

Lent – Wednesday - Week 2 – Interchurch

March 8, 2023

It has been said that there are Advent people and Lent people. Advent people are up on their toes looking ahead. Lent people on their knees praying. We all probably have some of each. I am basically an Advent person but Lent is a quiet prayerful time for me. However, prayer is not just being on our knees with our eyes closed or looking at the ground to the exclusion of everything around us. It is a time to take in everything the season has to offer.

We are called to open and embrace the world. To use our senses to fully immerse ourselves in the all that is around us. Using all our gifts can aid our prayers and expand our Lenten experience.

Jesus while being wholly divine was also wholly human and experienced the same senses and feelings as us. Our awareness of these can bring us in closer union with him.

On the first day of Lent, Ash Wednesday, we experienced touch as ashes were imposed on our forehead. We were marked by the sign of the cross and could feel the grit of the ashes on our forehead. And so it started.

Jesus was no stranger to touching. It was an integral part of his ministry. His touch was from God – curing lameness, healing lepers, stopping hemorrhages, raising the dead.

We can bring kindness to another by our touch. Physically we can show support and kindness and we can touch others through their hearts and feelings. Let us look for ways to give and receive through touch. A kind and supporting hand. A welcome gesture.

What do you see? How do you see? Just the immediate – just the surface? Or do you see inside – see someone's heart and their soul. Too often we see only the cover of the book and make a judgement by outward appearance without going deeper – without seeing someone's inner feelings and goodness and the whole person. Many times I have made this mistake and missed an opportunity for

more. We have the opportunity for sight and insight - to see below the surface and use this gift to the fullest.

Jesus knew how important sight can be. By his cures, he changed the lives of those who regained their sight. No longer beggars they could enter the world completely and find new meaning in their lives. By his healings, they could see him as the Son of God.

What have you heard? The sound of angels at the nativity? The cries of those in distress and despair? As Christians we are called to respond to what we hear. We can be moved by voices of hope and praise but not to the exclusion of responding to cries for help. There are many in our world today who need us to listen. Jesus could hear those who cried out to him – demons, beggars, and the sick. Calls to help those whose relatives were sick, dying or had died.

Are there smells that bring back memories for you?. Scents can immediately take us back to a former time and place - stir up a memory – baking, smoke and the burning coals of a fire, candles and incense, an ocean breeze, a hint of perfume, mown grass.

We have also encountered things that smell fishy -something off kilter that just does not ring true. Maybe that's what Jesus smelled with the Pharisees – that what they preached was somehow a bit off, not quite what God meant, had a little too much personal gain and not enough benefit for everyone. Trust your senses when you get that fishy smell.

What has left you with a bad taste. Certainly the Hebrews had their complaints about the food when they left Egypt. But it's not always about food. Events and encounters can leave a bad taste – when you are literally turned off.

Taste and see that it is good. Taste Holy Communion – fully experience the wine and the bread. Let the elements fill you completely and take you to another level – to union with Jesus.

Keep your senses alive this Lent. As we enter Holy Week our senses will be overwhelmed – Palm Sunday full of hosannas ringing in the air, seeing Jesus entering the city on a donkey, feeling palms in your hands, reaching out to touch as he passes by. All of Holy Week will be an assault on our senses – voices rejoicing, the sound of silver coins changing hands, the warmth of a charcoal fire

surrounded by denials, shouts from an angry crowd, the sights of torture, of scourging, the weightiness of the cross, the sound of hammer on nails, the weeping in the aftermath. There is also time for quiet and prayer.

Take advantage of all of it. Experience it fully because the greatest experience will come at the end of the week.