

The wisdom of the Church over the years teaches us that Lent can be a powerful step in our spiritual growth – if we engage in such disciplines of prayer, fasting, and almsgiving. So I want to share some thoughts about these as we begin our 40 day Lenten journey.

First, a word of caution. Whatever we “do” for Lent – does not increase God’s love for us – nor do prayer, fasting, and almsgiving make us more pleasing in God’s eyes. We do not earn, gain, or lose God’s love by whether or not we “make a good Lent.” What a good Lent can do for us – is make us more open to God’s guiding voice in our lives – and therefore make the relationship on our end a bit stronger or meaningful.

God already loves us – and will continue to love us – even if we completely turn away from Him: *I have loved you with an everlasting love, I have called you – and you are mine.*

God’s love for us is unchanging. The problem is never about God – the problem is always about us: our stubbornness, our independence, our weakness, our lack of good choices. . . WE build walls against God’s goodness – we erect barriers to letting God’s grace flow freely into our hearts and lives, our minds and spirits.

Are we not all aware that we can get so caught up in daily concerns, problems, pleasures and the stuff of everyday life that we give little attention to the Creator and Lover of our souls? Aren’t we all more than just a bit like Job of a couple of weeks ago – who thought life was a drudgery – because he wanted things his way instead of God’s way?

If we were hungry --- and found ourselves standing in front of a banquet table – we could choose either to eat until we were full --- or we could choose to continue to complain about our hungers as if we did not see the food right in front of us. . .

That’s kind of how God’s grace is. The banquet of God’s love, mercy, and forgiveness is always right in front of us --- but our lives are so filled with clutter, noise, commotion and the pursuit of earthly things – that we don’t always see the banquet of grace right before our eyes.

We would rather keep complaining about something – anything – than open up the Bible and read the comforting word of God.

We would rather keep walking the same old treadmill of our established routines --- after all, we’ve always done it this way --- than be lifted up by the Lord in prayer and worship – and be caught up in God’s plan for us and for the world.

The practices of prayer, fasting, and almsgiving are a means to open our eyes to the grace set before us – a way of drawing us closer to the one who loves us so very much.

So prayer: how can we know God unless we spend more time with God?

Fasting: how can we hunger and thirst for God unless we know what hunger and thirst is like?

Almsgiving: how can we have a sense of solidarity with the have-nots of the world unless we give in some way?

Sacrifice: how can we understand the ultimate price Jesus paid for our salvation unless we know what it means to give up something of our own desiring?

Reading Scripture: how can we know the Word who became flesh unless we read the Word?

Worship: how can we grow in our knowledge of the banquet of grace unless we experience it?

So do make a good Lent. NOT because you have to. But because you want to. Because you want to grow closer to the God who loves us all so very much

And have a good Lent because you have a good beginning of Lent --- spending some time during the remainder of this week – discerning your Lenten path – one that can re-direct the journey of your life. One which will bring you closer to God.