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It's Lent: What's your plan?

Kate Childs Graham | Apr. 1, 2011

Every year since I can remember, my godmother has given up the same thing for Lent: Coke and potato chips. As a fellow Coke-and-chip aficionado, I have always thought of this as the utmost sacrifice. I mean, 40 days without Kettle cooked deliciousness? That?s devotion!

Somewhere around middle school, though, our parish priest encouraged us to do something instead of giving up something for Lent. So, my family chose to go to daily Mass before school started. These early morning Masses were so grounding, so reflection-filled. I loved it.

A few weeks ago, I walked into work with ashes on my forehead and my co-workers automatically asked what I was giving up for Lent. The only problem was that I hadn?t decided yet. I felt myself, though, do a momentary juggle in my mind between daily Mass and a Coke/chip fast and then blurt out that I was going to try to go to daily Mass several times a week.

With that I knew that my family?s Lenten traditions, so seeded in my upbringing, have now become my own. That sense of familiarity and continuity, I find, fills me with the Lenten spirit.

Curious to know what other folks? Lenten plan are, I took the question to the world of social media. You?ll see that there are definitely common threads -- and even some consistencies with my family?s traditions. Here are a few of my favorite responses.

- Well, I thought that I would try to limit my computer time and cut back on junk food.
- I'm reading from my Bible every day -- even the Sundays! ;) And I'm trying to cut back on sweets?
- I'm trying to drink a gallon of water every day ... so far, I'm failing miserably. Satan is happy.
- Honestly, for the last ten years or so, I had chosen to not give anything up for Lent due to the limitations that my health already mandates. However, this year, I wanted to try it again. So, the one thing I could think of that I really, really like, which I normally turn to when I want to treat myself, is a nice cold Coke! I have given up soda for Lent.
- I'm trying to be vegetarian and reducing/eliminating some meals at night. So both awareness enhancement and recognition of living like most people eat, who don't have the luxury of 3 meals a day. I love the idea of using Lent as a time personally live out a commitment to honoring men and women who practice Islam...
- I'm trying to give up the snooze button. If I wake up on time I have more time for prayer before I start the day -- and less stress. I failed miserably at it last year so I'm trying again. Usually I switch it up each year, though.
- I gave up alcohol -- first time I've done it! Lots of United Methodists are doing that this year, and giving the money they would've spent on a cocktail to a charitable organization.
- I am practicing slowing down, choosing to not be in a hurry. This translates into a practice of generosity of time and presence.

- French fries and soda...I usually give up fried foods in general, but then I always miss out on those Friday evening fish fries.
- Lent is more of a prayerful journey in our house. Korean Catholics do fast from meat during Lent, so this is a tradition that we do not keep. I am trying to work in more personal prayer and dedicating my yoga classes to simplicity and gentleness in every day life.
- Cookies, candy, and 7-11 coffee. My three indulgences. This is a new one for me.
- There is an employee at work who gets on everyone's last nerve. I'm making every effort to be patient and remember he is loved by God....pray for me...it's not easy.
- I'm not buying any food at work -- making my coffee at home, eating breakfast at home, bringing lunch... and I'm also trying to journal and reflect each day.
- I figure at age 68 I am "retired from Lent" however I don't eat meat on Fridays. And am leading a weekly scripture study here in Sun City Center, FL.

Now, it?s your turn. What are you giving up or doing for Lent?

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