

“Give us today our daily bread.”

We are well into Lent so how is your Lent fast going? What have you given up for Lent?
Why do some people give up cakes or biscuits?
Is it to observe Lent or just an excuse to lose weight?

There is a much better, fully guaranteed way for losing weight!
Just rub your hands together for a while and you are guaranteed to lose weight!
In staggering feat of human biology the human body loses 500 million skin cells per day and then replenishes them. So it stands to reason if we vigorously rub our hands together for a while we shall lose some weight! So it's true 'Dust you are to dust you will return!'

So, how much weight do you hope to lose in your Lenten fast?

Large numbers of the world's population go to bed starving. Millions of others are preoccupied with losing weight:
60% of adults in UK are overweight...70% in the USA...27% in Sub-Saharan Africa... 70% in South Africa .

In the 1960's I remembering singing a song – 'Half the world is starving, half the world is overweight...' Nothing much seems to have changed in those 50 years and much of this is due to institutional thuggery at home and abroad.

Today we focus on the phrase from the Lord Prayer - **“Give us today our daily bread”**

This follows on logically and naturally from “Our Father in heaven...your **kingdom** come, your **will** be done on earth as in heaven”

What is God's will that we ask to be 'done on earth as in heaven' and what are the signs of that Kingdom? Bishop Christopher has asked us in our life as disciples to uncover the signs of the Kingdom in the world around us and in the events of contemporary society. The ordination service describes all ministers of the church (which I think should include the laity) 'as heralds of Christ's kingdom and to be expectant and watchful for the signs of God's presence, as he reveals his kingdom among us.'

As we bear this in mind we can consider what **“Give us this day our daily bread”** really means.

Quite simply it can mean:

1. A prayer that we may all have sufficient to live on and/or...
2. A prayer that **ALL** may enjoy the good things of this world **NOW!**

The 'us' is plural, and therefore 'communal' meaning **ALL** God's people whoever and wherever they are.

'Give us today' (where the original Greek word is 'epiousia') means '**today and tomorrow.**'

In other words it is a prayer that we may **ALL** be **TOTALLY** sustained.

Today's gospel reading Luke 13:31-35 gives us two vivid images - the 'Fox' and the 'Hen', rather like one of Aesop's Fables, but here it is used with strong effect and power.

Jesus first of all refers to Herod, “go tell that fox...”. Here we can pick up on St Paul’s description of the comfortable Roman colony in Philippi (our second – Philippians 3:17-4:1)) where ...’their destiny is destruction, their god is their stomach, and their glory is in their shame.’ Herod and the Roman authorities are a load of thugs - the foxes!

But, secondly, Jesus then refers to God as ‘a hen who gathers her chicks under her wings.’ I am reminded of the story of the farmer’s barn which burned down. Once the fire was extinguished the charred corpse of a hen was found with her chicks still alive under her wings. She died that they might live.

Foxes and hens. The thugs and the vulnerable. It just about sums up so much of human life.

Last Sunday, the first Sunday of Lent, we heard Jesus’ words ‘Man cannot live on bread alone...’ so our understanding of ‘Give us today our daily bread’ is not just about physical sustenance. Jesus points beyond our physical needs to our eternal, heavenly needs. As we have already seen, this is not about ‘pie in the sky when you die’, but about the HERE and NOW for ALL people – ‘your kingdom come on earth (NOW) as in heaven.’

Don’t work for food that goes bad but work for the food which lasts for eternal life, the food the Son of man gives, the one who said “I am the bread of life.” This is not just about feeding empty stomachs, and please God we don’t have to wait another 50 years before all the world’s people are adequately fed. It also assumes that this outcome will be as a result of common justice for all, where the figure of the mother hen protecting her chicks overcomes the predatory thuggery of the unscrupulous fox.

Alan Hayday. (Lent 2. 24th February 2013. St Michael’s Louth)