

Dean's Letter, 1 March 2020

Dear Cathedral family, Brothers and Sisters in Christ

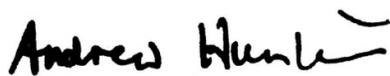
The first Sunday in Lent always has as its focus the temptations of Jesus. We began our Lenten journey on Ash Wednesday. Following the example of Christ, we enter into the Lenten wilderness and Lenten fast, of forty days. While you and I continue our daily lives, with studies, family commitments, work, projects, etc., I hope that we are able to step back from some things, and consciously enter into a regular time of quiet prayer and listening to God. The daily readings in the Anglican Lectionary provide both a very helpful rhythm and also a rich diet of scripture, prayers using the psalms, food and drink for the journey.

There are also several online apps that help us to pray, that provide regular scriptural meditations (I have recently discovered "Pray as you go", available via Google Play store); and there are resources on the Church of England webpage. Here at home and away from our phones or computers, there are regular prayer times – Morning Prayer and Evening Prayer - at the Cathedral, almost every weekday (see the pew leaflet front page for details), as well as a weekly Eucharist on Thursdays at 7 a.m. Each service lasts no more than 30 minutes, and are provide a gentle rhythm and structure for prayer.

But why all this? A colleague, Rev Tracy Bell (diocese of Natal) puts it very well: "Our world is a mess. We are a mess." And so we enter into this time of Lent, with the three-fold Gospel call (heard on Ash Wednesday) to fast, pray and give (i.e. to love) (Matthew 6:1-6, 16-18). We enter into the wilderness of Lent to be changed and transformed by God. To face our own brokenness. To be honest with ourselves and with God. To encounter the demons, the particular temptations that we face (today's Gospel reading, Matthew 4).

We have all been given the gift of life, to use or misuse. We all have our struggles. As Jesus entered into his ministry, he had to face particular temptations: the temptation to control others, the temptation to use the power he had for the wrong things; the temptation to put God to the test; the temptation to be like God; the temptation to gain power; the temptation to have people worship him. Those with spiritual authority or power are particularly vulnerable to these temptations; we have seen the wreckage in lives, when church leaders (lay or ordained) succumb to any of these. So this Lent is, as always, a vital time to go into the wilderness. It is a journey that we all need to take, and a time of testing that we do well to embrace.

My love to you all

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Andrew Hunter". The signature is written in a cursive style with a small flourish at the end.