**Week 1 Video**

**Opening our Eyes to his Presence**

Ever since he heard it mentioned in *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*, my youngest son has become obsessed with Turkish Delight. We have to buy it in bulk for him. It’s not particularly great for his teeth, so he’s only allowed one small slither a day. Yesterday morning he asked for his daily treat of Turkish Delight. I told him that if he ate it then, he wouldn’t have another treat for the rest of the day. He thought for a moment and then said: “imagine a treat that lasts forever”.

We’re now at the beginning of Lent. And it’s been a strange and difficult year, with so many churches, shops, schools, colleges, and workplaces having been closed. But this week, I challenge you to view the beginning of Lent as an opportunity to open up – to open up your eyes to God’s presence all around you. After all, through connecting with God‘s presence we connect with something of eternity. We connect with “the treat that lasts forever”, to use my son words.

But how does that relate to Ash Wednesday and to Lent? Well, the monastic tradition has always seen the contrition, the saying sorry, at the beginning of Lent as not simply being sorry for the things we have done. It’s also about being sorry for the things we haven’t done – and, in particular, according to the tradition, it is being sorry for the times we haven’t appreciated and savoured those moments of beauty, love, hope, and joy that break into our lives. The beginning of Lent gives us the opportunity to say sorry for those times and then commit ourselves to doing things differently from now on – to consciously open our eyes to where God comes to us in our lives each day.

So, this week, I encourage you, however difficult life might be at the moment, to recognise God all around you – in your daily walks, in the green shoots of nature that are starting to spring up all around us, in the birds in your gardens and parks, in your family at home or further afield, in the friendships you are fostering through text or phone calls, in the music you listen to and the films you watch, in inspirational sacrifices (such as we’re seeing from NHS workers, teachers, and other workers at the moment), or in the small moments of kindness that you witness as you go about your daily lives. By doing this, you can experience just something of that “treat that lasts forever”. Or, in the words of poet William Blake, you can experience “a World in a Grain of Sand And a Heaven in a Wild Flower... Infinity in the palm of your hand And Eternity in an hour”.