

Positively-lent

Lent: Why Not *Take Up*, Rather Than *Give Up*?

I wondered, as so often before, what to give up this Lent.

I've given various things up before, and it has indeed been burdensome, causing me to reflect on sin, commitment to Christ, and other spiritual things – which is the idea; the fact that people use this abstinence to try to shed a few pounds, as well, is not in itself a bad thing (I've done it).

But this year ... I thought to *take up* things, instead (or rather, as well as, because I have indeed given up a few things), and have a *positive* Lent. A while ago I heard that a Christian friend was reading John Bunyan's classic, *The Pilgrim's Progress* (1678, 1684), and by chance (?) I'd picked up the Penguin edition (this way I can take it on the bus) at a charity shop, some months ago. Well – perhaps surprisingly - it's not *heavily* about 17th century ecclesial matters (indeed, the Vanity Fair section, in Part One, says a lot that is very relevant to today's world, and the parlous situation of the Church, and faithful Christians, within it ... but I digress).

But I don't think the book will take me 40 days and nights; so, either I might move on to Bunyan's autobiography *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners* (1666) - which I have somewhere - or re-read C. S. Lewis's *The Pilgrim's Regress* (1953) – inspired, obviously, by Bunyan - or look out for another spiritual work from a different tradition. But above all, I am determined to regain a *positive* outlook, real hope and faith, which, I'm sorry to admit, the awful events that we daily experience in our dark world (the City of Claptrap, Lewis calls the world, in his 1953 book) have dented.

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