

Let's Talk About Lent

I know that Ash Wednesday is not until March 6th, but Catholic booksellers and blogs started to gear up for this special season in early February. More persuasively, *Christianity Today*, the very conservative magazine and web presence, has been talking about the season for quite some time. Why are they doing this? Well, Lent is a season in which we use every day to prepare ourselves for Easter. That preparation is more than thinking of something to give up for 40 days (the Sundays during the season don't count). There's nothing wrong with a bit of discipline, but consider if that bit of discipline is focusing more on you than on your faith and Jesus.

The thinking now is not what you stop, but what you take on. By all means give up chocolate for the season. But perhaps you can get up a bit earlier and say Morning Prayer. Don't have a prayer book at home? Let us know and we will fix that. Or if your evenings are better times, Evening Prayer, or my absolute favorite, Compline, are both great ways to end the day and focus yourself with beautiful prayers and periods of silence. If you don't think that is such a great idea for the time you have, there are many, many devotionals you can use which can provide you with spiritual nourishment. Some of these things are so personal that perhaps talking to me or one of our clergy will make it possible for you to use the right book. If you don't think you have time for that either, there are many folks that sit quietly for a bit and pray the Lord's Prayer slowly. Or perhaps you can take on some other practices I can speak to you about.

Yes, whatever you choose may be difficult to keep doing every day; but that is precisely how you can put yourself in position to become aware of the Holy Spirit already dwelling in you, no matter your situation in life, no matter what is going on with you now. You are saturated with grace, and you did nothing to have it. In fact, you can't do anything to get that grace. It is a free gift; and when you actually realize that, you will also be on the way to obtain the "fruit of the Spirit" as described in Galatians 5:22: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Those things don't usually cascade on you all at once like stepping into a waterfall, but realizing the indwelling of the Holy Spirit starts them welling up in you. Then when Easter arrives, you will be ready to understand what Christ's death means for you. And that, Brothers and Sisters, is the basis of all we do and say in all of our liturgies and in our lives.