Today is the first Sunday of Lent. The first Sunday in Lent became a very important day for the Reformation in Switzerland.

So, on the first Sunday in Lent on 9 March 1522, when fasting has begun, Zwingli and about a dozen other participants consciously transgressed the fasting rule in Zurich by cutting and distributing two smoked sausages (Dass Wurstessen in Christoph Froschauer's Werkstatt - workshop). Zwingli defended this act later in a sermon in which he noted that no general valid rule on food can be derived from the Bible and that to transgress such a rule is not a sin. This event, which came to be referred to as the Affair of the Sausages, is considered to be the start of the Reformation in Switzerland.

This so called Zurich sausage affair is considered to be of similar importance for Switzerland as Martin Luther's 95 theses in Wittenberg for the German Reformation.

After the Reformation took a foothold in the European countries, it also effected the churches and its RC theology in the UK.

As we all know, our own Anglican church is a Reformed church, after Henry 8th broke away from the RC church and its teachings with its rules and regulations and embraced the Reformation. Since then the CofE has become a Reformed church. No longer are its Dogmatics set by the Pope and its Curie, but the CofE became established on 3 Dogmatic pillars, which are the 39 Articles, the BCP (with the Ordinal), and the Homilies.

At the same time, however, it became obvious very soon after the break away from Rome, that at heart the CofE remained a RC church, with its organisation and hierarchy. The only difference is that the monarch became the head of the church and the state its administrative organisation.

Until today, the CofE still remains in this ambivalent or dual position and it becomes most visible during the Lent period.

Most of the Reformed churches have nothing to do with Lent, while it remains a very important period for the RC church.

Although, I have to be careful with what I say because what remains of its importance. One of our sons lives in the middle of the city centre of Den Bosch.....St.Jans Cathedral in Den Bosch Centre of RC church in Brabant; The weekend before Ash Wednesday is a period of heavy drinking and partying ending on Tuesday night before Ash Wednesday. Laurens said he was not able to leave the front door of his house...city jam-packed with people celebrating carnival.... 6 million liters of beer...

Ash Wednesday as a period of beginning of fasting is nearly completely overtaken by the beer drinking and ‘much more’ festivities of carnival.

How quickly Lent, its fasting and it contemplations, ends in a period which has lots its meaning is even visible in our society here.

Lent means Fasting , but not completely, only leaving some delicacies behind. This is based on Daniel 10:1-3 when Daniel ate no nice food for 3 weeks.

What does Lent and fasting mean to many today in the UK? The common answer on this period I hear is mostly about eating no more chocolate for 40 days. Another one I often hear is leaving aside sugar in coffee/tea with the consequence they don’t like sugar anymore in tea or coffee. Leaving certain delicacies behind refers back to Daniel 10:1-3 where Daniel ate no nice food for 3 weeks.

If someone leaves certain delicacies for Lent is it to imitate Jesus’ fasting in the desert, or is it to be like Daniel humbling oneself and setting the mind to learn more about God? Or is because it is part of this season and has no further meaning. It’s possible that is a combination of both.

The reason the Reformation did away with the Lent period is because the Reformed church wanted to put the focus again on living by the Word of God and salvation through faith based on the grace of God given to humanity through the ministry of Jesus Christ.

The Reformation took the importance of the sacraments as works for salvation away and replaced it with salvation by grace. It was the theology as handed down from the NT church and the apostolic teaching.

Being a reformed church, members of the CofE should not forget that the basis of its Dogma is the principle of salvation by grace.

When we loose the focus on Jesus Christ we stand on the slippery slope of letting Lent become a period focussing on festivities and dieting, instead of focussing on Jesus Christ as God’s Gift of grace to all of us.

Hans