

Encouragement Encouragement

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A Roof...

We are now into the first week of the period before the Resurrection which we call Lent. The word Lent means 'spring season' from the old English Lencten. Its forty days is a time of special reflection, prayer, self-giving and repentance and remembering our purpose as Christians, to know God and love Him and open out hearts to others. While we acknowledge this reality, I wonder in what spirit do we enter into Lent and with what aim? Are we thinking of having to give up certain things and fast, and so endure this period? Are we thinking of doing something to honour the Lord through prayer or service – or do we let it pass as just one of the seasons of the church and life. ?

There is a *hymn* which states.

**'Let us build a house where love can dwell, where all are named. Their songs and visions heard and loved and treasured and claimed as the Word.
Built of tears and cries and laughter, prayers of faith and songs of grace. Let the house proclaim from floor to rafter... All our welcome all are welcome all are welcome in this place.'** (Marty Haugen)

Do we really think of Lent as a time of building or rebuilding our house- the house of our spiritual life? We are temples of the Holy Spirit – we carry the Lord within us but do we make it a mansion fit for a King to live in.? Do we also build a house, a house that all can dwell in – a house of belonging for everyone and where all are supported. Buildings are important. We all need shelter from the storm, a place of warmth and security. Recently I was asked to help build a church in one of our supported projects in Pakistan which by grace we were able to do... But as I looked at the picture with half built walls, no doors or windows many things flooded into my heart. First I thought that as Christians we are one 'Body In Christ' and if one of us is lacking then we are all lacking and should provide for each other. But it also struck me that the Church is made up of the people and where there is a body of Christians praying the church exists.

The missing roof made me think that it is the last thing to go up for without the walls and supports the roof cannot be placed... I have a good friend who is a Roofer who takes great pride in both repairing and building a roof. He once said to me that he does so for without the roof the rest is in danger of ruin. Roofs and foundations...

Roofs are therefore important... the Hymn-song speaks of raising the roof with praise and welcome. Wouldn't it be wonderful if our praise and thanksgiving out service and joy raised the roof of our churches? Lent should not be a season of long face and grim determination but a season of Joyfulness. The death of Jesus was for a purpose and that is for our redemption and passing on to the Kingdom of Joy. Real joy lives deep in the heart regardless of circumstances. While we reflect on all our failures and sins and also the way of the Cross we must never lose sight of its purpose. We must always raise ourselves up and start all over again. Lent is a perfect time to do so. But without the action of grace it is very difficult to do this. The presence of The Lord in our spiritual houses enables us to continue in true repentance and change of heart.

'Lord I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof, but only say the word and my soul will be healed' Words first said by the Centurion who wanted his servant to be healed Luke (7; 1-10.) We repeat these words often just before receiving Holy Communion, communion with Jesus. The faith of the Centurion was greatly rewarded by both obtaining the healing for his servant but also praise for his faith and he a Gentile, like ourselves. Pondering these words do we really reflect on them? We are not worthy, yet the Lord chooses to visit us in this way and stay under our roof . Do we make Him welcome as we would any guest? If our roof and door are shut tight we do not let Him become the Master of our home. From that welcome dwelling we walk with Him in faith which reaches others.

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'To live is to change, and to be perfect is to have changed often.'

St. John Henry Cardinal Newman

We have many expressions which relate to roofs. We speak of 'having a roof over our heads' meaning a home, a place of safety and security. When disasters happen so often the first thing that we try to provide for people is some kind of shelter and protection, be it a tent or shack. We 'as church' should be those that provide real hearts' shelter for those in any kind of distress. They may be grieving or ill, broken or sad or lonely. Building roofs is a very good way of saying, being a safe haven for all who we meet. The friends of the paralysed man had to lower him through the roof as there was no way in, so that Jesus could heal him. Not only did Jesus do that but He also forgave him his sins. So do we keep the roof so securely that no one can come in? Clearly we cannot, in terms of buildings, open up the roof but we can make sure that we are open and loving to others.

We also speak of 'raising the roof' which in fact relates to the last part of the building being put in place. There is still a ceremony among builder's which celebrates this action with a plaque or writing on the rafter or cement the date that this was done and the building completed. Often it is said as an expression of either great joy... raising the roof in song or a party or conversely being angry at something, so raising the roof in anger, hopefully in reality, the former should be the case. But it does show how important in many ways 'a roof' is in expressing our feelings.



We as Christians should all be 'under one roof' in terms of our love of God and neighbour.

Acting together we can be a great force for good. We have been given all that we need to become holy people, all under one roof of the Church, in both the people and the Authority of Jesus acting through His Church. But there is one proviso. In Lent we must, as Christians, all be 'under one roof' in making Jesus the Builder of our house.

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Psalm 127/8 says it well.

'Unless the Lord builds the House the builders labour in vain.

Unless the Lord watches over the city the watchmen stand guard in vain.

In vain your early rising or going late to bed toiling for food to eat.

For the Lord provides sleep to those he loves.'

The Lord loves His people. Shall we let Him dictate our Lent and guard and lead us? Halina Holman

Pope Francis

"Dear friends, Lent is the favourable season for renewing our encounter with Christ, living in his word, in the sacraments and in our neighbour. The Lord, who overcame the deceptions of the Tempter during the forty days in the desert, shows us the path we must take. May the Holy Spirit lead us on a true journey of conversion, so that we can rediscover the gift of God's Word, be purified of the sin that blinds us, and serve Christ present in our brothers and sisters in need. I encourage all the faithful to express this spiritual renewal also by sharing in the Lenten campaigns promoted by many Church organizations in different parts of the world, and thus to favour the culture of encounter in our one human family. Let us pray for one another so that, by sharing in the victory of Christ, we may open our doors to the weak and poor. Then we will be able to experience and share to the full the joy of Easter." Rome 2019

Prayer

Heavenly Father, during this Lenten Season give me a new and expanded vision for my life. Help me to live full of faith. Teach me to find hope in the face of adversity. Amen

Feasts Days in March

1st First Sunday of Lent

2nd St. David

4th St. Casimir

6th St. Colette

7th Ss. Perpetua and Felicity

8th Second Sunday of Lent

9th St. Frances of Rome

10th St. John Ogilvie

15th Third Sunday of Lent

17th St. Patrick

19th St. Joseph

22nd Fourth Sunday of Lent and Mothers' Day

25th The Annunciation of the Lord

29th Fifth Sunday of Lent