

Kyrie II  
(Font. 0.108)

LENT PREFACE

It's curious how many religious practices & customs, (and this is not only in Christianity) have been ridiculed, debated and abandoned only to come back into fashion again in a secular garb, without the joy, even the humaneness sometimes, and the out-going selfless inspiration they originally had. It's happened with things like prayer, mysticism, solitariness & quiet, retreat, the "alternative society" of the life of a religious community. In recent years, all these aspects of old Christian practices have returned in one guise or another, often beginning (instructively perhaps) in the heartlands of modern technological progress, material well-being and social 'enlightenment' and rationality. <sup>Another</sup> The <sup>recent</sup> latest manifestation of this trend seems to be the custom of fasting: something evidently so deeply human that it's there in some way in all the great religions of the world. Now, in the name of health, environment, economics or concern for fellowmen, it's making a return. And it's not so very long ago that Christian fasting, or the Church's Friday abstinence, was thought of as at least odd and incomprehensible. Well, Lent has been the traditional Christian time of fasting. Interestingly for today, perhaps, the custom began with lay-people and only quite some time later became incorporated in the laws and official practices of the Church. Now, with the almost complete disappearance, in the past quarter century or so, of the former strict laws and regulations about fasting, it's coming back in favour again: and it's often young people who are giving the lead, especially where the religious aspects are to the fore.

inspirations

So maybe this Lent would be a time to look again at how we fast: from food & drink as from other things. For without necessarily calling it such, most people do 'fast' in one way or another, from all sorts of things for all sorts of reasons, from simple weight-watching to principles about life & behaviour. Why not make of such things a part of your Lenten observance, in union with Christ, in repentance, and for renewal, in preparation for a fuller celebration of the mystery of Easter. That's a start: to that, you can add whatever particular fasting you may like to choose - chosen of course not because you like it but as an ascetical practice whose purpose is to free you for closer contact with God in prayer, and sensitiveness to your fellowmen and their needs. For fasting isn't at all a merely negative thing, abstaining from something as it were, in a vacuum: always there's a positive purpose, out-going. Even in the old Testament, you can read time and again that the fast the Lord looks to isn't just to keep rules or to feel we're doing all right - rather, it's to comfort and care for people, the needy especially, to break oppressions which weigh people down. Above all, it isn't for show or even for the edification of others that we fast and do penance: as Christ reminds us, it is our Father who sees, and he rewards in our hearts. Think about it now, as we listen today to an old

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Motet for Lent. "Selva de Passi" ~ a setting of Thomas Tallis  
chant of the Church, a setting of a text from the Mass of the 2nd Sun of Lent  
MUSIC  
Dorothy Selva Nos. by Byrd  
PRAYERS