

From Peter Atkinson, Dean of Worcester

(Taken from The Cathedral News)



The forty days which Christians keep as a time of preparation for Easter are called 'Lent', which is simply an old word for springtime. Just as the natural world emerges from its winter 'lockdown', so the spiritual life beckons us to new life and new freedom. For Christians, the sign of this new life and new freedom is the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. Spring from winter, life from death, light from darkness, hope from fear, freedom from restraint, activity from lockdown – we hope and pray that we shall all feel something of that this Easter. Lent is a time of hope, of eager looking forward, not just a time of 'giving things up'.

Kenneth Grahame's classic book 'The Wind in the Willows' (a book for children but definitely a book for adults as well) opens with a wonderful evocation of spring 'with its spirit of divine discontent and longing'. The phrase 'divine discontent' has passed into the language, and it exactly captures the spirit of Lent for Christians. It is a time to shake ourselves out of complacency, to be up and doing, to have new ideas, to learn new things, to explore fresh horizons. We see that 'divine discontent' in the prophets of the Old Testament and the apostles of the New Testament (it is said that they 'turned the world upside down'). We see it in the saints down the ages, especially the turbulent ones like St Francis or, nearer our own time, St Oscar Romero. Above all, we see that 'divine discontent' in Jesus himself, telling his disciples to seek out that tough and steep path that leads to life. Lent reminds us of that tough and steep path; Easter reminds us of the life it leads us to. May Lent lead us to Easter, and may the 'divine discontent' of Jesus Christ lead us to life.