



Vision and Viewpoint

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A choice of directions

Lent gives us an opportunity to look again at who we are, at where we're going in life, at how we're getting to where we say we want to go. The Chinese say, "If you don't know where you're going, any road will take you there." But the aimlessness, the confusion, the anomie, that goes with it, wears us down, wears us out.

Everybody needs to know that they have lived for something. Everyone has a responsibility to leave this world better than when they found it. Everyone needs to carry a light into the darkness of the world around them so that others, too, may follow and find the way.

To go through life with no thought of responsibility for anything other than the self is to live like a leech off the riches of the world around us. To ask the questions, What is my life goal? What am I contributing to this world? And to hear no answer in the echo of the soul, is to be living a hollow life indeed.

Lent does not permit us the luxury of such banality. Lent ends in the shadow of the empty cross and in the sunrise of an empty tomb. There are great things to be done by us and each of them takes great effort, requires great struggle, will face great resistance. But the way to the empty tomb goes through the mount of the cross.

Lent is our time to prepare to carry the crosses of the world ourselves. The people around us are hungry; it is up to us to see that they are fed, whatever the cost to ourselves. Children around us are in danger on the streets; it is up to us to see that they are safe. The world is at the mercy of US foreign policy, US economic policy and US militarism; it is up to us to soften the hearts of our own government so that the rest of the world can live a life of dignity and pride.

We must "set our faces like flint," let nothing deter the Jesus life in us, knowing that however our efforts end, the resurrection is surely on its way.

Lent puts options before us. We can choose to be open or hardhearted, attuned to God or closed to everything but the self, full of faith or drowned in despair, stagnant or full of life. Lent is a choice of directions.

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