



Anglican Catholic Church



Diocese of the United Kingdom

Catholic Faith † Orthodox Worship † Apostolic Order

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My dear friends and colleagues,

Do you ever wonder why Jesus went into the desert to be tempted by the devil for forty days? There is no doubt that temptation exposes us to the danger of sin, and temptation is always serious business for the Christian. At the same time, paradoxically, temptation does have a positive value in the Christian life. Temptation tests us and strengthens us in the struggle against evil. Jesus went into the desert to be tested by the devil. His human nature grew in strength and his human mind and will grew in firm purpose and dedication as he struggled with Satan. Those who have met evil face to face and have struggled with it have a spiritual toughness and resolve that endless hours of quiet prayer alone cannot give. Being tested is an important part of growing in faith, strength and conviction. A person who has never encountered the spirit of evil and has never faced opposition from others or the impulses of his or her own desires may well be a person who has not grown spiritually. Lack of exercise of our minds and wills in practicing the virtues that make us strong may leave us weak and spiritually out of shape.

In dealing with temptation we need to be careful to trust in God's power, not in our own. Yet a life without testing is a life without strength. A prayer life without struggle is a prayer life without power. A Christian that avoids the trials and struggles of the world is a Christian who is unlikely to find Jesus as he or she attempts to walk the way of the Cross. Jesus went into the desert to be tested by Satan. Temptation is serious business. It is always dangerous. That is why Jesus taught us to pray "Lead us not into temptation." But an over-safe and comfortable life without the struggles that strengthen and deepen the faith, the virtues and the commitments that make us Christian, is also dangerous.

Jesus began his journey to the Cross and Resurrection by meeting the devil face to face. What is the devil that needs to be faced in your life and in my life this Lent? Are there weaknesses, sins and demons in our hearts that we need to face? Jesus went into the desert for forty days to be tested and tempted by the devil. After he had faced evil honestly and squarely he embraced the rest of his life, including the Cross.

May the temptations and trials of life purify and strengthen us as we embrace the way of the Cross during the season of Lent.

With every blessing

Fr. Raymond Thompson

Archdeacon



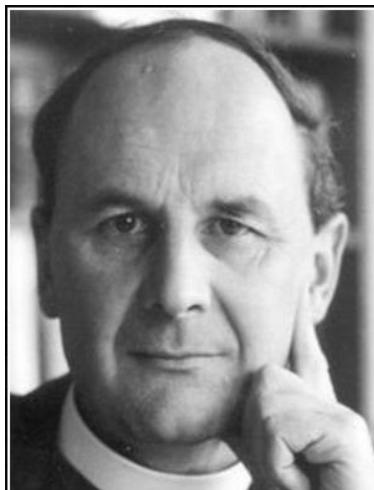
from the Archdeacon's Desk

Fasting and Feasting – a Lent checklist

Fast from worry, and feast on divine order by trusting in God.
Fast from complaining, and feast on appreciation.
Fast from negatives, and feast on positives.
Fast from unrelenting pressures, and feast on unceasing prayer.
Fast from hostility, and feast on tenderness.
Fast from bitterness, and feast on forgiveness.
Fast from self-concern, and feast on compassion for others.
Fast from the shadows of sorrow, and feast on the sunlight of serenity.
Fast from idle gossip, and feast on purposeful silence.
Fast from judging others, and feast on the Christ within them.
Fast from apparent darkness, and feast on the reality of light.
Fast from thoughts of illness, and feast on the healing power of God.
Fast from words that pollute, and feast on the phrases that purify.
Fast from discontent, and feast on gratitude.
Fast from anger, and feast on optimism.
Fast from personal anxiety, and feast on eternal truth and serenity.
Fast from discouragement, and feast on hope.
Fast from facts that depress, and feast on truths that uplift.
Fast from lethargy, and feast on enthusiasm.
Fast from suspicion, and feast on honesty.
Fast from thoughts that weaken, and feast on promises that inspire.
Fast from problems that overwhelm, and feast on prayer that underpins.

In times of severe testing one is sometimes faced with a stark reminder of what one takes for granted. I am referring to the fact that when we are healthy and fit and active, we often completely take for granted how precious a thing it is to enjoy good health and how lucky we are to be able to dash about indulging in all kinds of “busyness”. When I went into hospital eight years ago (and again a year later), little did I realise that there lay ahead of me months of enforced inactivity and recuperation. Never before had I appreciated what it means just to be able to speak. The frustration I encountered at not being able to be heard, and not having the strength to perform such small tasks as my four-year-old granddaughter could do with ease, made me realise just how fortunate we are when we are blessed with good health of body, mind and spirit. My sadness at that time at not being able to celebrate the Sacred Mysteries and preach the Word of God made the keeping of Lent, Easter, Pentecost, etc., a very different experience, and led me to have a deeper appreciation of the sufferings and frustrations of those who had much more severe disabilities than mine.

For many months now I have known what it is like to experience the pain of unimaginable grief, and to be completely overwhelmed and exhausted by it. We have also been given cause for much anxiety over the fragility of health of our Father in God and Bishop Ordinary, realising how much he means to all of us and to the Diocese, the wider Church, and the cause of the Gospel. There are times when God turns things upside down, and calls us to re-evaluate our part in His plan and to see the bigger picture – a picture that may not put us at the centre of things quite as much as our egos may have led us to believe. But ... there is the undeniable fact that after anguish comes resurrection.



To live with God is to live always in
the present, with him who is the
eternal Now.

— John Robinson —