

# Life, Lent, and Love

Those have a short Lent who owe money to be paid at Easter.

Benjamin Franklin

Lent begins about forty days before Easter. It is a time of spiritual preparation for Christians, as we ask God to prepare our hearts for the glory of the resurrection of Christ, and of all Christians.

Today, as this column is published just a couple of days after Ash Wednesday, the beginning of Lent, perhaps we can find a way to let God be more in us. We can ask anything of God, and in these forty days, we try to get to where we need to be for the blessedness of Easter to take root in us.

The season of Lent has its origins in the forty days of temptations that Jesus travelled at the beginning of his ministry. Jesus did not eat anything for forty days in the desert, and had some spiritual journeys for sure. Part of that journey was being tempted by the devil. He never gave in. He had victory over every temptation. Jesus was the only one without sin.

We are tempted as he was. The difference is, time and time again we give in, even without realizing it. Then we find ourselves far away from God, and wonder how we got there.

Benjamin Franklin, as quoted above in the banner, tied Lent to money. He saw it as a financial period of time.

Maybe we could see this season, and the season of Lent as a small example, of time lent to us by God to bless others and honor Him. It is often seen as a time to give up something to gain spiritual awareness. Interesting how folks may give up chocolate, cigarettes, desserts, or soft drinks temporarily, but take them up again after the season ends.

God wants us to focus on permanent changes that will endure forever.

Lent can be a good time to focus on filling ourselves with the things of God rather than the things of the world. It is indeed time lent by God. It is his time, his history, his world, and the sooner we realize this the sooner we begin living as servants who don't own anything rather than owners who think we have and know it all.

Clergyman Thomas Keating calls it diving therapy. "Lent," he says, "is a time to renew wherever we are in that process that I call the divine therapy. It's a time to look what our instinctual needs are, look at what the dynamics of our unconscious are."

What or whom do we value most. What do we think about? What drives us? What inspires us? What are our priorities, and do they need to change?

These are questions we can ponder during Lent, and maybe come up with some answers through prolonged spiritual searching that may not happen at any other time of year.

One way to focus is to look at our friends and family. As we age, we have more and more of them, and also lose them as the years pass.

Jean Cocteau, a French poet who was a filmmaker and designer, wrote, "I have lost my seven best friends, which is to say God has had mercy on me seven times without realizing it. He lent a friendship, took it from me, sent me another."

We must keep making new friends, and finding our permanent membership in the family of God, which eternal. When we mourn the loss of a friend and give thanks for them, we must thank God for sending us new ones. It is part of the cycle of living. If we live long enough, we will see it clearly.

Isn't it interesting that during lent, filmmakers, publishers and producers and television network executives who may or may not be Christians, let's put it that way, air and publish scores of works in which Jesus appears. The airwaves, newsstands, and internet are flooded with them. They almost overwhelm. Some attack Jesus, some lift him up.

Some inspire, some try to hold up the latest attempt to try to disprove long held faith and faithful. It happens every year. God is much bigger than all this. He is eternal. The world is temporal.

The season of Lent is indeed a time for spiritual growth. It reminds us that all of time is lent to us by God for a time. It seeks to tell us how best to spend our time or money, and that our time and our money are really God's.

We must remember that Easter, towards which we travel, is all about God's love for us. When the flowers of springtime bloom, let them remind us that God can bloom us right where he has planted us. May God bless you, dear Reader, as you travel from here to Easter, by lending you grand things which make people thankful for you and Your God.