

On the morning of writing this I did something I'd previously thought pretty disgusting: I had a bar of chocolate for breakfast. I'd been driven to this because the rectory teenager had finished all the coco-pops. (How she keeps that figure and eats more than I is one of life's real irritants.) I wouldn't have thought of myself as fixated on chocolate - after all, I'm currently devouring a packet of marshmallows! But you know what it's like, a craving can be overwhelming.

March is here and so is Lent. A time for self-examination. No, I'm not talking about looking for lumps and stuff; it's a time to know who I am. Am I some sort of corporeal lump or a creature of immeasurable wonder - a spiritual being - travelling in this mortal machine of, albeit pretty amazingly, finely balanced organic functions. Am I in charge of my bodily requirements or is my body in charge of me?

There was a time when I was a very fit man in a world of very fit men. That was a matter of pride, duty - and perhaps a little bit of vanity. These days, I'm becoming aware that there is something more at stake. I'm never going to be that physically fit again. However, there is a spiritual fitness that I need to exercise. (Taking back control over desire will, ironically, make me fitter physically and mentally, too.)

St Paul has a reasonable grasp on this. "For if you live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live." (*Romans 8.13*) "Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body." (*1 Corinthians 6.19-20*)

It is for our own benefit that we use Lent to make a real effort to know and regain control of ourselves. God knows who we really are. Can we find that person, too?

Lent: less jelly, more Jesus!