

Every year I look forward to Lent. Although I could (and should) do it throughout the year, the 40 days before Easter are a meaningful way for me to slow down and reevaluate. And boy do I need to slow down and reevaluate! At no other time more than during Lent do I feel God asking me to step up to the plate and surrender something to Him that has been pulling me away from Him. And no, I don’t mean chocolate.

Sure, some of us give up sweets, or social networking, or coffee, or wine, or shopping, and that’s fine, because detaching from stuff that may have gained power over us and exercising self-control often serves to awaken our spiritual self. But I don’t think that’s really the kind of surrendering God wants from us. I’m not saying giving up these things is not sacrifice enough for Lent. Trust me, 40 days without chocolate a cranky girl makes. However, I’ve learned that chocolate doesn’t keep me from sitting in peace through Mass, but refusing to move forward with God’s plan does; that social networking is not a barrier between me and Christ, pride is; and that coffee doesn’t harden my heart, resentment does.

Lent is a time to work on ourselves and to remember His suffering and His sacrifice in a meaningful, physical, and spiritual way, so we can prepare to celebrate the Resurrection with full joy. I know the times I gave up just things of the flesh, I didn’t really grow all that much and when Easter came I felt spiritually bummed. That’s why I think we need to challenge ourselves to take a hard look at where we’re struggling and focus our Lenten sacrifices there. We need to truly participate in the Cross in order to be transformed and receive the blessings this sacred season promises.

As for me, my surrendering kicked in a few days early this year, and I pray that tomorrow morning as I receive the blessed ashes, I am given the strength to continue my Lenten challenge: to let go of things of the past so I can find peace, to give up my pride and put love into action, to offer my bitterness for forgiveness — yeah I’m going for broke I know, wish me luck.

Everyone’s journey of Lent is different of course. Whatever you choose to give up, take on,

give in, or offer up, make it something meaningful for you.Ask the Holy Spirit to help you reach a deeper level of holiness and don’t be afraid to do something that will really test you. Live a better Lent this year. Nothing to lose in trying really, but much to gain. Let’s trust that ultimately in our struggle God will transform us. Because Lent isn’t for God you know, it’s for us. I don’t think He wants our chocolate…He wants us!

Have a blessed one my dear friends and family.

Give up complaining–focus on gratitude.
Give up pessimism–become an optimist.
Give up harsh judgments–think kindly thoughts.
Give up worry–trust Divine Providence.
Give up discouragement–be full of hope.
Give up bitterness–turn to forgiveness.
Give up hatred–return good for evil.
Give up negativism–be positive.
Give up anger–be more patient.
Give up pettiness–become mature.
Give up gloom–enjoy the beauty that is all around you.
Give up jealousy–pray for trust.
Give up gossiping–control your tongue.
Give up sin–turn to virtue.
Give up giving up–hang in there!

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