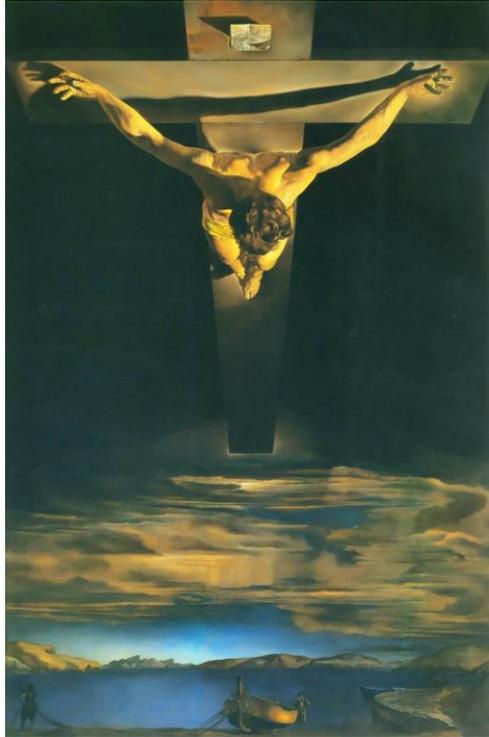


St Matthew's
Westminster



Lent Booklet
Week II

*Sunday 5th March -
Saturday 11th March 2023*

An Introduction to Lent

Lent is a season of forty days, not counting Sundays, which begins on Ash Wednesday and ends on Holy Saturday. The English word *Lent* comes from the Anglo-Saxon word *lencten*, which means *lengthen* and refers to the lengthening days of spring. In many other languages, the word used for this season refers to the 40-day length of the season (*cuaresma* in Spanish, *carême* in French, *quaresima* in Italian) or to the fasting that characterizes it (*Fastenzeit* in German, *fastan* in Swedish, *paasto* in Finnish).

Historically, Lent began as a period of fasting and preparation for baptism by converts and then became a time for penance by all Christians. The first Sunday of Lent describes Jesus' temptation by Satan; and the sixth Sunday (Palm Sunday), Christ's triumphal entry into Jerusalem and his subsequent passion and death. Note that the readings during Lent, until Palm Sunday, focus primarily on the meaning of baptism and discipleship, in continuity with the season's original purpose. Because Sundays are always little Easters, the penitential spirit of Lent is tempered with joyful expectation of the Resurrection.

Week 2 | Temptation

Today, temptation is often linked to chocolate cake. When someone brings a cake into the church office - usually to be encouraged - the clergy can be heard to say 'I shouldn't really eat it, but I am really tempted. Perhaps just a thin slice then ...' Well, this is a temptation, of a sort: the temptation not to stick to my diet. When the Scriptures talk about temptation, however, they mean something much more serious.

We begin battling temptation when we become aware of those small voices that flit through our minds. When someone has treated us cruelly, we might find that we are angry with them, then start resenting them, and finally we end up hating them. This can lead to pleasant pictures of taking revenge, telling ourselves, 'Then they will know how it feels to be let down by someone.' Jesus 'was tempted as we are yet without sin' (Hebrews 4.15). Having destructive thoughts is part of being human. Sinfulness comes in dwelling on them. When we are caught up in a destructive temptation, healing comes through prayer, perhaps by thoughtfully saying the Lord's Prayer.

And just to reassure you: the gift of a chocolate cake will always be welcomed, whether it's Lent or Eastertide.

Sunday March 5th *Second Sunday of Lent*

Reading

Jesus came out and went, as was his custom, to the Mount of Olives; and the disciples followed him. When he reached the place, he said to them, 'Pray that you may not come into the time of trial.'

St Luke 22. 39-40

Reflection

The Church has the power to make me holy but it is made up, from the first to the last, only of sinners. And what sinners! It has the omnipotent and invincible power to renew the Miracle of the Eucharist, but is made up of people who are stumbling in the dark, who fight every day against the temptation of losing their faith. It brings a message of pure transparency but it is incarnated in the mess and untidiness of the world. It speaks of the sweetness of its Master, of its non-violence, but there was a time in history when it sent out its armies to disembowel the infidels and torture the heretics. It proclaimed the message of evangelical poverty, and yet it looked for money and alliances with the powerful.

Carlo Carretto (1910-1988)

Prayer

I bind unto myself today
The strong name of the Trinity,
By invocation of the same
The Three in One and One in Three.

Christ be with me, Christ within me,
Christ behind me, Christ before me,
Christ beside me, Christ to win me,
Christ to comfort and restore me.
Christ beneath me, Christ above me,
Christ in quiet, Christ in danger,
Christ in hearts of all that love me,
Christ in mouth of friend and stranger.

From St Patrick's Breastplate

Monday March 6th

Reading

Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his power. Put on the whole armour of God, so that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.

Ephesians 6. 10-11

Reflection

The great temptation of modern humanity is not physical solitude but immersion in the mass of others, not escape to the mountains or the desert (would that more were so tempted!) but escape into the great formless sea of irresponsibility which is the crowd. There is actually no more dangerous solitude than that of the person who is lost in a crowd, who does not know they are alone and who does not function as a person in a community either. They do not face the risks of true solitude or its responsibilities, and at the same time the multitude has taken all other responsibilities off their shoulders. Yet they are by no means free of care; they are burdened by the diffuse, anonymous anxiety, the nameless fears, the petty itching lusts and the all pervading hostilities which fill mass society the way water fills the ocean.

Thomas Merton (1915-1968)

Prayer

Lord God, heavenly Father,
you know that we are set
in the midst of so many and great dangers,
that by reason of the frailty of our nature
we cannot always stand upright:
Grant us such strength and protection,
to support us in all danger,
and carry us through all temptations;
through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Martin Luther (1483-1546)

Tuesday March 7th

Reading

No testing has overtaken you that is not common to everyone. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tested beyond your strength, but with the testing he will also provide the way out so that you may be able to endure it.

1 Corinthians 10.13

Reflection

A silly idea is current that good people do not know what temptation means. This is an obvious lie. Only those who try to resist temptation know how strong it is ... Someone who gives in to temptation after five minutes simply does not know what it would have been like an hour later. That is why bad people, in one sense, know very little about badness. They have lived a sheltered life by always giving in.

C S Lewis (1898-1963)

Prayer

Abide with us, Lord,
for it is toward evening and the day is far spent;
abide with us, and with your whole Church.
Abide with us in the evening of the day,
in the evening of life,
in the evening of the world.
Abide with us in your grace and mercy,
in holy Word and Sacrament,
in your comfort and your blessing.
Abide with us in the night of distress and fear,
in the night of doubt and temptation,
in the night of bitter death,
when these shall overtake us.
Abide with us and with all your faithful ones,
O Lord, in time and in eternity. Amen.

Georg Christian Dieffenbach (1822-1901)

Wednesday March 8th

Reading

Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal that is taking place among you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you.

1 Peter 4.12

Reflection

Life is not about fairness or unfairness. It is often unjust, claiming the good and the innocent as its victims. Life is about making certain choices: between one action and another, between generous self-giving and selfish holding back; and it is also about what we make of the harsh, unlooked-for blows that come to us all: sickness and pain, grief and old age. None of us dare judge the life of another: that is God's prerogative, and his judgement is matched by his mercy. Those who become embittered or lose their faith or take their own life in despair may have had the dice loaded against them from the start, and none of us know whether we should have survived if we had been in their place. All I would dare claim is that it is good if we learn from our own experience of suffering or bereavement, and as a result are wiser, more tolerant, above all more compassionate. There are those who are able to use their sickness, their pain, even their dying as a time for growth and a new-found trust in the God who holds us in death as in life and will not let us go. And perhaps they are not as rare as we think.

Michael Mayne (1929-2006), A Year Lost And Found

Prayer

Lord,
give your people strength
to withstand the temptations of the devil,
that with pure hearts and minds
we follow you, the only God;
through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord,
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and forever. Amen.

Gelasian Sacramentary C8

Thursday March 9th

Reading

For this reason, when I could bear it no longer, I sent to find out about your faith; I was afraid that somehow the tempter had tempted you and that our labour had been in vain.

1 Thessalonians 3.5

Reflection

Scriptures do not offer rational certitude. They offer us something much better, an entirely different way of knowing: an intimate relationship, a dark journey, a path where we must discover for ourselves that grace, love, mercy, and forgiveness are absolutely necessary for survival in an uncertain world. You only need enough clarity to know how to live without certitude! Yes, we really are saved by faith. People who live in this way never stop growing, are not easily defeated, are wise and compassionate, and frankly, are fun to live with. They have a quiet and confident joy. Infantile religion insists on certainty every step of the way and thus is not very happy.

Fr Richard Rohr (b1943)

Prayer

Compassionate Father,
we pray for those who struggle with loss
and are weighed down by temptations to despair.
Drive away their darkness with the light of Christ
who came to bear our griefs and carry our sorrows.
Cheer their hearts with the goodness
of your many blessings they still enjoy.
Remind them despite their losses
that they will not lose the treasure of Christ
or his gospel that declares them his own.

St Stephen's Breviary

Friday March 10th

Reading

But those who want to be rich fall into temptation and are trapped by many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction.

1 Timothy 6.9

Reflection

Come, heavy souls, oppressed that are
With doubts, and fears, and carking care.
Lay all your burdens down, and see
There's one that carried once a tree
Upon his back, and, which is more,
A heavier weight, your sins, he bore.
Think then how easily he can
Your sorrows bear that's God and man:
Think too how willing he's to take
Your care on him, who for your sake
Sweat bloody drops, prayed, fasted, cried,
Was bound, scourged, mocked and crucified.
He that so much for you did do,
Will do yet more, and care for you.

Thomas Washbourne (1606-87)

Prayer

O God,
you make all things work together
for good to those who love you.
Fill us with the invincible power of your love
that the holy desires you have put in our hearts
may not be changed by any temptation;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Gelasian Sacramentary C8

Saturday March 11th

Reading

Discipline yourselves; keep alert. Like a roaring lion your adversary the devil prowls around, looking for someone to devour. Resist him, steadfast in your faith, for you know that your brothers and sisters throughout the world are undergoing the same kinds of suffering.

1 Peter 5. 8-11

Reflection

My Lord God, I have no idea where I am going. I do not see the road ahead of me. I cannot know for certain where it will end. Nor do I really know myself, and the fact that I think that I am following your will does not mean that I am actually doing so. But I believe that the desire to please you does in fact please you. And I hope I have that desire in all that I am doing. I hope that I will never do anything apart from that desire. And I know that if I do this you will lead me by the right road though I may know nothing about it. Therefore will I trust you always though I may seem to be lost and in the shadow of death. I will not fear, for you are ever with me, and you will never leave me to face my perils alone.

Thomas Merton (1915-1968)

Prayer

Almighty God,
by your mercy
do not let our minds be cast down by any troubles of this life,
let no hurtful temptation have dominion over them,
let no darkness of unbelief hold them captive.
But, illuminated by the light of your face shining on us,
may we always walk securely
on the sure ground of the true faith. Amen.

Mozarabic Rite C7

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