

1st Sunday Lent (A)

1st March 2020

‘Planned Giving wk I: part of our charitable giving for Lent’

Gen 2; 3: the Fall Rom 5: *one man’s fall brings condemnation ... one man’s good act brings life ...*
Mt 4: 1–11: the Temptations in the desert

We have entered, along with, and in imitation of, Jesus our beloved Saviour, this fast of 40 days (... Well, 36 days, as 4 have already gone!) These should be blessed and important weeks for us, our annual chance to look deeply into ourselves, and to examine many aspects of our lives: are they filled with a love and focus on God’s good plans for us? Are there things we need to change, cut back on, increase ...? The account of ‘the Fall’ in Genesis reminds us how prone we are — and always have been, since the dawn of human history — to want to ‘do it our own way,’ veer away from God’s own loving, divine plans for us. Lent is a stark reminder that applying ourselves more assiduously to (i) Prayer; (ii) Fasting; and (iii) Almsgiving is a sure way to allowing the Holy Spirit to get us back on track.

Now, this Lent, just for these first 3 wks, part of our parish focus needs to be our ‘Planned Giving’ campaign. As we consider in general the aspect of ‘charitable giving’

in Lent, it’s necessary that we remember that *this* charity, so dear to you (our parish!), needs supporting, through a generous combination of monthly SOs or weekly Offertory Envelopes, along with Gift Aid. The parish accounts have shown a deficit for 2 successive yrs now, and this is not sustainable. It’s not because of any great losses or misuse of funds, but simply because care for our parish life, parish church, parish grounds, costs a lot. So it’s not inappropriate, I feel, that as part of this Lent’s weighing-up, examination of conscience, etc., we each need to reflect on our level of giving to preserve and promote our parish life. The only financial support comes from you (and from the tax man if you pay tax and can sign a Gift-Aid declaration).

It’s true that many different things make demands on our family resources and income, and of course our charitable giving as Christians means that we must never neglect the poor — this week’s CaFOD fast day will bring that to our attention once again. But it is also incumbent upon us, as parishioners of St Augustine’s, to support adequately, and generously, the work of our parish.

“Man does not live on bread alone,” Jesus retorts to the devil as he tries to tempt Him to a selfish miracle, “but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.” In order to fulfil this mission — to be a vibrant place where the Word of God is heard and celebrated, where God is praised and His teachings are faithfully passed on, and where we generate care for our needy brothers and sisters — we do need to think about the parish finance from time to time, to take stock, and to bolster our commitment to *this place*, so precious to us, where we encounter the Son of the living God, whose commitment to us is unwavering, to the shedding of the last drop of His precious Blood. It is *here*, at the culmination of our Lent devotions and sacrifices, that we will welcome Him, the risen Jesus, this Easter!