# LENT

The beginning of the Bible gives us the story of Adam and Eve. In this story, the writers of Genesis are trying to show us how the world came to be in the mixed-up state it is in. The story points to many good things about this world. It is made by God specifically with us in mind. It is a beautiful place. We can be happy here. We can be at peace here.

The fall of Adam and Eve, however, describes the ‘big picture’ of the world. In every human life, every ‘little picture,’ - that fall is repeated. We can choose to follow God or to give in to the temptation to do wrong. Sometimes we give in. We are a fallen race and we know it, the evidence is all around us. If it destroys our hope or faith in God, we can be greatly harmed. We need good news: a reason to believe, a reason to hope, a reason to go on.

That good news has come to us in the form of God’s Son, Jesus Christ. This man fought with the evil in this world even to the point of death. But He was not defeated. The death and resurrection of Jesus is the triumph and vindication of God's goodness over evil.

At the beginning of this battle, Jesus struggles with Satan in the desert (the counterpart of Jacob struggling with God.) At the beginning of the season of Lent, Christians attempt to join Him in that struggle, and they do that by means of fasting, alms-giving and prayer. As well as expressing our solidarity with our Lord in the wilderness, these are tried and tested ways in which we can cleanse and renew our faith in the good news and our resources to go on.

For Saint John Chrysostom (secondary patron of our parish,) prayer is by far the most effective of these three disciplines:

It is “the light of the soul, giving us true knowledge of God. It is a link between God and man. By prayer the soul is borne up to heaven and in a marvellous way embraces the Lord. This meeting is like that of an infant crying on its mother, and seeking the best of milk. The soul longs for its own needs and what it receives is better than anything to be seen in the world."

Prayer is a precious way of communicating with God, it gladdens the soul and gives repose to its affections. You should not think of prayer as being a matter only of words. It is a desire for God, an indescribable devotion, not of human origin, but the gift of God’s grace. As Saint Paul says: "we do not know how to pray as we ought, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with sighs too deep for words.”