

EV Express

March 2013

My Lent Reflection

Yang

For me the Lent of 2013 turned out to be a most memorable journey because for the past 40 days spiritually I have been staying in a desert – my home – in penance and prayer to fight against the temptation of the world and to salvage my damaged family, which in the end led me to a taste of the sweetness of returning to God, together with my family members.

Back then in the beginning of the Lent when my spiritual director kindly invite me to put myself in the Lenten mode of fasting, prayer, penance and reconciliation, I found myself unprepared. I was so overwhelmed by the academic successes and achievements of my kids and my own studies, as well as the goodness of my Pastor, the community leaders and the parishioners that my eyes were filled with merits and glory rather than sins and evil. Do I love God all the time? Yes I do: I go to the Seminary to study theology three times a week. Is my family a Catholic family? Yes we are: we are all baptized Catholics. Do we love Church? Of course we do: we participate in the mass and serve the Church. So it seemed I didn't have some real problems that would take 40 days to clean up.

But Lent bestowed me a gift: I saw evil face to face in the environment of my home. A recent parents' conference with the Principal of my child's high school woke me up to a serious reality: schools, even the parochial schools are becoming vigilant of the infiltration of drugs. We are called to form a united front, with parents' cooperation as the core force, to raise a drug-free generation.

Now I looked at what's really happening with kids at home in the light of Lent: kids could hardly resist the temptation of the entertainment on the internet; texting became the real task while homework is only the company; kids resisted my preaching of the Gospel in the imitation of the attitude of my spouse, a devout Catholic himself, who tends to exercise the policy of tolerance and non-religion instead of the necessary disciplinary measures and the installation of the Catholic tradition at home. To help subdue my "religious zeal" kids would remind me, "Home is not the church, and it is not that everything has Jesus in it."

On my part, in order to maintain the unity and peace at home many times I would give up the preaching and focus on my own learning on theology, as a sacrifice, or a prayer to the Lord for the whole family. For a while this passive defense seemed to be working -- arguments and conflicts did recede a little. But soon as kids gained more freedom and independence, they started developing passive and even negative attitudes, making wrong choice to hang around with friends of bad influence. What they were doing was an accurate reflection of the environment we allowed them to grow up, where Christ and the Church were removed from the center of our family life.

Why have we as a Catholic family arrived at this sad situation? In trying to unite we became more divided. In trying to raise smart kids we raised the kids with spiritual deficiency. What is the first cause of all the turmoil in my family? Is it because of the art of communication or because in the great ocean of secularization we lost our compass? How can we restore the recognition of Jesus as the central dynamics in our family life? Am I ready to side with Him at any cost? How could I get my evangelical messages through more efficiently and intelligibly?

It seems that 40 days are not enough to resolve these issues I have held in my heart and mind that have intertwined into a complicated web. But one thing that pulled me through this darkness of confusion is the greatest gift of Lent – the grace of hope that Lent bestows to those who believe in Christ and dare to open themselves to the presence of the Lord to engage them in the preparation, through penance and prayer, for the Easter – our Lord's Passion, Death and Resurrection from death into the eternal life. Lent points to Easter while hope is based on Resurrection.

Noah stayed in the Ark for 40 days and 40 nights before the rains passed. The Israelites spent 40 years wandering in the desert before arriving in the Promised Land. Jesus spent 40 days in the desert fasting and praying to overcome Satan's temptation. Once in a year during this 40-day period of Lent we are invited to a much needed

soul-searching reflection to lay out our problems and issues encountered in life and to exam them through the lens of faith before we could encounter the Risen Lord once more. St. Ignatius reminds us in his *Spiritual Exercises* that **in everything**, it is the presence of Christ which engages one. Therefore when things went wrong and our lives seemed to fall apart, usually the causes would evolve around the lack or absence of Jesus as the central dynamics in our lives.

Lent, that precedes and prepares for Easter, invites us to hear the Word of God once more: “return to me with your heart (Joel 2:12)”, and to convert with great hope and a renewal of the faith. It belongs to those who have faith in Christ and love to carry the cross in imitation of Him. The days in the desert were not spent in vain: when I heard my daughter sincerely promised that “I would bring Jesus more into my life in the future”, I see the meaning Lent and embrace its necessity. It is truly a grace from God for those who cooperate with Him in search for the true discipleship.



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堂區一家, 薪火相傳
One Church One Family

She traded in her trading job – An interview with Angela Cheung

By HEATHER SENISON

Angela Cheung started out as an information technologist before going to work as an equity trader for a private fund. In 2005 she began a career as a clinical social worker after graduating from Hunter College with a master's in [Social Work](#). She works at YAI, a nonprofit agency that serves individuals with developmental disabilities and their families, and operates out of her own [private practice](#) in Manhattan.

Why did you switch? September 11th affected me a lot. Shortly after that, I did a lot of soul-searching, searching for meaning and purpose in life. A few months later I went on a [Catholic] pilgrimage to Medjugorje, a small town in the Western region of Bosnia, and there I had a really profound spiritual experience - I had a very personal encounter with God. The Virgin Mary was allegedly appearing to people there. And after I came back I knew that I wanted to be in the profession of helping people, so I took a bit of time to discern exactly what profession I wanted to go into, and I finally decided that I wanted to go into social services.

What are some pros and cons of your new career? The work is not easy. Being a therapist, the burnout rate is high. I really need to make sure that I am centered and focused because if I'm not centered and I'm not focused I wouldn't be able to do what I do. [However,] this might sound cheesy, but I really believe that my patients, they have inspired me to be a better person and because of them I am so much more appreciative of the things that I have that I often took for granted in the past. I do a lot of work with parents who have children on the [Autism spectrum](#) and these parents they are the most selfless, dedicated, hardworking and resilient people that I know. They make sacrifices for their children constantly and their love for their children is unconditional, and they're the ones that really inspire me.

Are you happy with your career switch? In the beginning I had my share of fears and doubts, because it is such a big change from my original career. [But] the longer I am in this profession, I really am certain that this is my calling, and I really love this because I do this with my heart.

Do you think you might change your career again? Absolutely not, I think this is it.

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沙漠的試探: 丙年封齋期第一主日福音的反思
—孫耀華

1. “人活著，不是單靠麵包”

麵包差不多是必需的。我說“差不多”不是指除了麵包之外,還有粥粉麵飯，而是指生理上的需要。但為什麼有人會去絕食？為什麼會有“麵包與愛情”的選擇（窮家女面對窮小子愛人或做富人情婦）？為什麼會有“不為五斗米折腰”的情操？這都說明了有些“東西”是超越生存 survival 而存在的。

耶穌這個試探不是因為石頭有什麼“不可侵犯”的特性，而是魔鬼叫他去做的事-包括充飢這樣基本的事，他都不會去做。換言之，這個試探的道德意義和孟子魚與熊掌的教訓很相似：“生，我所欲也。義，亦我所欲也，二者不可得兼,捨生而取義者也。”

捨生取義是個“釘十字架”的選擇。不是每個選擇都是“上刀山，落油鍋”，超乎常人的氣和能力。很多時,這種選擇祇是一種每日都發生，基督徒日日都要面對的選擇。例如,要在工作上做多二個鐘頭？或是去為小朋友的足球賽打氣？要不要在同事背後打小報告來獲得上司的歡心？自己選擇職業，或為兒女選擇主科時，為了天賦在某方面的能力？或是純然因為某種職業的報酬高？

很多非教徒，甚至有些教徒，喜歡用“人在江湖，身不由己”這個理由來支持他們”為兩餐乜嘢都肯制”的籍口。其實,人有很多情況下，選擇是有可能的。耶穌拒絕了魔鬼的引誘，沒有將石頭變做麵包，結果是他繼續捱餓。但耶穌並沒有因此而餓死。天父從來沒有捨棄過我們，何況是祂的愛子！

古人說“衣食足則知榮辱”。是不是等如衣食不足就可以做出不仁不義無恥的事？當然不是。理由是，當我們連基本的衣食還未有的時候，我們的關注，（“知覺”的“知”字）當然是放在如何去爭取生存最起碼的條件（衣食足的“足”字的意思）。

但當我們不用為衣食耽憂的時候，我們的關注為什麼仍然祇停留在更多、更好的生活享受是不去追求那些“永生”之事呢？我們需要做什麼來改變內心的渴求呢？

2. “你若朝拜我，這一切都是你的”

英文用三個P字（possessions, power and prestige)來形容這三樣難阻擋的“金牛”：財產、權力和名譽地位。

金牛就是梅瑟上了聖山接受天主的十誡時，以色列民在山下把金器鑄成一條金牛,做他們的偶像去崇拜。舊約故事今天的版本，就是當教徒過了主日，離開教堂，他們便把另一套的價值觀拿出來應用：在不同崗位上撿財；在家庭、工作上、社團中（包括教會）向權力核心跪頭--不論這些權力的使用是否正確，有沒有約束；沽名釣譽（高調的做善事獲取台下的掌聲）。



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3P 的魅力是會上癮的。一旦習慣了，要戒便需時和費力。

其實財富權力名聲本身是中立的。用來榮神益人，便是好的僕人。用來勞役我們，便是壞的主人。問題是這些偶像太真了，我們以為從那裡便可以得到保障和安全。把快感誤認為快樂，把短暫當作永恆。

3. “你若是天主子，就從這裡跳下去吧”

這個試探其實是最難抵擋的：人可以捱餓，可以視錢財名利如糞土，但一旦相信自己是天主的化身，什麼有違常理、喜歡祭祠多過仁愛的事情都可以明正言順的做出來。

耶穌是不是天主子？當然是。但天主子化生成人的目的就是去奉行天父的旨意，而不是天父要隨聖子的心意去改變這個一早預定的救世工程。

這個試探要問的不是“如果耶穌真的跳了下去，天使會不會託住他？”應該要問的是“天主站在我們的一方”，和“我們站在天主的一方”的分別在那裡？



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前者略似拜神祈福的心態：我們萬事勝意，因為天主時常保佑我們，關注放在自己，自己的家人、朋友、團體身上。如果我們基督徒以為已經擁有所有正義和平真理，思想和關注會不會變得狹窄，自以為是，甚至不能包容異己？

後者可以用耶穌的山園祈禱來代表：

“主，如果可能，請免我這苦杯，但不要照我的意思而照祢的意思”。耶穌的出發點不在自己，而且處處以成全天父旨意為依歸。這樣的心態，就不會恃著自己有特殊使命而不先去了解內心的情緒、需要、動機而走父入魔。

前者的態度是肯定的（敵我分明），肯定天主站在自己那一邊、常常用道德判斷來指控別人。後者的態度是開放的，時時反省自己的思、言、行為是否站在天主的一邊，是否天主的旨意。

魔鬼希望耶穌跳下去的，是個自滿，驕傲，封閉，訴諸權威，以為是替天行道其實是傷害別人，遠離天主的深淵。



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