

“For many of us, then, Lent is time for the spiritual equivalent of New Year’s resolutions. We set aside work on ourselves for forty days so we don’t end up wandering around in the wilderness for 40 years. We do things to burn off the excess fat that’s weighing us down, try to improve our spiritual diet, and do some meaningful spiritual exercises to strengthen the muscles we call “virtues.” But in the early days of the Church, Lent was not so much a time to focus inward. It was time for Catholics to focus outward. It is a time not just for personal growth, but for growth of the Church.” Dr. Marcellino D’Ambrosio

This has been a guiding light for my Lenten journey for some time. And although the above quote is from a Roman Catholic, it was a Presbyterian who first challenged my view of Lent.

So what would this look like for me???

- It might include inviting youth to observe a holy day, say Ash Wednesday. And they would be welcomed to bring a friend (with reg. forms of course!),
- Having clergy from different denominations helping us journey to the cross with reflections each Wednesday,
- Preparing to tell the story of our faith in song, *The Rock*,
- Welcoming people in to explore one of the most beautiful passages of scripture, the story of the Prodigal son using a gifted writer, Henri Nouwen, and a gifted painter, Rembrandt, and
- Thanking God for young couples and together exploring how we speak in Love to each other

So in fact, this always tends to be one of my busier times of faith. And certainly given the country in which we live this is counter cultural. For this is the time for hibernation, for curling up in a chair with a book or watching the Senators win.

Not that I don’t like to do those things, but only in so far as they are used to help me offer myself once again to the world that God loves. So at this time of year, at this time of Lenten preparation, let us engage fully with one another, and with our God.

As St. Paul reminds us in 1 Corinthians 13,

¹²*Now we see in a mirror dimly; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.*

¹³*And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.*

Let us make this a time to truly offer ourselves in love to the world. For that is how we best see both ourselves and others. That is also the place of true understanding or knowledge. As Paul and the early Church learned that is also the surest way to growth and most especially the way to draw us closest to our God of Love, Jesus Christ. And isn’t that what Lent is all about??

God Bless and keep us all,
Fr. Craig+