

Vicar's Notes

USING LENT

By the time this magazine appears, Lent will be upon us. It is very easy for us to be caught unprepared, and so perhaps drift right through Lent in an indecisive kind of way and with an uneasy conscience that we really ought to be doing something about it and yet we aren't. Then at the end we are left with a feeling of frustration and opportunity wasted. Another Lent has gone by without our having used it. It has been unfruitful and unproductive of good.

But need this happen? Not, I think, if we make some simple plans and do our best to stick to them. I do believe that we need a rule. It need not be a complicated affair. We can easily lose ourselves amidst a multitude of resolutions and renunciations. I think three main points should usually be sufficient. The following might serve as suggestions:

1. **CONCENTRATION:** In these days, when it is so easy to flit from one thing to another without having to give undivided attention to anything for long, our powers of concentration become weak and dissipated. Lent is a good time for seeking to rectify this. Let us begin in church, so that our worship there may be more real, and play its part in making the whole service less unworthy of God. We must be very definite and practical about this: a vague resolution to concentrate more is not sufficient. We should say something like this: During Lent, at every service I attend, I will concentrate with all my strength on one or two particular parts of it. I will decide on them beforehand, choosing perhaps those parts which have become most automatic and which usually slip by me without any conscious thought on my part. It may be the collects, or the responses; it may be the Magnificat, or the Lord's Prayer. I will try to understand what I say, and to mean what I say. At the Communion, it may be the action of the Offertory—meant to be so meaningful, but often allowed to pass by almost unnoticed. Well, on the next occasion, I will concentrate on its inner meaning, so that when the bread and the wine mixed with water are placed on the altar, it is indeed an offering of my whole life—my work

and play, my joys and sorrows, my home and friends, all brought before God and offered to Him, to be enriched, sanctified and blessed.

This concentration on particular parts of the service will naturally spread itself over to other parts too. I shall begin to find much more meaning and purpose in things that had become habitual and taken for granted. "Church-going" will become more full of life and interest.

Then again, I might try to concentrate on reading something worthwhile, really good and true and rewarding; that requires perhaps a real bit of effort. I might choose, for example, one of the books suggested in connection with one of the courses in the "School of Religion", and say: "This Lent I am going to do my utmost to get to the heart of you, make your meaning part of myself."

If I am a practical person — and perhaps even more so, if I am *not* a practical person, and rarely do anything with my hands: here is an opportunity to correct the balance—I might also concentrate on making something, or mending something, or painting something that might be of service to someone else, or sold and the money given to some good cause. Or I might take over a definite piece of housework, like washing the dishes or cleaning a room, that someone else normally does, and by being more of a Martha myself for a change, give another more chance of becoming a Mary.

2. **DEVOTION:** We need a rule here in terms of *time*. Most of us, however busy we are, find enough time every day to listen to at least one item on the wireless. Those exposed to the fascination of television often find, I believe, that they have more free time than they ever thought possible! So also, if we are really determined, we can manage to find some time during which we will try to do nothing else except concentrate upon God and some aspect of His truth, or meditate in a disciplined way on some part of His revelation in Christ. We will set aside a fixed number of minutes for this, with the same determination that we free ourselves from other claims to concentrate on a favourite wireless or tele-

vision programme, and we will keep a record of our success in sticking to what we have decided.

3. **DISCIPLINE:** Here, it is a help to pick on one thing that we will do, or refrain from doing, each day, or at least every Wednesday and Friday. It may be getting up *immediately* the alarm-clock rings—not listening to the inner voice that says “There’s plenty of time—take another five minutes.” In Lent we can put that five minutes to good use! It may be not reading the newspaper, or sitting in an easy-chair, or smoking until after tea-time; it may be this or that but we must stick to it! This simple act will also spread its power through our whole life, making our will more free and flexible, adding ‘backbone’ to our character.

Well, there are a few simple suggestions, and they may help to make our keeping of Lent a real time of fruitful growth.

THE SCHOOL OF RELIGION

It is hoped that some may find this a valuable aid to making good use of Lent. It can easily be fitted into the pattern I have just outlined. It provides us with the opportunity of making a disciplined concentration upon a small portion of the Christian Faith, and this will help to enrich our understanding and deepen our devotion. There are prospectuses on the table in church which contain enrolment-forms, and a poster on the church-door explains how we are hoping to cover the four local courses in partnership with St. Mary’s, Hampton. At each church, Course I will be the subject of the morning sermons in Lent, and Course III that of the evening sermons, Course II will be taken at St. Mary’s, on Wednesday, at 8.0 p.m., and Course IV at our church on Fridays, at 8.0 p.m. Of course you can attend any or all of these courses without enrolment: but enrolment for two courses, and the undertaking to read one suggested book, does add a discipline and a meaning that might otherwise be lacking.

On Sunday evenings in March, beginning on the 9th, we shall welcome—up to the limit of our accommodation!—all who would like a short meeting at which questions can be

asked about points made in any of the four courses, and at which we can discuss informally anything anyone likes to raise. We will try to start as soon as possible after the end of the evening service.

On March 9th, there will be inserted into the courses here something that is not in the official prospectus. On that day the Rev. Jim Wilson, a younger brother of Dr. Edward Wilson, that fine Christian hero who went with Scott to the South Pole, will be with us. He will preach both morning and evening on various aspects of the Church’s ministry of healing, and the resources that are available for bringing men to that wholeness which Christ makes possible for us. He is an expert in his knowledge of this great subject, and I hope that no one will miss the privilege of hearing him. In the evening at the Vicarage he will be pleased to answer any questions and suggest ways in which we may follow up what he has said.

It is interesting to note that there has recently been opened in London a centre called the “Edward Wilson House,” the main purpose of which is to enable clergy, doctors, psychologists and members of the nursing profession to work together in furthering the cause of health and healing. At this centre, principles and outlook of spiritual healing, until recently often despised or overlooked by medical science, will be given their rightful place, and the Church and Medicine will work together in partnership for the healing of the sick. No doubt we shall be able to learn more of this great experiment on March 9th.

A SPLENDID GIFT

At the Annual Church Meeting, we were privileged to announce a most generous gift which had just been made to the church. The gate at the east end of the churchyard, and the new railings, recently erected at the west end, which had been much admired, and which were far superior to those which had been confiscated during the war, were not to be a further financial burden laid upon us, but accepted as a gift. The generous donors were Mr. S. J. Cadwell, director of the firm which had made them,

and Mr. C. H. Harrison. This was good news indeed, and it was received with gratitude and acclamation. This church has been greatly helped in recent years by the munificence of benefactors such as these, who have given spontaneously and without hesitation when they have seen a need, and we are much indebted to them.

THE LIVING TRADITION OF KINGSHIP

(An extract from the sermon preached during the Memorial Service on the morning of February 17th, the Sunday after the funeral of his late Majesty King George VI.)

Kingship at its truest points beyond itself to a higher reality. There is in those who exercise kingship truly a sense of vocation, of a call from God—and a sense of duty and responsibility to God. The secret of George VI and of his father was that they knew and felt this deep within them. The knowledge of their call from God, their solemn commission by God at their coronation, and their duty and responsibility to Him—and their faithful practice of this: that was their title to leadership. They were, as has been said, in a real sense priest-kings, mediating through their own character and their own response to God's Will the wisdom and power of the supernatural. They have been humble men, not claiming anything great for themselves in their own right, and therefore they have kept us from the excesses and absurdities by which, in many modern republics—despite their professed belief in the equality of men—mortal men have been treated as though they were divine. The crowned king of England has in our time been first and foremost a man of God As a result, many ordinary people who have somehow found the church something strange to them have yet been kept from wandering too far from God; in their ideals and aspirations that derive from God have been kept alive—because of the king. And those who have found the reality of supernatural religion for themselves, as the king had found it, have been helped and strengthened by the way in which the monarch fulfilled his vocation and ministry as a Christian man and a Christian king.

That then is the monarchical system as we know it to-day. The link with the

supernatural, with God, is a necessary part of it—and it must be real, and not feigned. In George VI it was most real

This is the living tradition of kingship as we now know it. Will it continue? There is every sign of it. Our new queen is steeped in this tradition, and has accepted it freely and wholeheartedly as the right path for herself.

And what of ourselves, who have such kings and queens as these? Ought we not to be more worthy of them, more earnest in following the way of service to God and to man which they themselves tread?

PIONEERS 01

The Rev. J. D. Richards spoke on "The place of the Laity in Evangelism" at the Ruri-Decanal Conference on February 18th, and some points which he made during his talk were very exciting.

It was, he said, in working for the Mission to London in 1949 that the people in the churches in the London Diocese first began to take their share in evangelism. The lay men and women began then to realise that they have a corporate responsibility for making their church live: that it is not only the job of the parson, but that everyone must feel intensely interested in building up a loving fellowship in their church, which, in time, perhaps by very slow degrees, must grow and make its influence felt in the surrounding neighbourhood.

Many of us in this parish will remember visiting before the Mission to London took place: between us we covered nearly the whole parish, and little did we realise then that we were sharing in a new and exciting experiment. The Mission to London has been copied, Mr. Richards told us, in many parts of this country, in Dioceses, in towns and in parishes, and all have followed the lead of London and have encouraged the lay men and women to take their part. Now the idea has extended abroad, and news comes of similar Missions in South Africa, in the United States of America and in Australia.

I think that we who live in the London Diocese can feel very proud that this idea started in London, and that we at St. James', Hampton Hill, were privileged to share in it.

Now we London people are called to carry on with our pioneering with our School of Religion taking place during Lent. This, Mr. Richards said, might well in the years to come be copied by other Dioceses, towns and parishes, and the idea may spread abroad as the affects of the Mission to London have spread.

Pioneers have got to point the way.

and they have got to prove that the way leads somewhere. We people of the Diocese of London have another special privilege in front of us:—that of making use of this School of Religion so that it may be an example of how to begin to train the lay men and women for their responsibility to their Church. H.S.

AROUND THE SPIRE

being notes and news about people, activities & organisations

A DRAMA GROUP

We enjoyed the experience of acting together so much at Christmas that we are wanting to form a Drama Group in the Parish. As we are all beginners, we plan to start with play readings and very simple acting. We shall also arrange theatre outings.

Meetings will probably be fortnightly, and all who are interested are invited to join. If we are to prove ourselves capable of acting plays—in the parish hall or in the church—it will mean plenty of hard regular work. We are not only asking for actors: we need volunteers for scene painting, lighting and people with a flair for dressing up and costumes.

If you are interested please make further enquiries of the officers:

Hannah Stanton, 63, Park Road, Hampton Hill; Cyril Tarrant, 31, Anlaby Road, Teddington; Lawrence Weedon, 27, Cranmer Road, Hampton Hill.

SOME DATES TO NOTE

Mar. 2nd.—First Sunday in Lent. 11.0 a.m. Course I in the School of Religion begins.

6.30 p.m. Course III begins.

Mar. 3rd.—8.0 p.m. Scout Group Annual Meeting.

Mar. 4th.—8.0 p.m. Social Committee.

Mar. 5th.—3.0 p.m. Mothers' Union. Speaker: Mrs. Rogers.

8.0 p.m. Course II begins at St. Mary's, Hampton.

Mar. 6th.—7.30 p.m. Young Wives' Group: Dressmaking Class (Windmill Road School).

Mar. 7th.—8.0 p.m. Course IV begins at this church.

Mar. 9th.—Lent II. The Rev. J. Wilson, preaches at 11.0 a.m. and 6.30 p.m. on "Christianity and Healing."

7.45 p.m. Meeting at the Vicarage for questions and discussion.

Mar. 12th.—2.30 p.m. Young Wives' Group Badminton afternoon.

2.45 p.m. Mothers' Union Intercessions.

Mar. 13th.—8.0 p.m. Drama Group.

Mar. 18th.—8.0 p.m. Men's Society: Speaker: The Borough Librarian.

Mar. 19th.—3.0 p.m. Mothers' Union Annual Meeting.

Mar. 25th.—The Annunciation of B.V.M.

7.0 a.m. Holy Communion.

3.0 p.m. Mothers' Union Deanery Festival at Ashford.

Mar. 26th.—3.0 p.m. Mothers' Union Choir Practice.

Mar. 28th.—7.30 p.m. Magazine Distributors' Meeting.

Mar. 31st.—8.0 p.m. Young Wives' Group. Speaker: Mrs. Bligh.

BAPTISMS

Feb. 24th.—Diane Patricia Nunn, Exmoor Quarters, Borden, Hants.

Feb. 24th.—Linda Rosemary Deeks, 60, Laurel Road.

Feb. 24th.—Irene Mary Gorse, 142, Fulwell Road.

MARRIAGES

Feb. 16th.—Donald Frederick Smith to Margery Esther Ashwell.

Feb. 23rd.—Albert Edward Farmer to Brenda Stella Beryl Smith.

BURIALS

Feb. 4th.—Elizabeth Critchley, 74, Wellington Road, aged 89 years (at Teddington).

Feb. 6th.—Nancy Adelaide Elsdon, 15, Acacia Road, aged 43 years.

Feb. 18th.—Arthur Rixon, 4, Myrtle Road, aged 83 years.