

~ The Epistle ~

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NEWSLETTER OF THE CATHEDRAL CHURCH OF SAINT JOHN THE EVANGELIST
ANGLICAN CATHOLIC CHURCH OF CANADA • TRADITIONAL ANGLICAN COMMUNION
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THE MOST REVEREND SHANE B. JANZEN, ARCHBISHOP & RECTOR



WE now enter into the holy Season of Lent. In the name of the Church, bishops and priests throughout the world have exhorted the faithful "to observe with great devotion the days of our Lord's Passion and Resurrection, and to prepare for the same by a season of penitence and fasting." Here, on this Ash Wednesday, we have knelt before the Altar and, in humility, have been reminded that we are but dust, and to dust we shall return. We hear also the call to repent of our sins and to be faithful to the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. Sin is no longer to have sway over us; God alone is to have dominion over our lives and our souls.

It is in the Season of Lent that the Church and her faithful exam most starkly the nature of sin and its remedy. In terms of moral theology, 'sin is the violation of the divine law of love for God and our neighbour, committed with full knowledge and deliberate consent'. The Christian revelation teaches that sin is not ultimately just the imperfection of a free creature, which can be corrected by intelligence and human determination; nor that sin is the transgression of a cold, remote law; nor that sin is just an offence against another human being. Sin in Christian revelation is man's deliberate turning away from God; the refusal to love others, and to love the One who is Love Itself. It is no accident that the Church precedes Ash Wednesday with the reading from 1 Corinthians 13, St. Paul's great Epistle on love. For when we, as human beings, sin we try to attain something contrary to the love of God. We in fact violate the divine order of love to which we are all called. As the Prayer Book confession states:

"We have followed too much the devices and desires of our own hearts, We have offended against thy holy laws, We have left undone those things which we ought to have done, And we have done those things which we ought not to have done; And there is no health in us."

The fact that when we sin some good may be involved helps us to realize the snare and deception of sin. It also shows the corruption and sacrilege of sin: something true and good, something from God, is misused or abused.

Unfortunately, sin and evil can blind us to the reality of their power in our lives. The presence of evil in and around us deprives us of the ability to see sin as it really is. And it blinds us to the harsh reality of the consequences of sin. Jesus spoke many times about the power of sin in men's lives.

Holy Scripture reveals to us, from Genesis through the Book of Revelation, the consequences of a life lived in sin. So too, the Christian revelation speaks to us of the remedy for sin. Through confession, repentance, and God's forgiveness and grace we are set free from the bondage of sin and made whole again. As St. Paul writes: "The wages of sin is death; but thanks be to God who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." God wills all people to be saved. Through the Passion, Death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ, He has conquering sin, and has opened the gate of Heaven to all who repent and believe in God.

When we stray and go our own way, seeking for some better life, whether through 'the lust of the flesh, or the lust of the eye, or the pride of life'; Jesus bids us come back to Him. And in that coming back to God, all we are required to do is admit that we have sinned, confess our sins fully and completely, and then through God's mercy receive the absolution for our sins and the healing of our souls. St. James bids us: "Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw nigh to God and He will draw nigh to you."

The Season of Lent is a time for turning away from sin and for turning back to God. It is a time to reflect upon the will of God for our lives, and to recommit ourselves again to Him. As one author has written, the journey back from sin and death is but a change of direction into the waiting embrace of God our Father. Let us begin that journey, as we enter into these Forty Days of Lent.

Archbishop Shane B. Janzen

**GOD'S GRACE:
STRENGTH IN WEAKNESS**

by Archbishop Shane Janzen

EACH of us at various times in our lives is faced with temptation. It may take the form of desire for material goods or comforts that go beyond our needs; it may be pleasures of the flesh (not just sexual but also food and drink, or the desire to escape life's demands through worldly entertainments and distractions); it may even be a temptation to doubt God's love or providence in our lives.

We may be tempted by our own pride, believing that we, and we alone, are capable of dealing with life in all its circumstances. Fortunately, God knows us better than we know ourselves. Even in the face of temptation, He provides a way through it – not just around it, or over it, but power to overcome it – even the most subtle of temptations. For God offers us the supernatural power of His grace.

The grace of God is not wholly understood, for it is a power that emanates from God beyond our human comprehension; beyond any power or strength of will known to man. What we do know is that by means of God's grace we are given the strength and the ability to withstand the temptations of the world, the flesh, and the devil; and to walk in the way of God.

But there is a catch to God's grace – you have to use it! Grace, like faith, is a divine gift. As Christians, we can be guilty of receiving 'the grace of God in vain'. This is what Saint Paul is writing about in today's Epistle reading.

How then can a Christian be guilty of receiving the grace of God in vain? We may have an intellectual understanding of the Christian Faith but not have the Word of God written on our hearts. Knowledge of the faith, even with pious devotion, does not pass for living faith. We must 'walk the talk', as they say' we must 'live the faith' we profess.

On the flip-side, we may accept the grace of God in vain if we are so caught up by and with the love of God that we live without the power of God's love in our lives. The Passion and Cross of Christ can be or can become for some merely a moving spectacle, an event in time which passes away without subduing our will; or, indeed, without transforming our love of God into the service or sacrifice that makes that love real. Our Lord said: "Why do you call me, 'Lord, Lord,' and not do what I tell you? (*St. Luke 6:46*) Unless the Cross of Christ produces in us both the desire and the will to live our faith in God each day, then we may indeed be guilty of accepting the grace of God in vain.

Yet again, we may accept the grace of God in vain if we do not allow our conversion in Christ to rule in every part of our lives – work, leisure,

relationships with others, our political and social associations, our membership in the Body of Christ. If we live as 'Sunday Christians' only; if we compartmentalize our faith such that it has no influence on our daily conduct or transactions, then we have failed to receive the grace of God as it was meant to be received. And the love of Christ may not have taken root within us.

Lent is an opportunity to examine our walk in faith. It is a time in which to ask ourselves the tough questions; and it is a Season in which to renew our faith and start living afresh the life of a true disciple of Christ. We are given an opportunity and a time in which to put away old habits, old sins, our old selves; and turn back to Christ. An opportunity to place before God our worldly cares and concerns which rob us of peace; to place before God our whole lives, the good and the bad, the love and the sin. An opportunity to ask God for His grace and mercy to turn our lives around, back to Him; and so be worthy of His Passion and Cross.

Throughout this holy Season, our little acts of self-denial, our little acts of kindness, our times of prayer and meditation, are intended to remind us that we do not truly belong to this world at all. We have been bought with a price; and our lives are hid with Christ in God. We have freely renounced this world in order to affirm the claims of the other, unseen world with its entirely different set of values and standards. We have chosen God, and God's way; or, more accurately, God has chosen us, and shown us the way to happiness and fullness of life.

As Saint Paul so eloquently writes in his Epistle to the Corinthians, the life of a Christian is one marked by contradictions. It is a life lived in contradiction to the standards, the ideals, the pursuits of the world. It is marked by a constant 'No' to the world, the flesh, and the devil, and a constant 'Yes' to all that is true and lovely and good – that is, to all that is of God.

As the expression states: 'We live in the world but not of the world'; and this apparently paradoxical attitude to life is at the heart of the Christian vocation. But as we read in our Epistle for today, St. Paul reminds Christians not to be afraid of this apparent contradiction. Saint Paul takes each charge made against him and sets its opposite truth side by side with it. "As unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and behold, we live; as chastened, and not killed; as sorrowful, ye always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things." (*2 Cor. 6:9,10*)

This is not just word play, or literary license; for the paradox is realized and resolved in the actual experience of St. Paul, and of every practicing Christian. If we gladly accept death

to the world, we find a glorious new life open to us, hid with God in Christ. If we accept our weakness, our inability to fight the struggles of life and salvation alone, then we find that God is true to His word: "My grace is sufficient for you; for My strength is made perfect in weakness." (2 Cor. 12:9)

Our Lord withstood the temptations of the world, the flesh, and the devil to restore the obedience of fallen man to the commandments of God. Our Lord offers to each of His disciples the grace to withstand these same temptations; and to offer in the place of sin and death, blessings and life. In His Body and Blood offered for us and to us, our Lord gives us sacramental grace to live the life we are called to live. And the grace of God is powerful; it is capable of transforming the lives of sinners and shaping the lives of saints.

"Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." (Hebrews 4:14-16.)



SIN AND REPENTANCE

by Archbishop Shane Janzen

FROM time to time, often in preparation for the Sacrament of Penance, I find myself discussing the nature of sin with a parishioner or with a person who has asked for spiritual counsel. During these times I frequently need help the person understand the difference between actual 'sin' and what is so often merely human error or human folly. It is not that the person feels that he or she has not sinned, but rather the person has been overly scrupulous and somehow, somewhere along the way has misunderstood the nature of sin and its commission. Because the penalty for unrepented sin is so great – eternal death – it is important that all Christians know and understand what it is to commit sin; and also to know and make use of the remedy for sin, the Sacrament of Penance (Confession).

So now, once again, a brief lesson in moral theology 101. In order for any one of us to be guilty of sin, we must have: (1) know that the thought, word, deed or omission is an actual sin prohibited by God; (2) actually committed the sin in question; and, (3) have done so with full intent and free will. In other words, we must have knowingly, willingly, and freely committed the sin – a sin which is an offence against God or neighbour, as set forth in Holy

Scripture and the moral teachings of Christ and His Church. There is no guess work involved. We may wish we had not committed the sin; hopefully we regret that we committed the sin; but we should never be in doubt that indeed it was a sin for which we are morally culpable. And if there is any doubt in your mind, as the *Exhortation* in the Prayer Book states:

Firstly, then, it is important to know what is or is not a sin; which in turn requires of each of us knowledge of the commandments of God and the teachings of Jesus Christ; and in so knowing, a conscience formed according to the faith and teachings of the Church. As in matters of faith, so in matters of morals, it is not a question of whether you or I think something is a sin or not a sin, but rather what is the teaching of Christ revealed to His Church?

This revelation is not a matter of speculation (contrary to what popular opinion may say), but is set forth by God's in His Word. God does not lie to His people nor does He conceal the truth from us in tiny fine print or hidden teachings. God is a just Judge and loving Father, who desires only our well-being and eternal salvation.

So then it is the duty of Christ's faithful followers to know, through the study of His Word and the teachings of His Church, what is our bounden duty and responsibility with respect to the moral life. And it is one of my primary responsibilities to see to it that none of you is in doubt or ignorance as to the nature of sin or its consequences for your life and salvation.

Each of us needs to remember that sin and temptation are not respecters of age, nor of financial or marital status, or of lifestyle. We are all guilty of sin and in need of God's mercy and forgiveness in our lives. To help us determine the nature and degree of sin in our lives, especially during the penitential season of Lent, we need to undergo an examination of conscience. Like our annual physical examination with our doctor, so too as Christians each of us needs to undergo a complete annual moral examination – one which asks us the hard soul-searching questions and probes into our lives, our thoughts, our motives, our intentions and our actions. Here then are the hard questions which require an honest answer before our loving Father in heaven:

- Do I love God with all my heart, mind, body, and soul?
- Do I make an idol of money, possessions or sex?
- Do I blaspheme by taking the Name of the Lord in vain?
- Do I study and listen to the Word of God and try to obey God's commandments?
- Do I go to Church regularly on Sundays and Holy Days?

Do I tithe, offering to God money according to my means for the support of the work of the Church at home and abroad?

Do I keep Sunday as a holy day, avoiding all unnecessary work?

Do I say my prayers regularly?

Have I hated others, desiring them ill or hurt?

Have I been faithful to my spouse?

Have I been kind and helpful to my children?

Have I honoured my mother and my father?

Do I contribute to the needs of those less fortunate?

Have I lived up to my promises made at Baptism/Confirmation?

Am I a peacemaker and an example to others of Christian living?

Do I speak up for my beliefs and principles as a Christian?

Do I encourage my family and children to live a Christian life?

Do I visit the bereaved and the lonely, the sick and shut-in?

Have I been a good steward of God's creation – caring for His creatures (particularly those in my care) and the environment?

Have I stolen from others?

Have I cheated my spouse, my employer, my employees or others?

Have I made restitution of what I have stolen?

Have I damaged others' good name?

Have I been quarrelsome?

Have I thought ill of others and used others for my own ends?

Have I exploited others sexually?

Do I fasted and abstain from flesh and fowl as required by the Church?

Do I practice self-control over my emotions and actions?

Have I followed what my conscience tells me?

Have I tried to acquire habits of wisdom and understanding?

Have I wallowed in self-pity?

Have I allowed myself to be consumed by ambition, bitterness or disappointment?

Have I wasted my money; my talents; my time?

Have I kept my word?

Have I been proud or arrogant?

Have I coveted other people's possessions or status?

Have I indulged impurity (pornography, masturbation, sexual fantasies)?

Have I been envious of others?

Have I been greedy, angry, lazy, indifferent?

The motives of our hearts and the thoughts of our minds will be the measure by which we are judged in our conduct and in our faithfulness to God's commandments. The measure or bar of Christian moral righteousness is high – it begins with our thoughts, moves to our intentions, and finds its outward appearance in our words and

deeds. The motive, the intent, of our words and deeds are what is most important in determining our moral culpability for sin.

Fortunately, for us sinners, God has not only provided us with His commandments and moral teachings but also with the means for our forgiveness and redemption. We have only to confess our sins before Him, to admit with sincerity of heart and true contrition of mind that we have sinned against Him in word and deed, by what we have done, and what we have failed to do; and then God, in His love and mercy, forgives us; and grants us, through the Cross of Christ, the remission of all our sins. God's mercy and forgiveness, however, is not something to be taken lightly or something we may presume upon. The price of our sins, and the cost of our forgiveness was paid by Jesus upon the Cross. God gave us sinners His very own Son as the ransom for our redemption. Such a gift, such a precious offering of love and forgiveness, is to be taken seriously, humbly, and with true contrition of heart and soul.

During the Season of Lent, Christ and His Church calls upon each of us, personally, to examine our lives in light of the Gospels; to peer into the hidden recesses of our souls; and to weigh our actions and intentions against the commandments of God. We need to undertake this examination, this spiritual 'housekeeping', with the same humility, faith and perseverance as the Canaanite woman displayed in today's Gospel.

So, with all of this in mind, let us with faith and humility turn once again in this holy Season to our Saviour Christ; lifting up our hearts and confessing our sins; and by His grace, renewing our lives. God will surely answer our prayers and defend us from "all troubles which may happen to the body, and from all evil thoughts which may assault and hurt the soul". He will strengthen us in temptation and deliver us from the evil; in His love and mercy we will abide.

"Come now, and let us reason
together, saith the Lord:
though your sins be as scarlet,
they shall be as white as snow;
though they be red like crimson,
they shall be as wool."

Isaiah 1:18

“Confession is Good for the Soul”

FREQUENTLY in the Gospels we read of people bringing sick and possessed loved ones to our Lord for healing. Jesus likened Himself to a physician -- one who has come to heal the sick and to save the sinner. Our Lord viewed evil and sin as a sickness, one which afflicts the very soul of man, even unto death -- eternal death.

The sickness of the soul is still with us; each of us stumble and fall -- wounded by our sins. But even in our sins the Cross of Christ stands before us and we are reminded that He died for us that we might turn from the death of sin and live only unto God. In our sinfulness, Christ provides to His Church the Sacrament of Penance, or Confession, whereby the sinner receives assurance of God's pardon and mercy; is reconciled with the Church, the Body of Christ; and is restored to the life of grace. It is significant to note that the *Book of Common Prayer* places the Sacrament of Penance, called 'A Form of Confession and Absolution', amidst the Ministry to the Sick (see p. 581) for Confession is truly a remedy for spiritual illness caused by sin.

The Sacrament of Penance goes by many names, yet all of them are one and the same: for the Sacrament is, in the words of the Fathers of the Church, the 'medicine of the soul' and the 'remedy for sin'.

It is called the *sacrament of conversion* because it makes sacramentally present Jesus' call to conversion, the first step in returning to the Father from Whom one has strayed by sin.

It is called the *sacrament of penance*, since it consecrates the sinner's personal steps of conversion and penance.

It is called the *sacrament of confession*, since the disclosure or confession of sins to a priest is an essential element of this sacrament. Confession is good for the soul, as the saying goes; and the acknowledgment of our sins before God and His minister is an important element in our spiritual healing.

It is called the *sacrament of forgiveness*, since by the priest's sacramental absolution God grants the penitent "pardon and peace".

It is called the *sacrament of reconciliation*, because it imparts to the sinner the love of God Who reconciles us to Himself and to the community of believers which His Church.

In this Sacrament our offences are blotted out, our sins forgiven, and our souls healed from the disease of sin. We acknowledge and confess our sins, confident in the Lord's forgiveness and mercy. We acknowledge evil in our lives but confess the power of the Cross of Christ to overcome sin and to conquer evil.

Sickness not only carries with it pain, weakness, and suffering -- all conditions associated with the body; but may also carry with it anguish, self-absorption, self-pity; and even despair causing one to turn away from God. On the positive side, illness can also lead to a greater maturity, a stronger faith, and a greater appreciation of God's blessings in our lives. It can lead the soul to search more deeply for God and to return to Him.

Holy Scripture places before us men and women of faith who lived out their suffering and sickness in the presence of God. It is before God that they placed their pain and illness; and it is to God that they implored healing. In the Scriptures we find the mysterious link of illness to sin and evil; but we also find the link to conversion, healing, and wholeness.

The Gospels record that our Lord was deeply concerned with sickness and human suffering. Over and over again He healed those who came to Him; over and over again those who touched Him, and were touched by Him, were healed and made whole again. We read that "He took our infirmities and bore our diseases." So linked was human sickness and suffering to the problem of sin and evil, that our Lord commissioned His disciples to go forth in His Name to heal the physically and spiritually sick; and to lift the hearts of those weighed down by sin and evil.

Finally, in the midst of our struggles with illness, suffering, and pain, we must never lose sight of the fact that our Lord came not only to heal individuals of sickness and disease; but to announce a more radical healing: the victory over sin and death. On the Cross, Christ took upon Himself the whole weight of evil and took away the "sin of the world." By His Passion and Death, our Lord has given a new meaning to human suffering, in all its dimensions.

O HEAVENLY Father, I confess that I have sinned greatly against thee in thought, word, and deed, and have done that which is wrong in thy sight. I ask thee to forgive me my sins, and to give me grace always to resist temptation and to do thy holy will; for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

O GOD, whose nature and property is ever to have mercy and to forgive: Receive my humble petitions; and though I be tied and bound with the chain of my sins, yet let the pitifulness of thy great mercy loose me; for the honour of Jesus Christ, our Mediator and Advocate, who with thee and the Holy Ghost, livest and reignest, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

MY LENTEN RULE OF LIFE

The Season of Lent affords Christians an opportunity to renew their faith and devotional life. You are invited to fill out this Lenten Rule of Life, sign it, and keep it close at hand as a guide for your Lenten observance this year. This Lenten Rule of Life is your free offering of devotion, self-denial, and sacrificial giving that you may continue to grow in grace and Christian discipline, to the glory of God and the deepening of your own life of faith, prayer and service.

I UNDERTAKE, AS MY LENTEN RULE, THE FOLLOWING:

1. I will set aside the following time daily for Prayer and Meditation:

2. I will attend the following Service(s) in addition to my usual Sunday worship:

3. I will read a chapter or portion of the Bible daily or weekly:

4. I will read at least one religious or devotional book during Lent, other than the Bible:

5. I will serve others by undertaking the following volunteer activities:

6. I will give up the following food(s), activities, or pleasures during Lent:

7. My Lenten fast will take the following form in the meals I eat during this Season:

[The Lenten Fast is generally observed by simple, traditionally meatless, meals; the exact nature of the fast is up to you. Medical diets must be observed; nutritional needs should not be ignored. Sundays in Lent are not days of fasting and abstinence.]

8. My Lenten Offerings I shall devote to:

ALL THIS I UNDERTAKE TO THE GLORY OF GOD AND BY HIS GRACE.

~ ~ ~ CATHEDRAL CALENDAR ~ ~ ~

- March 1* **ASH WEDNESDAY**
Sung Mass 10:00 am ~ Low Mass 5:30 pm
- March 3* *Stations of the Cross ~ 7:00 pm*
- March 5* **FIRST SUNDAY IN LENT**
Mattins 9:15 am & Sung Mass 10:00 am
- March 9* *Lenten Feria ~ Mass 10:00 am*
Study Group at 10:45 am in Church Hall.
- March 10* *Stations of the Cross ~ 7:00 pm*
- March 12* **SECOND SUNDAY IN LENT**
Mattins 9:15 am & Sung Mass 10:00 am
- March 16* *Lenten Feria ~ Mass 10:00 am*
Study Group at 10:45 am in Church Hall.
- March 17* **SAINT PATRICK OF IRELAND**
Bishop & Missionary ~ Mass 10:00 am
Stations of the Cross ~ 7:00 pm
- March 19* **THIRD SUNDAY IN LENT**
Mattins 9:15 am & Sung Mass 10:00 am
- March 22* *Parish Council Meeting ~ 7:00 pm*
- March 23* *Lenten Feria ~ Mass 10:00 am*
Study Group at 10:45 am in Church Hall.
- March 24* *Stations of the Cross ~ 7:00 pm*
- March 25* **THE ANNUNCIATION ~ Sung Mass 10:00 am**
- March 26* **FOURTH SUNDAY IN LENT: Mothering Sunday**
Mattins 9:15 am & Sung Mass 10:00 am
- March 30* *Lenten Feria ~ Mass 10:00 am*
Study Group at 10:45 am in Church Hall.
- March 31* *Stations of the Cross ~ 7:00 pm*
- April 1* **LENTEN QUIET DAY:**
Mattins 9:30 am • Mass 11:30 am • Evensong 3:30 pm
- April 2* **PASSION SUNDAY: FIFTH SUNDAY IN LENT**
Mattins 9:15 am & Sung Mass 10:00 am
- April 6* *Passiontide Feria ~ Mass 10:00 am*
Study Group at 10:45 am in Church Hall.
- April 7* *Stations of the Cross ~ 7:00 pm*

- April 9* PALM SUNDAY ~ Beginning of Holy Week
Mattins 9:15 am
Blessing of Palms, Procession & High Mass 10:00 am
- April 13* MAUNDY THURSDAY
Mass of the Last Supper ~ 7:00 pm
- April 14* GOOD FRIDAY
Mattins & The Litany ~ 9:30 am
Liturgy of the Passion ~ 2:30 pm
Evensong & Stations of the Cross ~ 4:00 pm
- April 15* HOLY SATURDAY
Mattins & Ante-Communion ~ 9:30 am
Preparation of the Church for Easter ~ 10:30 am
Easter Vigil & First Mass of Easter ~ 8:00 pm
- April 16* EASTER DAY
Mattins ~ 9:15 am
Solemn High Mass ~ 10:00 am
- April 23* OCTAVE DAY OF EASTER (LOW SUNDAY)
Mattins ~ 9:15 am
Sung Mass ~ 10:00 am
- April 25 to 28* ACCC Annual Clericus at FCJ Centre, Calgary
- April 27* St. George of England (transferred ~ Mass 10:00 am
- April 30* EASTER II: 'GOOD SHEPHERD SUNDAY'
Mattins ~ 9:15 am
Sung Mass ~ 10:00 am
- May 5* Eastertide Feria ~ Mass 10:00 am
Study Group at 10:45 am in Church Hall.
- May 6* SAINT JOHN THE EVANGELIST IN EASTERTIDE
High Mass at 5:00 pm
Patronal Festival Dinner 6:00 pm
- May 7* THIRD SUNDAY AFTER EASTER
Mattins ~ 9:15 am
Sung Mass ~ 10:00 am
- May 11* St. Cyril & St. Methodius ~ Mass 10:00 am
Study Group at 10:45 am in Church Hall.
- May 14* FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER
Mattins ~ 9:15 am
Sung Mass ~ 10:00 am
- May 18* Eastertide Feria ~ Mass 10:00 am
Study Group at 10:45 am in Church Hall.