

SPIRITUAL REFLECTION

Think of all the time, effort, and planning that go into making our Christmas celebrations so joyful and memorable. Planning is essential for a positive outcome. We might consider the same approach to Easter. If our Easter celebrates the wondrous grace of the risen Christ that is the fruit of our Lenten practices, we might want to think carefully and plan for how we wish to walk through the forty holy days of Lent.

The practice of offering some special sacrifice for Lent remains a worthwhile endeavor. But to make the Lent of 2013 even more memorable, we might reflect carefully about choosing something to do that we can carry forth into our lives after the forty days of the holy season are past. Wouldn't that make Easter a unique and special grace in our lives? The call of the Lenten season is all about conversion, turning our life in a different direction. At the outset of his public ministry, Jesus proclaims, "Reform your lives. The kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matt 3:2). And so we ask ourselves, "What needs reforming, what needs conversion in my life?" Keep in mind that this Lenten "good work" should be something to continue into my life after Lent is over.

Are there any relationships in my life – with members of my family, with friends, with co-workers – that stand in need of healing? With whom do I need to "make peace?" Am I satisfied with the way I pray each day, or might I give that matter some extra attention? Does God deserve more quality time in my daily life? How might I carve out time in a busy day for the kind of prayer that brings praise to God and refreshment to my own spirit? Do I know any people who could use a cheerful visit or a few words of encouragement? Could my schedule reasonably be adjusted to allow me once each week to visit someone who is lonely and in need of support, just to listen to them and be present to them?

All we have to do for some good ideas about how we might bring the gospel to life this Lent is read through Jesus' Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7). A little extra planning this year might make the celebration of Easter a truly memorable one, in which we can truly see the redeeming grace of Christ's resurrection at work in our lives.

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