

Lent: A Season of Sacrifice.

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There are two Penitential seasons in the liturgical year. They are Advent and Lent. Both seasons are designed to prepare us for the two highest holy days of the Christian year, Christmas and Easter. During Advent we prepare for celebrating the birth of Christ and the second coming of Christ. During Lent we remember the suffering, death and resurrection of Christ. During Lent we also prepare to give thanks for and celebrate Christ's perfect act of redemption for our sins.

Traditionally, the Church marks these seasons with acts of personal and corporate sacrifice. The historical church gave up food items for Lent and Advent so that they would have a daily reminder of Christ's sacrifice. They would give up meat, eggs, and yeast. These foods were daily staples which touched every level of society. In place of these staples, they would eat a diet of fish, vegetables and unleavened bread. This sacrificial diet was followed 6 of the 7 days of each week in the penitential seasons. Generally the fast was broken for on Sunday, a feast day. Given that food insecurity was, and still is for many, a daily concern, the pursuit of food was a major distraction from God. By sacrificing food, Christians put their focus back on Christ.

Today, many other things distract us from God. Cell phones, computers, work, play, committees, sports, school, smoking, chocolate and an assortment of other activities and objects take our focus off of God and Christ's sacrifice for us. God understands the worries and concerns of our lives. God wants us to enjoy our time here on this earth, but we must remember that true joy does not come from this world. Real joy comes from our relationships with God and the community of Christ.

This Lenten season, carefully consider what in your life is causing the greatest distraction from your relationship with God. Once you have determined what that distraction is, determine how you can best get rid of that distraction. For some, all that will be required of you is to give up the use of your distraction for Lent, be it chocolate, TV or watching sports. For others, Lent will be more about changing your mindset instead of sacrificing something. If your greatest distraction is work, then be intentional about starting your workday with a prayer. Every time you get a phone call, respond to an e-mail or make a widget, say a prayer for the person you are talking to or the future owner of the widget. Take the focus off of you and your paycheck and place the focus back on blessing others and praising God. Give God his due and enjoy a renewed relationship with God. Then when you celebrate Easter, you too will experience a resurrection of the spirit as you are born again on Easter morning.