



# Evangelion

Monthly Newsletter of St. Luke Anglican Catholic Church, Augusta, Georgia

February, A.D. 2018

## The Season of Bright Sorrow

The Rev. Fr. Daniel S. Trout

Lent has been called by perceptive spiritual commentators the “Season of Bright Sorrow.” Yes, the violet hues that seem to darken our church—and perhaps our mood—are a sure sign that Lent is closing in. Repent! Be sorry! But how can there be brightness in this sorrow? Are we not sorrowing over our sins, both the things that we have done and those left undone? Are we not practicing rather unpleasant introspection? If we characterize it in the negative like this, Lent, with its emphasis on penitence and its solemn customs can feel like a necessary evil before the glorious rapture of Easter. Is not the *latter* the time of brightness—the radiance of Christ arisen?

We can avoid this dichotomy if we recast the spirit of Lent in the *positive*. Because we tend to focus on discarding habitual sins and abstaining from foods, we make Lent about what we “give up” when it should be about what we *gain*. Confronting sin and fasting are not ends in themselves but *means* to an end. For example, if one of us celebrates that he managed to endure his chocolate deprivation for 40 days, but made no connection with his spiritual life, what has he profited? Sadly, nothing. The point of Lent is not a mild experiment in will-power or even frugality, but gaining a deeper communion with God. In this sense, Lent *is* bright, for we are allowing God’s grace to release us from our vices and obstacles to know Him in a deeper and more uninhibited way. If that is not a movement from darkness to the light of Christ, I don’t know what else is—this is *conversion*.

Most importantly, with this positive approach to Lent as “bright sadness”, we are enabled to identify with Christ’s own example of denying self to gain God. Let’s think about it. Did Jesus fast those 40 days in the

wilderness as a test of bodily stamina? No, but to achieve a new closeness with His Heavenly Father. With Satan’s temptation coming, He would need all the confidence in His Father’s love and power. And when the Devil could not lure or break Him, Jesus’ fast became proof positive that abandoning self to God’s care is the sure way to success, spiritually and vocationally. As Christians, like Him, we can only win when we sacrifice reliance on self and entrust ourselves to God and His perfect will. Like Christ in the desert, God wants to see if we’d rather choose the easy temptations of the world, the flesh, and the Devil, or carry the cross of discipleship. What peace we can learn during Lent by depending upon God instead of the alternatives! We may sorrow over what we must let go—or over what must let go of us—but the joy of new life awaits. Is this not one of the promises of Easter? How much “brighter” every Easter could be if we would just start letting in God’s light during Lent?

Let us all at St. Luke make this Lent about gaining, not giving up. If we make this season something positive, not only we, but others stand to gain. Perhaps try to sacrifice time or resources so that Golden Harvest, our veterans, or even some other ministry can benefit from our generosity. And personally, through what Lenten devotion can we lose self and gain God? Stations of the Cross? A Lenten study at church or at home? However the Holy Spirit directs, let us each keep Lent “bright” through Christ-likeness: holiness and charity.

## Vestry Officers Announced

At the Vestry meeting on January 21, Fr. Trout introduced Gladys Fox as the new Senior Warden. The vestry elected George Clark Junior Warden and Jeff O’Betz Treasurer. Karen Elmy will continue as Secretary.

