

## Thursday of Lent Week 3



A friend who is expecting a baby in a few months had just come back radiant from her first scan. As she was leaving she saw a lemon on the kitchen counter and picked it up and said "it is this size now." *It is still an it.*

Great oaks from little acorns grow, naturally. But the idea of a baby "and all the changes it has begun to bring into the life of the family from conception. And all the expansion of life that is to come" the idea is different from the actual thing as it has developed up till now.

The lemon brought home how big an event a small thing can be. But even more strange is the resilient purposefulness of life and growth. Such an ordinary and yet inexplicable wonder as an emerging human being the size of a lemon silences the chattering mind.

St Paul uses the image of a developing foetus to describe his relationship to the community in Galatia that he loved and cared for so intensely. These local churches were perhaps composed of no more than thirty or forty followers. He extended the metaphor of the living womb to the process of their spiritual growth as bearers of the person of Christ. "My children, I am again suffering labour pains for you until Christ is formed in you."

Like the lemon it is a striking reminder of how real and incomplete the process is. How odd it is to assume that we are "Christian" when we hardly yet know what it means. The present moment is announced at each tick of the clock, each movement of the countdown button. But the moment cannot be grasped. Time cannot be frozen except in virtual reality. In real life we are an arrow shooting through time and space.

This is perhaps why we need seasons, to differentiate the continuous passage of time. They remind us that we must learn to travel consciously, even if we don't know what we are conscious of. Just be conscious becomes the rule. And let the objects of consciousness present themselves sequentially; and see what stays, and for how long, and also what passes. For this growing consciousness we need the clarity and calmness of mind that comes

with the focus that discipline and Lent and meditation brings.

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