

**Lectionary readings: Genesis 2: 15-17, 3: 1-7; Psalm 32; Romans 5: 12-19; Matthew 4: 1-11 (1st Sunday in Lent)**

**For reflection and prayer**

- **Genesis 2-3:** It seems to me that Genesis is telling the story of every human being. The Garden of Eden symbolises the world in which we live - full of goodness, beauty, gifts, a feast for the senses. But we fail to appreciate all the good things we have and instead we focus on that which is forbidden, or we get hooked on to what is bad for us. And something inside of us dies the moment we give in to the illusion that it is harmless (whatever the 'it' is for each one of us). God shows us the way to live, but He leaves the choices to us: to walk through life with Him, bringing Him into all our choices and trusting that what He has given us to enjoy He has given us in love; or going our own way, thinking we know better. When we do make unwise choices, we must live with the consequences of these, but God does not abandon us. We may hide from God but God in His love will go on seeking us. That is good news indeed. Is this the God we know?
- **Psalm 32:** The Psalmist says that the person who is forgiven is blessed. God is far more ready to forgive than we are to ask for forgiveness. When we refuse to acknowledge our shortcomings, guilt weighs heavily on us and we become weak and miserable, our strength draining away. But when we are honest with ourselves and with God, we can know the joy and peace of being forgiven and the opportunity to start afresh, knowing we are embraced by Love. *'Dwelling in the heart of the Beloved, we are free ... to live creatively.'* (Psalms for

Praying) Let's allow God to embrace us this week so that we may live freely and creatively.

- **Romans 5:** Sin is universal. One definition of sin that I came across recently touched me: sin is *'missing the point of human existence'*. That is worth reflecting on, I think. God coming in Jesus shows us the point and meaning of human existence. God gives us the life-giving gift of Himself and that leads to breathtaking Life. There are a lot of people who stop short of saying yes to the God who has said yes to us. C S Lewis: *'There comes a moment when people who have been dabbling in religion suddenly draw back. Supposing we really found God? We never meant it to come to THAT! Worse still, supposing He found us?'* That might be worth reflecting on.
- **Matthew 4:** Jesus had received grace and affirmation at his baptism and where there is grace, temptation is very close by. God had said of Jesus, 'You are my beloved son.' Now Jesus had to struggle with how he was going to live out that identity in the world. God, I believe, is calling each one of us to live out of our True Self – our beloved child of God self - rather than out of our ego. And just as Jesus had to struggle with disturbing questions that might have steered him off course, so do we. God wants each one of us to be his living presence in the world, but we are so often side-tracked from living out of the Spirit of God within us by our ego. In everything that happens to us, we need to ask ourselves: Is this of God and going to draw me deeper into God's desire for me? Or is this movement or desire within me coming from my ego and going to prove destructive, undermining my decision to be all I can be for God? May we, like Jesus, choose day by day, indeed moment by moment, to be all that God is calling us to be.