

Traveling Companion: My God! It's Lent again

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Okay, God! It's Lent again. It really has crept up on me this time. I had just started the New Year with all kinds of promises and resolutions. I felt good about making them. But! Alas! They didn't last too long. Now, it is Lent again and I have to make some more promises and resolutions.

God! I'm not sure I am ready for Lent. I have no choice but to get ready. So much of life is filled with beginnings, with starting over. Beginnings can be exciting but, at the same time, scary. Beginnings are reminders of our need for fresh starts because we continue to mess up opportunities. Given chances to start over again is a reminder that someone still believes in us and can see our true potential in spite of our many falls. Of course, that someone is you! Beginnings are also scary because they demand a step in faith; a journey into the unknown; a leaving behind the comfortable for the uncomfortable, the known for the unknown.

God, as I reflect on my life, so much of it has been charted, analyzed, measured and determined by others, using their own self-created analytical tools. Ever since my childhood days, I can still hear that inner voice asking, "Why aren't you like..." I become my own worst critic.

As a kid, I remember my Lenten pasts and all the resolutions I made. I was told it was forty days of penance. Even then, through my rudimentary knowledge of math, I had a sneaking suspicion that Lent was actually more than forty days and someone was trying to get me to be extra nice and do more penance than for the recommended time. Of course, I would stash all the candy and goodies I had saved during the week and would have a feast day on Sunday because Sunday did not factor into the forty day count for Lent.

Now, God, I am a bit wiser and maybe I need to have a different perspective on Lent this year. Of course, I need to include the Sundays, even if the whole season adds up to more than forty days.

I think I will approach Lent a little more imaginatively this time. Instead of fixating on fasting and giving up, I will think more about taking on.

For starters, instead of giving up candy, cookies and snacks, I might try and develop a new appreciation for food. Rather than being finicky about food, I might begin to appreciate it more. Maybe, I should complain less about the food and appreciate it all the more. Maybe, I need to resist saying things like, "We're having that again tonight!" and show more appreciation for the preparer and the sacrifices made. Maybe, too, I might show up on time for meals and not forget "Grace" before and after.

The second thing I need to do for Lent is to look at my buying habits and patterns. I need to avoid being a "compulsive" buyer, a "bargain" hunter or an "on sale" item I cannot pass up. God, why do we love to accumulate things, or find it hard to say "no" to a bargain we don't need? If we all were more realistic in our buying habits, there might be less need for garage sales where we sell to some other "bargain" hunter things we thought we needed but now don't. We all know how nature abhors a vacuum. So, when we sell everything we think we could do without at a garage sale, we are tempted to fill that empty space with more stuff we think we might need.

God, talking about food earlier reminded me that maybe I should think about food for my mind also. Maybe, I watch too much TV, see too many DVD's, spend too much time surfing or have to have the latest chart topper. Maybe, instead, I might read a good book that will feed my mind with wholesome and challenging thoughts while, at the same time fertilizing my soul.

So, God, I think I have talked myself into a different Lent this year. Maybe, instead of saying, "My God! It's Lent again. I will be able to say, "My God, I'm glad it's Lent again."