting *us* in, not us fitting God into our lives when it suits us – fitting Him in when there’s nothing else to do.

This is a time to re-evaluate our relationship with Him, to value this time between birth and death, death and new birth, to satisfy our hunger with the word of God and the Bread of life, and not to welcome the risen Lord with, as it were, full stomachs and empty hearts on Easter Sunday morning.

It is essential, if we wish to come back to the Lord with heads raised to him and hearts on fire to meet Him, that we make ourselves ready, that we turn again, with our whole bodies, minds, and lives, all of us, the whole “I am”, to God – turn again and look for that path that leads to salvation.

Ash Wednesday is not necessarily the day for great theological discussion; it is the day for honest prayer and listening to the word of God. It is a day to take a step back from the pressures of modern life and to turn ourselves to the coming Easter. It is a day to turn again to the pattern of all creation and look to the Lord in love, and to look to His coming Passion and death and be aware, without doubt, or fear, or discomfort, that *He did that for me*. We need to honestly think about why He did. And to honestly respond to that love. We need to come back, with all our heart, but in love and gratitude born from our understanding of this most beautiful relationship between God and Man.

A Blessed Lent to you all.

Fr. Raymond Thompson

Archdeacon

Mobile: 07443 438465 Email: rthompson@anglicancatholic.org

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

Email: diocesanoffice@anglicancatholic.org.uk

It is finished

“Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by? Behold and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow.”

There are so many that pass by and miss this incredible thing. It can be staring them in the face, and they just don't see it. What blinds them? Well, the usual trio, I should imagine: the world, the flesh and the devil.

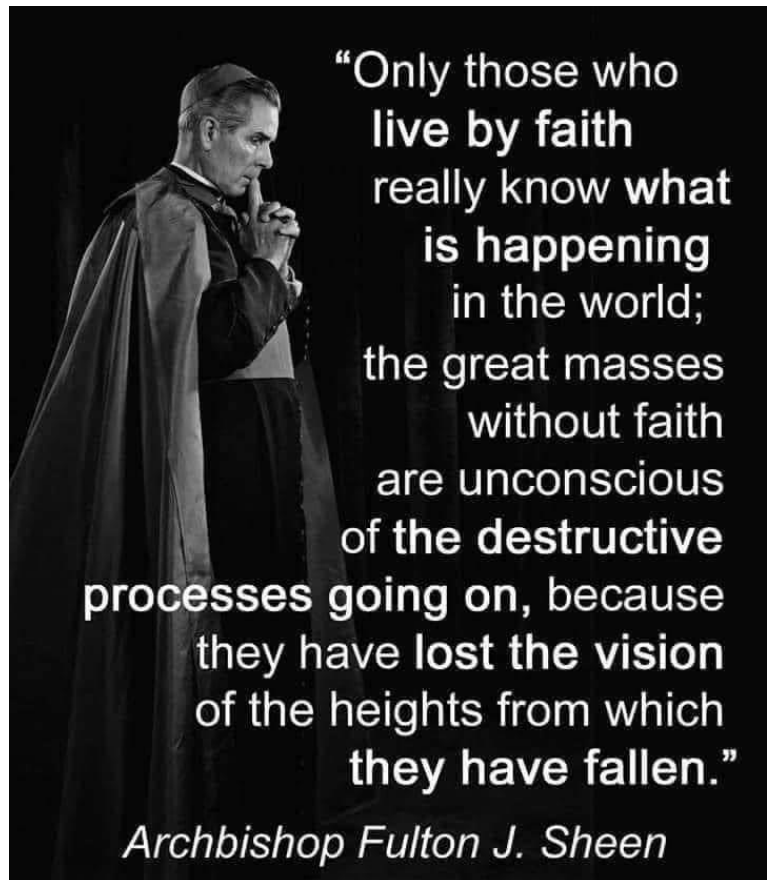
That's what made the chief priests, the scribes, the Pharisees, the Saducees, the Romans, pass by. And it wasn't a crucifix in church but the real bloody spectacle that they saw. Their cosy world of state-tolerated religion and special privilege would be shattered if the claims of Jesus were true. They would have to be deprived of some of their selfish pleasures if the commands of this Jesus were obeyed. Their devil-inspired pride by which they despised others would have to be subdued, if they believed this madman's claim that “Inasmuch as ye do it [charity, love, care] unto the least of these my brethren, ye do it unto me”.

Dom Gregory Dix, that great Anglican Benedictine, asked in “The Shape of the Liturgy”: “Was ever another command so obeyed?” referring to the words of Jesus at the Last Supper: “Do this in remembrance of me.” Through two millennia the Church has offered the Mass in millions of different places day by day. And because each Mass is a re-presentation of the Sacrifice of the Cross, all the rest has flowed from it, the feeding of the hungry, the visiting of the sick and dying, the forgiving of enemies, the loving of the unlovely and uncaring and ungrateful.

On Good Friday, we share again in the Passion of Christ, and we venerate his Cross, but we also receive his Sacred Body. And we go away from the bare, empty, stripped church to wait in silence for what God will do next.

Then, when Christian folk return for the Easter Vigil, they might find the church resembling the Chelsea Flower Show! Justifiably! Only our best will do for the triumphantly risen Christ. Can we say that, in spite of the world, the flesh and the devil, we have not passed by? We have stopped, shocked at man's inhumanity. And then we have listened to our Lord's words from the Cross: “Father, forgive”; “Father, into thy hands”; “It is finished”.

It is finished. Completed. Perfected. Or in modern parlance: “I've done it! Mission accomplished.”



(My “desk picture” on the front page shows an Isle of Sheppey scene viewed from my desk, or from the garden, or within a few minutes of it.)