

We are well into the season of Lent now. Ash Wednesday has passed, and the readings for last Sunday included the Gospel account of Jesus's temptations during his forty days in the wilderness. Perhaps this made us think of our own temptations - and whether we might be able to resist them like Jesus did - whether the plans we set ourselves for Lent (or perhaps didn't quite get round to setting!) will be successful or not. We're far enough into Lent to check up on ourselves, but still have enough time ahead to do something about it - if we need to!

The Sunday readings are moving on quickly. The accounts of the wilderness have gone, and the way of the cross is starting to loom large. Jesus is hinting about his destiny - his crucifixion - and the story continues. We are invited to follow Jesus as he follows his Father's bidding. Jesus doesn't look back - and it is important that we are not detained too long looking backwards at our past wrongs and failures.

Quoting now from Nick Fawcett's thoughts (as I often do!) for the Second Sunday in Lent:-

Living God,
it's easy to fool ourselves
that we are observing Lent -
giving up certain vices,
denying ourselves particular pleasures,
making bold resolutions.
It's easy to imagine that this is what Lent is all about -
but it's not.
For Lent above all is a time for reflection, for self-examination,
for prayer, for renewed commitment.
As we seek your guidance and offer you our love,
help us to hear your voice and be strengthened in the service of Jesus Christ.

The main task for Lent is to "be there" - with God - to focus on time with God rather than on our deeds and actions. This sounds easy - but it's not. Life and the world force us into busy-ness and achieving things - into plans and goals and success. It's so easy to think that the Christian life is all about us, and what we do - rather than what God is doing in us. Self-denial, learning, prayer and spiritual reading can all have their part to play in Lent - don't get me wrong - but they are only a means to an end, and may or may not help us. The best goal to seek for our Christian lives is a deeper relationship with God, and the gift of his love to fuel our life of love and service. As Nick Fawcett invites us to pray:-

Loving God,
we think we are so busy, so pressurised,
having so much to do.
We rush around day after day with never a moment to spare.
Yet so often we forget the one thing we really need -
to make time and space in our lives to meet with you,
to hear your voice,
and to look at the world from your perspective.
Loving God, teach us to be still
and to know your presence. Amen