



The Bishop of Ebbsfleet's Pastoral Letter – March 2009

Learning the Catholic Faith

T HIS MARCH is entirely Lenten. We arrive in March with the first Sunday of Lent and we leave it, still in Lent but with Holy Week beginning to come into view. As with every Lent, it is a time for a new look at Prayer, Fasting and Almsgiving. As with every Lent, it is a chance to look more deeply into our Catholic Faith. Some of us will be doing this as catechumens – candidates for adult baptism and confirmation. (here is some material about the Christian Initiation of Adults on the liturgical page of *Ebbsfleet Extra* this month.) Others will be making use of whatever special course is on at church or, sometimes, organised by churches together. Others will be studying privately, reading *that* book, looking at *that* DVD, surfing the internet. I hope that study will be a watchword for everyone.

A year ago we had a special push on catechetical resources and there is a whole section of it now on the Ebbsfleet website. I hope that parish catechists and teachers will either have access to – or print-outs of – the relevant web pages. I hope too that every parish organising classes will be using something from these resources – some of them much, much better than anything we have had before. I hope too that parishes with regular groups – whatever the group is called – will also be looking at and using these resources. Not everybody has access to the internet, but everyone surely knows someone who does. The resources listed include a fair amount of electronic material – DVDs and so forth – as well as pamphlets and books.

It is increasingly obvious that we live in a church where knowledge of the Faith and familiarity with the tradition is dangerously thin. Most people no longer learn the Faith at their mother's knee or in school or in Sunday School. For many, the Faith is a fresh and exciting discovery in adult life. This demands from those who teach a new approach to communicating it, a new sophistication, new resources. Professional teachers and modern teaching methods have much to teach us. Those who are hostile to Christianity usually belittle it, in their ignorance, by caricaturing it. All the more important that we understand our faith and learn to explain it clearly and simply to others. This is not just a matter for the brainy and the super-intelligent: the genius of Christianity is that things are often 'hidden from the wise and intelligent and...revealed to infants' (Luke 10:21).

May God bless you this Lent as you deepen your faith by learning the Faith.

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