

## **Views from the Pews: The Blessings of Gratitude**

Traditional Anglican liturgy marks each passing season of the Church's year with different liturgical colours. Along with the readings, music and sermon, the colours of the altar hangings and clergy vestments remind us of the theme of the day's service. Green stands for the long period of hope and growth after Pentecost; red for the blood of a martyr; white for the joy and triumph of Christmas and Easter; and purple for the penitential seasons of Lent and Advent. So the change in colour up front today is a significant reminder of the start of the traditional 40 days of Lent.

The idea of a "penitential season" is often interpreted as a cue to the faithful to undertake some form of self discipline – as in the long-established idea of "giving up something for Lent". There is nothing wrong with that, and if done in moderation, it can lead to a beneficial long-term change in habits. As a youngster, I loved sweets, and had rotten teeth in consequence. I used to take two or more large teaspoons of sugar in my coffee several times a day. One year, I gave up sugar for Lent, and at the end of the six weeks, I no longer needed it. I have never lost a tooth since.

Underlying the idea of a period of penance is the more positive intent of preparing ourselves for a great Christian festival. That is why Lent leads up to Easter, and Advent to Christmas. Both are seasons of great blessings, especially for those best prepared to receive them. Christ himself told us that he had "come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly" (John 10:10). The "they" in that context referred to thieves, and by implication, to all sinners – people like us. He offers us all abundant life because "I have not come to judge the world, but to save the world" (John 12:47). Is that not a reason for overwhelming gratitude? And it's not the only one.

Starting next Wednesday (24<sup>th</sup>), we will begin a five-week study series on Gratitude. The little study booklet is available from the Cathedral bookshop (\$5) or you can download it from our website. We will think about five of the many reasons we have for gratitude, with Bible notes and discussion questions. Alleluia!

*Kim King*