

The First Week of Lent

When we begin Lent, many people have a general sense of what this church season means. There's one long-standing idea that during Lent we should "give up" something, something we like or desire. Perhaps it's sweets, or the internet, or something else that we decide we're going to give up for the forty days of Lent.

What's this all about? Well, Lent is certainly about personally preparing for Easter by examining one's own faith with all its uncertainties and difficulties. To help in this close examination, extra times of prayer through Lent, or faith-based reading, or denying oneself particular pleasures or even necessities, are ways that people have used to focus their attention. Some people of faith today, and many earlier Christians down through the centuries, have actually fasted through Lent – going without food for some days or parts of some days of the season. The current idea of denying oneself particular pleasures or indulgences reflects that practice.

Whether you give up something for Lent or not, it's worth asking yourself some deep questions. What does it mean to have faith, as you know it? Where does your sense of God fit into that? What about Jesus? Do you experience a holy presence sometimes? Is it as personal as a close friend? How does God's place in your life connect with the story of Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection?

Pay attention to what you otherwise might just ignore or never ask. Go ahead and ask yourself the deep questions.

Prayer: May God and I come together in ways that feed my spirit and help me look deep inside. May I find the places and the ways within, where the big questions of life reside. As Jesus' follower, may I ask, and come to answers. Amen.

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