

Traveling Companion: Lead us not into Temptation!

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It's Lent again! It's time for resolutions, for the more painful mortifications, sacrifices and disciplines of the season. I am resolved to do my usual Lenten disciplines.

Each Lent, I give up watching TV. Ok! It's a bit of a sacrifice! After all, it is nice to sit down in my recliner and watch some of the news and news shows when all the evening meetings are finished. It also has a therapeutic effect. It can put me to sleep as a prelude to the real sleep.

So, what do I do with the time I recover after giving up watching TV for Lent? Well, I read. I usually have three or four books by my recliner ready to be devoured. Which one I pick up, depends on the mood and hunger. Such opportunities provide nourishment for soul and insights to live life at a deeper level.

Each Lent, I also give up snacking. This is a tough one and is filled with a tremendous array of temptations. I am always nibbling on something. If I have a cup of tea during many of my daily tea-breaks, I feel compelled to munch on some chocolate chip cookies, or some other munch able delights. It's really tough pouring out a cup of tea without indulging in the munching and crunching sounds of a satisfied palate. I am truly blessed with good metabolism and don't show any signs of a protruding tummy so snacking hasn't added any girth to my stature.

The real temptation tugs at the heartstrings of my resolution when parishioners drop off some of their tested and favorite candies, cookies and cakes. They sit on the kitchen counter testing one's will power. My eyes stalk them. My mind battles to say "No." My tummy churns in anticipation of their arrival. My taste buds prepare to taste test another heavenly delight. My Lenten resolution gnaws at me, asking if I am going to compromise; if I have the commitment and dedication to follow up on my resolution, if I have the will power to resist the temptation to indulge.

There they stand on the kitchen counter, arrayed in all their tantalizing beauty, yearning for attention, competing for a tempting prize. There are the dark thickly-covered brownies, dripping with satisfaction, yearned to be cradled with sticky fingers on their way to a waiting stomach. There is the carrot cake, one of my delights, made by a parishioner with a well-known gift for creating the best carrot cake in the parish. There is the homemade chocolate chip cookies, with their generous supply of chocolate chips, pleading, begging on bended blobs to break even an ironclad resolution. There is the banana bread, sliced to perfection, filled with moistness, freshness and a bleeding heart for any sucker without will power.

Each time I pass the kitchen counter, laden with its array of temptations, I have to make sure I don't bend on buckled knees to adore, worship, sample, or indulge their tumultuous temptations.

Of course, I could compromise and relent, even for a short time. I could water down my resolution. After all, Lent is supposed to be forty days but, in fact, it is more than forty if my math is correct. If I count the days from Ash Wednesday to Holy Saturday, inclusive, then I come up with forty-six days so maybe, I could revert to my childhood Lenten approach when, as children, we didn't really count Sundays as part of Lent. Instead, we stored away all our Lenten candies until Sunday and then binged on the results of our Lenten sacrifices. It sure is tempting.

I sure hope this Lent is good for my body, mind and soul and I hope that, when it is all over, maybe some adoring individual will drop by some homemade chocolate chip cookies or some scrumptious brownies. In the meantime, all I can do is to pray that the Lord will lead me not into temptation but deliver me from the evil of compromising my Lenten resolutions.