

WEAPONS OF CHRIST

What does "Entering Lent" mean? It means we are entering a season of special commitment in the spiritual battle to oppose the evil present of the world in each one of us and around us. It means not off-loading the problem of evil on to others, on to society or on to God but rather recognising one's own responsibility and assuming it with awareness. In this regard, Jesus's invitation to each one of us Christians to take up our "cross" and follow him with humility and trust is particularly pressing. Although the "cross" may be heavy, it is not synonymous with misfortune, with disgrace, to be avoided on all accounts; rather it is an opportunity to follow Jesus and thereby to acquire strength in the fight against sin and evil. (Pope Benedict XVI)

For about a week before Ash Wednesday, our parish priest was encouraging us to prepare in advance how we could make this Lent a special one. To consider how we would fast and how we would celebrate the season. When I read the above quotation, I was even more encouraged to do so. However, I had a dilemma; as I am already trying to diet in order to lose a little weight for a very special event later in the year, I thought that, at my age, it would not be wise to eat even less than I already was, so I wondered what else could I give up. I decided I would stop buying a newspaper every day. I do not buy a paper for the news for I believe that due to modern technology the press can only report stale news, so they report it in a sensational and very biased manner. I buy a paper mainly for the puzzles. I enjoy completing the cryptic crossword every day as I think it keeps my brain active. I think, for me, that giving that up is a greater sacrifice than giving up cakes or biscuits.

We are now into Lent and I am missing the puzzles but I am using *Walk with Me*, the Lenten booklet, and I have received from The Catholic Truth Society, a booklet to study. "Arma Christi" (weapons of Christ) by Father Philip Caldwell is a spiritual Lenten reflection; "it offers meditations on these implements of Christ's Passion and considers the great mystery in which the tools used to wound Our Lord became *His* weapons in conquering sin and death and winning for us Salvation." At first, I wondered about the meaning of the title, the weapons of Christ seemed to contradict what we believed Jesus to be; gentle, peaceful, loving. Then I realised that He was using these instruments of pain to demonstrate to us his divine love for all of mankind, and to overcome the sins that we have committed. As pope Benedicte says, we have to be aware of what we ourselves have done, or perhaps what we have sometimes failed to do, which has added to the suffering that Jesus endured.

When we see what is happening in our troubled world today, it is easy to become overwhelmed by all the bad things that are happening. I have long been devoted to Saint Therese of Lisieux who, when I was young, was always referred to as "The Little Flower". I try to follow her "little way". I try to accept all the pains and discomforts my body suffers and all the hurtful remarks and criticisms that others throw at me; all the difficulties and the things that annoy and upset me. I try to think of Jesus's passion and try to offer up my little hurts with His suffering and pray for those who hurt me. I know that I am nowhere near as successful at it as Saint Therese but I will keep trying to follow her example, always looking forward in hope to Easter and the resurrection. I am aware that my tiny offerings cannot compare with the supernatural sacrifice that Jesus made. He is God, yet He set aside his divinity to become one with us and to suffer and die in order to free us from sin and death. He shared our humanity that we might share in his divinity.

O Jesus, stay with me, heal me, save me!