



Lent letter 2025

Dear friends,

As part of my preparations for Lent I have been reading a book entitled *In the Shelter: Finding a Home in the World* by Pádraig Ó Tuama. Ó Tuama is a poet and theologian who hosts the podcast *Poetry Unbound* and leads the Corrymeela Community. The book is a beautiful combination of personal story, testimony, theological reflection and poetry and I highly recommend it.

In a section of a chapter entitled, *Hello to Change*, he discusses the temptations of Jesus in Matthew and Luke. The temptations are, of course, a pivotal moment in the ministry of Jesus. It is at this point in his journey that questions of vocation, identity and the use of power in his ministry come to the fore. Ó Tuama suggests that the word 'if' in the text might better be translated as 'since' or 'then'. Because Jesus is who he is, why not choose to act in any way he wishes? The challenge in the temptations is to Jesus' use of power. Because he has power, how will he use it?

'It was a temptation that said: You are capable of many things. So, do what you like. Use your power in this way...It is the complication of every moment. Because I am capable of this feat of power, or this feat of management, or this feat of ordering, do it. Do it. Do it. It doesn't matter. You're capable of it.' (*In the Shelter*, p.188)

He goes on to explore each of the individual temptations and I would encourage you to read further if you have the chance. The question of power and its use is, of course, highly relevant within the life of the Church and in all our relationships. We each have power even if sometimes we fail to recognise the power we exert. How do we use that capacity? What consideration do we give to its impact on others?

I write this letter on the morning after a deeply tragic and unfortunate encounter between Presidents Trump and Zelensky in the White House. It was an example, it seems to me, that was highly revealing of character and the misuse of power to violate, destroy and to worship that which is self-serving rather than life giving. In these difficult days, the question of power, who uses it and how has never been more important. It is a question we must place before all those who hold it.

Yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "J. ...", with a stylized flourish underneath.

District Chair