

~ The Epistle ~

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SEPTUAGESIMA/LENT 2020

No. 1

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

WITH a very short Epiphanytide this year we move from one liturgical season to another this month with the arrival of Septuagesima on Sunday, February 9th.

Septuagesima marks the beginning of the Pre-Lenten Season. This is a time of preparation for the discipline of Lent. It is meant "to call us back from our Christmas feasting and joy, in order to prepare ourselves for fasting and humiliation in the approaching time of Lent." (Wheatley)

The three Sundays before Lent are called respectively, Septuagesima, Sexagesima, and Quinquagesima. The Latin names for these Sundays signify that they are the seventieth, sixtieth, and fiftieth days before Easter -- for the Church Year, as with the Christian Faith, focuses upon and culminates with the Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. The Epistles and Gospels appointed for these three Sundays encourage us to reflect upon the virtues that are necessary for holiness of life: faith, hope, love, prudence, courage, temperance, and justice. The object of these virtues is our happiness on earth and our eternal blessedness in the world to come.

We enter into Septuagesimatide with minds open to learn about the virtues necessary for holiness of life; and in fervent prayer that Christ may fill our lives and forgive our sins.

As in years past we began the month of February with the celebration of Candlemas, the Presentation of Christ in the Temple and Purification of the Blessed Virgin Mary. This Feast has been observed by the Church since the year 350 AD. One of the distinctive rites celebrated on Candlemas (hence its name) is the blessing of candles. Candles, which are blessed, distributed, and lit while the *Nunc Dimittis* is sung, are carried by the faithful in procession commemorating the entrance of the Christ Child, the 'True Light', into the Temple in Jerusalem. There His Mother Mary, together with St. Joseph, encounter the aged Simeon, who filled with the Holy Spirit, pronounces the beautiful words of the *Nunc Dimittis* and prophesies that this Child shall deliver His people from their sins and be the true Light of the nations. Amidst this glorious proclamation

comes also the bitter prophesy to the Virgin Mary, that a sword of sorrow would pierce her heart. It is a reminder to each of us that to follow Jesus, the Light of the world, is to walk the way of the Cross, and to bear suffering and sorrow for His sake.

This year Ash Wednesday falls on February 26th, and the first Sunday in Lent on March 1st. On Ash Wednesday, Christians everywhere began the solemn days of prayer, fasting, and self-denial that mark the holy Season of Lent. The focus of Lent is not only upon sin but also upon our redemption; it is not only be about ourselves as sinners in need of God's mercy and grace but also about the corporate sin of the world.

The Season of Lent provides each of us an opportunity to reflect on our lives and on God's place in it. We are exhorted to examine our thoughts, words, and deeds in light of His commandments; and to undergo a *metanoia* -- a change of heart -- that our old lives may be transformed into the likeness of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Lent also draws us back to a simpler life -- a life focused on God and His saving actions in our lives; principally the salvation wrought for us by the Passion and Death of His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. Through fasting and self-denial we are provided opportunities to spend time with God in prayer and meditation. By forsaking some temporal nourishment and entertainment we are able to partake of eternal nourishment -- fortifying our spiritual lives by reading and meditating on God's holy Word, and feeding on the spiritual food of the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ in Holy Communion. We are reminded by our Lord, 'man does not live on bread alone but on every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God'.

As we move from Epiphanytide to Septuagesimatide to Lent, may we use these days to devote ourselves wholly unto Him, Who was born for us, manifested His glory unto us, and Who died and rose again for our salvation, our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

+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 to 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.

~ ~ ~ **CATHEDRAL CALENDAR** ~ ~ ~

February 9	SEPTUAGESIMA <i>Sung Mattins 10:00 am</i>
<i>[The Archbishop on pilgrimage to the Holy Land, February 9 to 21.]</i>	
February 16	SEXAGESIMA <i>Mattins 9:15 am</i> <i>Sung Mass 10:00 am</i>
February 23	QUINQUAGESIMA <i>Mattins 9:15 am</i> <i>Sung Mass 10:00 am</i>
February 26	ASH WEDNESDAY: BEGINNING OF LENT <i>Blessing & Distribution of Ashes and Holy Communion ~ 10:00 am</i>
February 26	<i>Parish Council Meeting 1:00 pm</i>
February 27	<i>Feast of Saint Matthias the Apostle (transferred)</i> <i>Mass 10:00 am</i> <i>Study Group 10:45 am</i>
February 28	<i>Stations of the Cross ~ 5:30 pm</i>
March 1	FIRST SUNDAY IN LENT <i>Mattins 9:15 am</i> <i>Sung Mass 10:00 am</i>
March 5	<i>Lent Ember Day</i> <i>Mass 10:00 am</i> <i>Study Group 10:45 am</i>
March 6	<i>Stations of the Cross ~ 5:30 pm</i>
March 8	SECOND SUNDAY IN LENT <i>Mattins 9:15 am</i> <i>High Mass and Ordination to Diaconate 10:00 am</i>
March 12	<i>St. Gregory the Great</i> <i>Mass 10:00 am</i> <i>Study Group 10:45 am</i>
March 13	<i>Stations of the Cross ~ 5:30 pm</i>
March 15	THIRD SUNDAY IN LENT <i>Mattins 9:15 am</i> <i>Sung Mass 10:00 am</i>
March 17	<i>St. Patrick of Ireland ~ Mass 10:00 am</i>
March 18	<i>Parish Council Meeting 1:00 pm</i>
March 19	<i>St. Joseph of Nazareth</i> <i>Mass 10:00 am</i> <i>Study Group 10:45 am</i>

March 20 Stations of the Cross ~ 5:30 pm
March 22 LENT IV: MOTHERING SUNDAY 'Laetare Sunday'
 Mattins 9:15 am
 Sung Mass 10:00 am
March 25 FEAST OF THE ANNUNCIATION ~ Mass 10:00 am
March 26 Lenten Feria 10:00 am
 Study Group 10:45 am
March 27 Stations of the Cross ~ 5:30 pm
March 28 LENTEN QUIET DAY ~ 10:00 am to 3:30 pm
March 29 LENT V: PASSION SUNDAY
 Mattins 9:15 am
 Sung Mass 10:00 am
April 2 Passiontide Feria Mass 10:00 am
 Study Group 10:45 am
April 3 Stations of the Cross ~ 5:30 pm
April 5 PALM SUNDAY ~ Beginning of Holy Week
 Mattins 9:15 am
 Blessing of Palms, Procession & High Mass 10:00 am
April 9 MAUNDY THURSDAY
 Mass of the Last Supper ~ 7:00 pm
April 10 GOOD FRIDAY
 Mattins & The Litany ~ 10:00 am
 Liturgy of the Passion ~ 2:30 pm
April 11 HOLY SATURDAY
 Mattins & Ante-Communion ~ 10:00 am
 Preparation of the Church for Easter ~ 10:30 am
 Easter Vigil & First Mass of Easter ~ 8:00 pm
April 12 EASTER DAY
 Mattins ~ 9:15 am
 High Mass ~ 10:00 am
April 19 OCTAVE DAY OF EASTER (LOW SUNDAY)
 Mattins ~ 9:15 am
 Sung Mass ~ 10:00 am
April 22 Parish Council Meeting 1:00 pm
April 23 St. George of England
 Mass 10:00 am
 Study Group 10:45 am