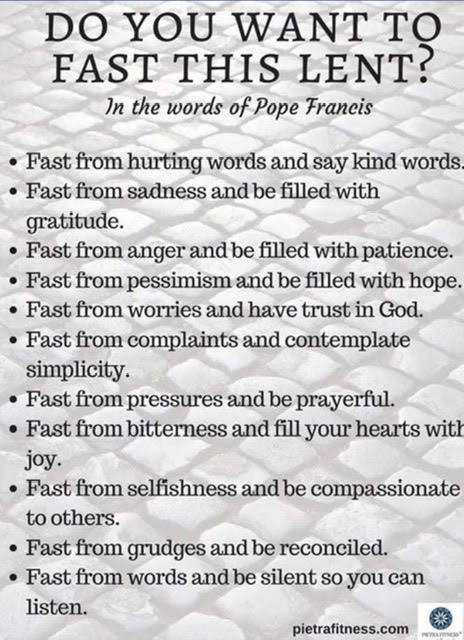
**Holy Habits: Sharing Resources – week 6**

As human beings we all experience hopes and fears, ups and downs, joys and disappointments.  Our emotions are a very important part of who we are.  This week I want to say something about sharing some emotional resources with each other.  We begin with something that Katie Vernon shared with us.  We think it is so good that we want to share it with all of you –



I hope you agree that this gives us plenty to think about and pray about during Lent.  It is both challenging and inspiring.  We all know that if we can fast from the negative things in the list, and replace them with the positive things, it will benefit us both psychologically and spiritually, but equally we know that it is sometimes very difficult to move from the negative to the positive.  Indeed, sometimes we on our own cannot manage it, but God can.  Jesus replaced the darkness of Good Friday with the brightness of Easter.  When the Risen Jesus met with His disciples in the upper room on that first Easter Day, He said to them, *“Peace be with you. As the Father sent me, so I send you.”  Then he breathed on them and said, “Receive the Holy Spirit” (John chapter 20 verses 21-22).* Jesus still shares the Holy Spirit with all Christians, and with His help we can certainly accomplish at least some of the things that Pope Francis suggests.

May I help you today with the fourth suggestion on the list: *Fast from pessimism and be filled with hope.*  It is quite common to hear people saying that the church is dying in this country and has no future.  Let me replace this pessimism with some of the things I learned at the Joined Up Conference on Saturday when over 200 Christians from all around our region met to share the good news of all the exciting things happening in Christian work with young people.  Because space is limited, I will only share news about Sheffield (where I live) and about schools (where I spent my whole working life).

# Meadowhead (secondary) School has a dozen adult school pastors who gather with the young people at lunch time and after school to befriend and support anyone with a problem.  Two other secondary schools are actively trying to set up similar schemes.

# There are a dozen “Open the Book” teams across Sheffield who each go into 2 or 3 or more primary schools to act out Bible stories in school assemblies.  They are mostly retired people who are free at assembly times, and the children love these assemblies.

# Bishop Pete has a vision to set up “Churches in Schools” and there are 5 already in place, including one in a primary school that feeds into High Storrs and Silverdale.

# The South Yorkshire Chaplaincy and Listening Service is now sending people into a dozen schools to support school staff.

# The “One Mentoring” project has already piloted individual mentors for troubled older pupils in secondary schools, and is seeking to roll out similar support in a dozen other secondary schools.

# The “School Chaplaincy Project” has already trained 31 people (including the leaders of three of the above projects), most of whom are using their skills in schools.  Our own Cherry Mair is one of these, and is the Staff Chaplain at Silverdale School.

That is just Sheffield, and just schools.  There are similar encouraging and exciting activities in church and other youth groups in Sheffield and across our region.  With all this going on, it is no surprise that there is some evidence that a greater proportion of young people are positive about Christianity than in previous generations over the last 40 years.  There are certainly several large churches in Sheffield with lots of young people and young families attending.  I firmly believe that it is premature at the very least to claim that the church has no future.  After all, God is very good at creating new life, as Easter proves.

*Produced by Glenn Evans on behalf of the Bents Green Holy Habits Planning Group (Debs Barnett, Glenn Evans, Martyn Read, Graham Wassell, Daphne and John Wilkins).  You can find more information on the Circuit Holy Habits Programme on the Sheffield Methodist Circuit website and also the Sheffield Methodist Circuit Facebook page.*