

A few words from the Vicar

'And whenever you fast, do not look dismal, like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces so as to show others that they are fasting. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, so that your fasting may be seen not by others but by your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you. (Matthew 6:16-18)

So, having promised to give up chocolate, sweets, biscuits, cake or whatever for Lent, how have you managed so far? Has your fast held or has there been a lapse?

Well done if you have persevered. Keep it up!

If you have lapsed, perhaps if someone has offered you a biscuit or whatever and without thinking you have indulged, then don't worry; all is not lost. Say sorry to God, start your fast again and try your best to do better next time.

The reality is, whether or not you have managed to persevere in your Lenten fast so far, it is a win win situation spiritually.

All of us are sinners; that is to say, we fall short of God's standards in so many different ways throughout our lives. If you have lapsed, then take it as a timely, personal reminder of this fact. If you haven't lapsed, then remind yourself that we fast during Lent as a mark of penitence. Our fast isn't meant to be an aid to slimming but a vehicle for spiritual growth.

As I said, win win!

Being penitent isn't about being miserable or an excuse to engage in self-pity. Sure Lent is a season when we try to be realistic about ourselves and, of course, this should bring with it repentance; which is as much about resolving to turn away from whatever is wrong in our lives as it is about saying sorry to God (and for that matter anyone else affected by our sin).

With our growing realism should come joy as we remind ourselves that no matter who we are or what we've done, God loves us and forgives us; that he will always love us and will never abandon us.

Indeed, as we travel through Lent and our Lenten fast, as we travel through Palm Sunday, Mandy Thursday and the darkness of Good Friday, we know our journey will always bring us to the overwhelming joy of Easter. So, with our gaze firmly fixed on the Easter celebrations, we have joy in our hearts in the knowledge that in his death Jesus took upon himself the consequences of our sin and in his resurrection we have eternal life.

And we win some more!

It is very easy to focus upon the shortcomings of others whilst ignoring our own. Well, as we persevere in our Lenten fast, as we use the opportunity to be realistic about ourselves, this should help us to become more tolerant when confronted by the shortcomings of others.

So, keep it up and, if you have lapsed, start again. Keep going, Easter is nearly upon us!

Every Blessing

Dave