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A season for seeking

Patricia Datchuck Sánchez | Mar. 8, 2014 Spiritual Reflections

If someone were to ask you, "When is your favorite time of the year?" how would you respond? For some among us, the holiday season including Thanksgiving, Christmas and the New Year holds a special charm. It is a time of holy happenings when families and friends can celebrate God and one another, a cherished season that calls upon those who have to share generously with those who have less.

First Sunday of Lent

Genesis 2:7-9, 3:1-7
Psalm 51
Romans 5:12-19
Matthew 4:1-11

Sports enthusiasts may favor football or baseball season; for millions around the globe, the season for soccer's World Cup is especially thrilling. Many among us look forward all year to our week, or weeks, of vacation from work -- a time for adventure, togetherness and recreation. Even a "staycation" can offer an enjoyable experience. Children and students of all ages eagerly await their spring break, and then the summer months off from school. Those who have been steadily at work for decades look forward to the day of their retirement, when their daily routines can be more flexible and relaxing.

As for the seasons of the liturgical year, most of us are probably enthusiastic about the time set apart to remember and celebrate Jesus' resurrection, but we might be less enthused about Lent. It is, after all, a serious season, and rightly so, but Lent is also ripe with fresh opportunities for seeking God and for being found by God anew.

In an effort to describe the experiences that are ours to be had during Lent, author and publisher Jeremy Langford encourages believers to be conscious of "God moments" (*God Moments*, Orbis Books, 2001). Our glimpses of God come and go, says Langford, but even so, we know in our souls when they happen. The trouble with God moments is that we too easily forget them. We go right back to playing hide and seek with God. Sometimes, says Langford, God hides and we find her. Sometimes we hide and he finds us.

Flannery O'Connor was fond of saying that God is inescapable. In her first novel (*Wise Blood*, 1952), she featured a character named Hazel Motes. A veteran of World War II and a vowed atheist after all he had seen and experienced during the war, Motes once spoke of Jesus "moving from tree to tree in the back of his mind, a wild ragged figure motioning him to turn around and come off with him into the dark." However we imagine or experience Jesus, each Lent offers us yet another chance to seek him and be found by him, regardless of who we

are or what we might have done or left undone.

If today's first reading had included a few more verses, we would be reminded that perfection is not a requisite for seeking or being sought by God. Indeed, according to the Genesis narrative, immediately after humankind had disobeyed, God came calling, "Where are you?" So also does God come calling after us, not only to assess our sins but to heal and forgive.

In today's second reading, Paul leads us in celebrating the God who seeks after us so earnestly as to take on our human nature and become one of us in Jesus. Through Jesus, and by faith in him, sinners are justified and graced with salvation.

Today's Gospel beautifully voices the fact that Jesus became one of us in all things except sin. When confronted with temptation, Jesus did not wither; he approached his tempter with the power of God's word and the strength of the Spirit. This is the spiritual strategy he has left with us as we continue to seek and be found by God, especially during the weeks of Lent. Let us be open to God moments and be willing to find God in all the traditional places as well as those that are less traveled. Of course we seek and find God in prayer, in the sacred texts, through the liturgy and sacraments and in the inscrutable mysteries and ever-evolving wonders of the world around us. During Lent, however, we are challenged to seek God in the silences that exist between and behind the sacred proclamations. There, in those silences, we will learn how to listen to the needs of others and tend to them in a manner befitting a son or a daughter of God. There, we will learn that the God we seek is waiting to be found and fed and sheltered and served. We need only look; we need only listen.

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