

## **THE RITE OF ELECTION**

No, it is not new liturgy for use in polling stations, but a ceremony which takes place each year in most cathedrals of the world on the First Sunday in Lent, and Brentwood is no exception. Although still recovering from illness, Bishop Thomas welcomed 311 catechumens and candidates from most of the parishes of the diocese who were due to be baptised or received into the Catholic Church this Easter – and he greeted each one individually as they were presented to him. These are the “elect”, those called and chosen by the Church for the Easter sacraments.

In his homily on that Sunday afternoon he spoke on the gospel accounts of Jesus’ temptations in the wilderness. The wilderness for Jesus was a place of solitude and testing where he confronted evil. When we are in such a place of emptiness, darkness, vulnerability and fear, feeling lost, it is best to embrace it rather than escape it. Uncertainty and doubt are part of the Christian life; faith enables us, not to suppress, but overcome our doubt.

The three temptations of Jesus highlight that evil always appears good on the surface. To turn stones into bread can never satisfy the deeper hungers of the heart: only Jesus the Bread of Life can do this. A spectacular skydive might be impressive but draws attention to the skydiver rather than God. And Jesus came to redeem the world from the Satan who now offers Jesus a power-sharing agreement to rule the world – on certain conditions.

Jesus allows himself to be tempted without yielding. Resolutely, like him, we are called to walk through Lent. We need to pray for God’s grace and favour to persevere. Speaking to the elect, Bishop Thomas reminded them that after our first fervour of conversion, we can face the wilderness of failure. But by following the example of our sponsors, families, clergy and fellow-parishioners, we can always be assured of the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. There is encouragement for all of us.

Fr John Glynn