

Dear Friends,

It's always interesting to come across new nuggets of information. I was reading something a couple of weeks ago which included an explanation of the origins of the word focus. Focus is originally the Latin word for hearth, fireplace or, perhaps slightly more primitively, burning point. If we were to think about a room with an open fireplace, it does become a point to which our eyes are drawn. It is a place of movement, dynamism and energy.

Today, when we use the word focus it's not so much in the context of a hearth or fireplace directly. It is more about providing a moment of concentration on one particular area or creating a spotlight on something or making it the centre of attention for some reason. This may be physical, but it could also be about something in our lives. In the way we use the word most readily today, we can see how it has grown from the Latin root, as a fireplace would be the centre of attention in a room both physically and a place to bring people together relationally.

We might also think of times where things are out of focus for a particular reason. For those of us who wear glasses this might be something we can perhaps easily relate to. When something is unfocussed, it's probably a bit blurry and we long for some clarity.

We can relate all these aspects to our journey with God. During Lent, we are encouraged to place an emphasis on our discipleship. Where in our lives might something be a little out of focus? Maybe we would like to spend more time in prayer or reading our Bible, or appreciating all God has done for us in creation.

We may feel we need to place Jesus more at the centre of our thinking, praying and action. This time of Lent could be a time on which we consider new ways to encounter Jesus who is always ready to meet with us. Maybe the analogy of meeting Jesus by the fireplace for a chat is one which is helpful.

We often associate the Holy Spirit with wind, breath or fire. In this context, the metaphor of fire is the most appropriate. The dynamism and movement of the flames reminds us of how God the Holy Spirit moves. If we are open to the work of the Spirit, we are open to how God is seeking to shape and form us for good.

Lent is a time of preparation and a season of penitence. At the end of the month we come to Holy Week where once again we think about Jesus' journey to the cross. As part of our preparation, we need to be focussed on our discipleship.

During this Lenten period let us focus, in all the meanings of the word, on God. If there is a part of our lives where things seem to be a little out of focus, it would be good to bring that before God. Let us concentrate on our relationship with Jesus, placing him at the centre, and allow the Holy Spirit to move within and between us.

God bless,
Chris