

~ by Candie Suarez ~

Lent has arrived. For Catholics this is a time of prayer, fasting and giving alms. However, many people do not observe this sabbatical from self-indulgences. Actually, for Catholics it is mostly a time of penance as we take 40 days to abstain from those things which bring us personal gratification and instead we are called to do acts of charity for others, and attempt to carve out some quiet time during our day to pray and get closer to God in order to obtain the fruit of spiritual growth. These traditions are important and significant no doubt.
However, I have found that penance can sometimes be easier than celebration.

Personally, for me the past couple of years have been somewhat about doom and gloom for an array of reasons, mostly the radical politics we are living through, but also personal struggles have not exactly avoided me, and why should they? As Catholics, we pretty much atone for 40 days, except of course for Easter Sunday. No doubt Easter Sunday is an amazing day and great cause for celebration. But I believe Christ already suffered and died on the Cross for me, so I see no reason to continue to crucify Him year after year.

On Easter Sunday many will be celebrating the resurrection of Christ, again, as will I, but even more of us will be celebrating the breaking of the fast and the chocolate, soft drinks, beer, wine, coffee, deserts, nail biting and all those other things we tend to indulge in during the year, but abstained from during Lent await us once again on Easter.

As hard as it may seem to some to give those things up, its really no big deal. After all, not eating or drinking a favored delight for 40 days is no real sacrifice. Although I have to admit I never crave steak or chicken wings on Fridays as much as I crave it during Lent.

As I sat through mass tonight, I heard as Father spoke to us about celebrations, and I decided that during these next 40 days, I would take the time to celebrate those things and people that I inadvertently take for granted. Of course I will atone and lash myself for all those atrocious things I've said and done or not said and done. However, this year I will make a concerted effort to celebrate.

For instance, I will celebrate my co-workers, those people in my office who have overcome difficult moments in their lives, or who have been supportive during their children's hardships when they really wanted to ring their necks, or the co-workers who struggle financially yet come to work everyday with a good attitude, and especially my dear friend who has overcome a life-threatening challenge and whose big beautiful smile always brightens my day whenever I see him. I Celebrate you.

I celebrate my employers, and their unwavering determination to make the firm a great place to work. Thank you, I celebrate you.
I celebrate mothers. Even though mine is with God, many of you still are lucky enough to have yours, and better yet, your children can still be spoiled by their nanas, grammys, bubbies, abuelitas and grandmas. What a great gift. I Celebrate them.

I celebrate the love, lives and legacies left behind by our dearly departed who are no longer here physically, but whose spirit lives on in our hearts, endlessly. I celebrate them.

I celebrate Our soldiers who have vowed to die for my freedom, regardless of the fact that they don't even know me. I celebrate every single one of them and their families who are doing without; while these heros are at war.

I celebrate your hardships and mine, because we will make it through and once we do, we will be all the better for it. I celebrate our struggles.

I celebrate every unborn child in their mother's womb. I celebrate those who adopt and give loving homes to children who would otherwise not know such a blessing. I celebrate children, especially my own who do such a good job of keeping me in check, everyday. Thank you, I celebrate you.

I celebrate my health, the health of everyone of you, and the health of my husband and children.

I celebrate my friends and the amazing laughter we share everyday; sometimes even to the point of pain or peeing or both, the tears we have cried together or for each other's hardships, and the tolerance each and everyone of you show me every time I just cant keep my opinions to myself. I celebrate you.

Finally and most importantly I celebrate the Master of our Universe, the Alpha and the Omega, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, without whom our time here on earth would just be a pointless journey with no hope of eternal life. May God touch you this Lenten season and may a celebratory heart be yours all year.

Lent, a time for Celebration? Absolutely.

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