

# Lent Begins February 26

## Guidelines for Your *Best Lent Ever*

Don't just give up chocolate this Lent. Become more proactive. Try something inspirational...something maybe even life changing. Here are some ideas/dates you might find worthwhile:

✝ Lent begins on Ash Wednesday, February 26. Masses with the distribution of ashes will take place at St. Mary's at 6 AM, 9:30 AM, and 7 PM. No better way to get Lent off on the right foot!

✝ We encourage all parishioners, young and old, to enroll in Dynamic Catholic's *Best Lent Ever* program. Just register at this website- <https://dynamiccatholic.com/best-lent-ever> - and receive a daily



email during Lent consisting of a short inspirational video (~3 minutes or so in length) designed to help all of us unlock our potential and become the best version of ourselves. Best of all—it's free!

✝ CATHOLIC CHURCH RULES FOR FASTING & ABSTINENCE—Ash Wednesday and Good Friday are obligatory days of fasting and abstinence for Catholics. In addition, Fridays during Lent are obligatory days of abstinence.

fries, rice, vegetable, slaw, dessert, drink. Cost for Adults is \$9, Kids 6-12 \$5, \$30 Family Max. Plus, you could win the weekly 50-50 drawing!

✝ Stations of the Cross will take place on all Fridays during Lent, with the exception of Good Friday, at 5:30 PM in the church.

✝ Lent is an opportunity to attend an extra Mass during the week as part of your Lenten journey. Masses are held Monday thru Friday morning at 7 AM. On Fridays, when school is in session, there is a Mass at 2 PM. Also, don't forget the Thursday evening Holy Hour starting with the Rosary at 5:00, followed by Adoration, Exposition, and Benediction. Come spend time with the Lord this Lent.

✝ The Sacrament of Reconciliation is available at the following times: Monday-Friday 6:25 AM-6:55 AM  
Wednesday—Noon-1 PM  
Thursday—6-6:45 PM  
Saturday—2:30-3:30 PM

Something to add to your Lenten repertoire.

✝ Annual Penance Service will take place on March 31 in the church at 7 PM. Several priests will be on hand to hear confessions that evening. More information in our March newsletter.



### Voice of St. Mary's Parish Monthly Newsletter

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✝ The beginning of Lent also means the Knights of Columbus Fish Frys. The Knights will be feeding the flocks from 5-7 PM on Ash Wednesday, February 26, and on the following Fridays during Lent: March 6, March 13, March 20, and April 3. No Fish Fry on March 27 due to



WATCH Weekend. Menu includes baked cod, fried pollock, fried shrimp, grilled cheese, mac & cheese, French



✝ Like we did last year, our weekend liturgies will feature many of our traditional Catholic practices, including singing or reciting The *Kyrie Eleison* for the "Lord Have Mercy;" *Sanctus* for the "Holy, Holy, Holy;" and the *Agnus Dei* for the "Lamb of God."



# Little Disciples Preschool Blessed & Building

St. Mary's School Principal Karen Jones could hardly be blamed for having a couple of tears in her eyes. The ceremony blessing the new area of the school that will house the Little Disciples Preschool had just ended, and a bunch of happy families, parishioners, and school staff had left, but Mrs. Jones wanted to milk the moment just a little longer.

"This was exactly as I hoped it would be way back when we started to talk about adding this program to our school," the smiling principal remarked. "This (ceremony) was perfect!"



As part of the culmination of Catholic Schools Week, the entire school and staff, families of incoming registered students for the preschool, and many parishioners attended a Ceremonial Blessing of the new facility, located in the former spot that housed the St. Vincent de Paul Food Pantry. The renovation, being done by McCoy Construction, had already begun, but there was plenty of room for the huge crowd in attendance.

With the future students wearing their official Little Disciples t-shirts (designed by Development Director Danielle Gill) and posing in ceremonial hard hats, holding golden work shovels and hammers, Father Adam led the ceremony, asking God's grace to keep the workers safe during construction and to provide a quality environment for the kids once the school is opened this fall. All those in attendance received a traditional sprinkling of holy water at the end of the service.



Following an enthusiastic breakout by the students, everyone slowly departed, leaving Mrs. Jones to soak it all in. "Work seems to be ahead of schedule," she mentioned. "Exit doors to the parish hall will be added, and then the tough part will be the new bathrooms being put in."

But we are so excited! Having the only ALL-DAY preschool in Pontiac provides families with an excellent option, and we are very proud of what St. Mary's has to offer."

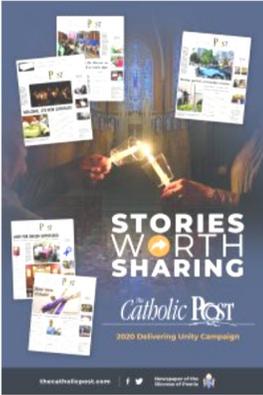
The class currently has eight students registered; with openings still available for the upcoming year. Mrs. Carol Hepner will be the teacher for the class.

**Now registering for Kindergarten and Preschool**

**Play,  
Learn,  
& Grow...  
Together!**

**Join  
Our  
Family**

# St. Mary's News & Tidbits



Per Bishop Jenky: "We all have stories to share. Family stories. Work or school stories. Travel stories. In living our Catholic faith, we also share stories about how our lives have been impacted by the greatest story in history – the love of Jesus and His Church.

We are blessed in the Diocese of Peoria to have a newspaper that tells stories exceptionally well. In 2019, THE CATHOLIC POST was judged as the second best newspaper of its kind in the United States and Canada. Whether shared on newsprint, online, or via social media, the stories generated by THE CATHOLIC POST offer invaluable

support for Catholics living in central Illinois. They tell the living story of our family of faith – from the next pew to across the globe. They inspire, challenge, and unite us. These are truly 'Stories Worth Sharing.'

THE CATHOLIC POST is beginning its 2020 Delivering Unity Campaign. I strongly urge your support and readership. The subscription rate is \$30, but larger gifts in support of the mission are welcomed. Subscribe online at [thecatholicpost.com](http://thecatholicpost.com); call 1-800-340-5630; or send a check made out to THE CATHOLIC POST to PO Box 1722, Peoria, IL 61656"...

*\*\*\*We strongly encourage support and readership of our diocesan newspaper, THE CATHOLIC POST. We hope all members of our parish will use this valuable resource for Catholic living in our diocese. Follow THE CATHOLIC POST on Facebook to get breaking news first and share stories of faith with your friends and family.*

\*\*\*Date/Place set for Gonzaga 10 – All high school age youth in our parish are invited to attend *Gonzaga 10* during the weekend of March 7-8 at Tri-Point High School in Cullom. Application forms can be found on the back tables of the church and may be turned in to either Lindie or Debbie Alsdorf.

## GONZAGA 2020

\*\*\*A note to remind everyone who may have attended Masses out at the hospital either during the week or on weekends that no Masses will be offered at the Chapel until further notice. Father Roche is recovering from cataract surgery, and hopefully he will be totally healed and back in action in early March.

\*\*\*WANTED—A FEW GOOD WOMEN AND MEN- We need USHERS folks, people who are willing to serve our parish in a hospitable manner. The position involves helping people find a pew if necessary, be responsible for the weekly collection at Mass, and ensure that all things are in line for the next Mass on the schedule. Pretty simple. We are also looking for people interested in becoming GREETERS at Mass, people who like to smile and make others feel welcome when they come to Mass: a smile and a

## Ushers & Greeters

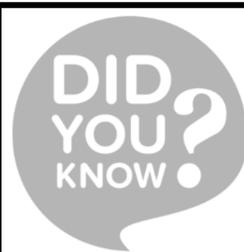


“Hello! How are you doing?” All Weekend Mass times could use a few more volunteers, but especially the Saturday Mass at 4 needs our help. Young (including High school age) or old– you are all welcome! Contact the parish office (815-844-7683).

\*\*\*Something to look forward to—According to Music Director Justin Lindsey, the plan is by the end of February that St. Mary's will be having our SMS choir students join in singing for the liturgy at Mass once a month! Keep your eyes on the bulletin for specific Mass time for this event..



\*\*\*WATCH Weekend—hosted by St. Mary's March 27-29. It is an amazing weekend filled with prayer, worship and so much more. For more information please pick a flyer in the back vestibule or contact Kimberly Davis by email at [kimberlydavis0823@hotmail.com](mailto:kimberlydavis0823@hotmail.com) or by phone at 309-533-2558.



### ...why Catholics genuflect when they walk into church???

Historically speaking, the act of genuflecting on one knee comes from court etiquette and was done while in the presence of a medieval king or noble. It was a sign of respect as well as a pledge of service.

Christians adopted this custom over time, and it became fully integrated into the liturgy of the Roman Rite by the 16th century. The left knee was always used to give reverence to a king and so to distinguish the Christian usage of the custom, Christians would genuflect in church on the right knee to God.

God has always been known to Jews and Christians as a king who is rich in mercy and boundless in love. To give honor to that "King of Love," Christians thought it fitting to pay respect and honor to him by genuflecting every time they entered his "court."

This meant bending on one knee whenever they passed in front of the tabernacle — the little house in every Catholic church that holds the Blessed Sacrament. For Catholics we believe that Jesus is truly present, Body, Blood, soul and divinity in the Holy Eucharist and so when we genuflect, we do so because we are in God's presence.

The Catechism affirms this teaching, "In the liturgy of the Mass, we express our faith in the real presence of Christ under the species of bread and wine by, among other ways, genuflecting or bowing deeply as a sign of adoration of the Lord (CCC 1378)."

This also means that Catholics should *only* genuflect when there is a tabernacle present with the Precious Body within it. There are times in the liturgical year, Good Friday, for example, when the tabernacle is emptied and the doors are open. Since the Eucharist is not within the tabernacle, Catholics do not need to genuflect before getting into the pew. A simple bow is substituted whenever the Eucharist is not present.

A practical tip to know if it is appropriate to genuflect in a Catholic church is to look for the red sanctuary lamp. If it is lit, that means Jesus is present and the proper response is to genuflect to show your love and honor. As a reminder, Catholics are only asked to genuflect while passing before the tabernacle. That means, if a Catholic church has the tabernacle in a separate chapel of Eucharistic reservation, you only genuflect when walking by it, not every time you enter the main body of the church.



Single genuflection

# Super Saints of the Month

## 3rd Grade

The third graders learned how to divide in math, and in science, they learned about force in motion. In religion, they learned about Jesus and his death and Resurrection. They learned about the Paschal Mystery. They also learned about important people in our history. They learned about people who changed history like Martin Luther King Jr, Harriet Tubman, and Abraham Lincoln. They wrote a cinquain poem about famous people, and they also learned to read and make timelines. The class made a timeline about the formation of communities. The students will soon choose their famous person to start their Living Poster Project.



## 6th Grade

The 6th grade class has been learning a great deal in religion and math this month. In math, they are learning about dividing fractions and decimals and the Euclidean Algorithm. They are working on finishing their second module in their new Eureka Math program. In literature, they are reading the book *Holes* by Louis Sachar. In religion, they are studying Moses and the covenant he made with God. The question they have been asked is, "What does obedience mean (really hearing God), and what does our will look like in that?" Abraham has proven to be a very good example for us especially when it comes to obedience. This year for their field trip, the students and the Grace Christian 6th grade are going to Challenger Learning Center at Heartland College in Bloomington. Caterpillar is paying all expenses for a field trip for all the schools in Livingston County for the next three years. At the Challenger Learning Center, they will be given a mission to complete. The students and teachers are very excited for this experience and can't wait for their mission to begin.



## Holy Corner

On January 24th, the 7th graders traveled to the Cathedral of Saint Mary of the Immaculate Conception in Peoria for Mass for the Unborn. The goal of the mass was to bring awareness of life for unborn children. At the same time, the March for Life was happening in Washington D.C. Bishop Jenky led the Mass, which included the Knights of Columbus and amazing music. After Mass, the class went to the Newman Center at Bradley University, so the students could get a tour and talk about what Catholic students can experience while at Bradley University while pursuing their faith and education.

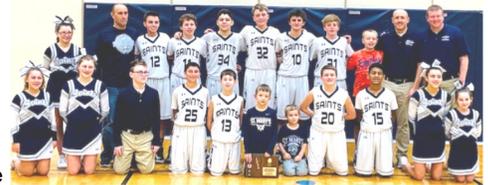


<b>13</b>	<b>End of the 3rd Quarter</b> <b>First Reconciliation</b>
<b>20</b>	<b>3rd/4th St. Patrick's Basketball Game</b> <b>Report Card day</b> <b>Early Dismissal for Spring Break</b>

## Boys Basketball

First round of the 7th grade 1A Regional began January 25th in Saunemin. St. Mary's won their first game by a landslide against the Donovan Bobcats. In the second round of regionals, the Saints won against Hopkins Park Lorenzo Smith by a score of 32-18. In the Championship game, we won against Mazon-Verona-Kinsman 47-27. On Wednesday, February 5th the Saints took on the Marseilles Milton Pope Pilots in the 1A Sectional and defeated them by 11 in front of a packed gym. This win advanced the boys into the Elite 8 of the IESA State Tournament on Saturday, February 8th in East Peoria at East Peoria Central Junior High.

The 8th grade boy's basketball team won their 1A Regional game Thursday, February 6th against Ransom-St. Michael School, 58-29. The Saints were also victorious in the Sectional Championship on February 12th against Elwood Grade School and earned a trip to the state tourney at Macon Meridian High School.



## Volleyball

The St. Mary's Volleyball teams are having a very good start to their season. The 5th/6th grade teams played in the Ridgeview tournament, taking home a couple wins. The 6th grade team played in the Morris Saratoga Tournament and played hard. The seventh and eighth grade teams have played very well and began the Livingston County Tournament



February 10th. The eighth graders had their eighth grade night on the 22nd against the Pontiac Junior High Warriors.



## Kindergarten

During Lent, the Kindergarten class is talking about what gifts God gives them and what they can give to God. They are also thinking of words they can use in their Fatherhood Essay. On the 100th day of school, they did things involving 100 and wrote 100 words. In math, they learned how to make 2 parts to make whole. In social studies, they learned the difference between a city and state and where we live. The kids were very excited about their Valentines Day party.



## 1st Grade



This month the first grade classroom has been very busy. In math, they started using number charts. The first graders have learned that going up and down is ten, and going side to side is going up by ones. In English, they are writing Fatherhood Essays. The Fatherhood Essays are about father figures in their lives. For Lent, they will be making a crown of thorns made with paper and toothpicks.

When they show good behavior, they will get to take one thorn out. Along with the crown of thorns, they will be saying a decade of the Rosary each day.

## 2nd Grade

With Lent coming up, the second graders have been concentrating on doing good deeds and are getting ready for their first Reconciliation. For science, they've been learning how to write like scientists by doing science experiments and recording their results afterwards. In math class, many were excited to learn how to subtract two-digit numbers and skip count fives, tens, and hundreds.



# 100 DAYS OF SCHOOL!

At left: Students could dress up like they were 100 years old on the 100th day of school!



## 4th Grade

The fourth grade class finished studying about natural disasters, hurricanes, and tornadoes. They created a model hurricane and made a tornado in a bottle. They also just finished doing long division. Starting on Ash Wednesday, they will be doing a tree called the "Easter Jesus Tree." Every day until Easter, they will have a symbol that goes along with the reading of that day. Also, the 4th graders prepared very hard for the Mass they did on Valentines Day.



## 5th Grade



The fifth graders began their Iditarod unit. The Iditarod is a dog sled race in Alaska. The kids will be doing team building activities during their Iditarod lessons. They will go to Yorkville to do a STEM activity at the Outdoor Education Center. For Lent the students will be encouraged to attend an extra Mass other than the weekend or the school Mass on Friday. Mrs. Legner will also be talking to them about not only sacrificing physical objects but also helping others.

## 7th Grade

February was crunch time for the seventh graders as they prepared for the annual Cultural Fair. The students worked on their fact cards for their posters and began preparing their poster boards. The seventh graders will be presenting their poster boards for the Cultural Fair February 21st from 11:30-1:30 in the Parish Hall. Since it is the Lenten season, the seventh graders are giving up three things, and Mrs. Krenz is teaching them about paying it forward for our Lord Jesus Christ and teaching them about the Gospel of Lent in church.



## 8th Grade



In Mrs. Cheek's 8th grade literature class, the students are reading a fiction novel called *The Outsiders*, written by S.E. Hinton. In the 7th grade class, they are writing their Cultural Fair papers on their countries with the fair being held on February 21. The 7th graders are reading a fiction novel called *Tuck Everlasting* by Natalie Babbitt. The 6th graders are reading *Holes* and are working on various parts of speech and identifying errors in their writing.

On February 1, Rhiannon and Maria Long, along with Holly and Riley Rogers, joined over 100 people in spending the night in their cars in Bloomington to raise money for Home Sweet Home Ministries. This was their third year participating, and every year the ladies are humbled by what homeless individuals experience everyday. One of the biggest things they have learned is that even the smallest gesture can make a difference. The event raised \$69,000 for the Homeless.

# How Are You Going to Influence Your Environment?

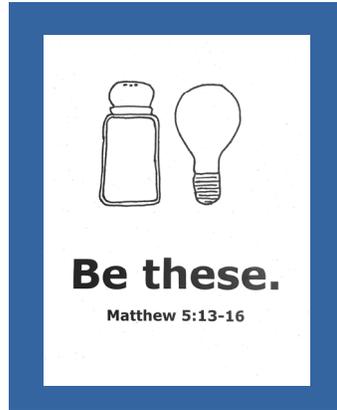
By Father Adam

Before I left for my canonical retreat, I saw these posters hanging throughout the halls of our school:

This reference to the Gospel of Matthew from the 5th Sunday in Ordinary Time is a great reminder to each of us for every day, but possibly something to ponder as we journey through Lent.

Mrs. Kelly Krenz's 6, 7, and 8th grade religion classes have been discussing the Sunday Gospel prior to hearing it at weekend Mass. During this Lectio Divina, or "Divine Reading," students read, pray, and act on the Word of God. Students recognized that they were each called to be the salt and be the light of the world. They reflected on how they could stay salty, and how they could stay bright. By doing these things, they could have a powerful influence on their environment.

Bishop Robert Barron was thinking along the same lines as our St. Mary's students when he wrote the following in his "Daily Gospel Reflections" from February 9, 2020:



MATTHEW 5:13-16

*"Friends, in today's Gospel Jesus asks, "If salt loses its taste, with what can it be seasoned?" That question ought to bother us as much today as it did Jesus' audience long ago. What he means is that a weak Christianity is a disaster for the world, for it depends upon the Christian Church in order to become what it was meant to be.*

*Consider the truly awful gun violence in the streets of Chicago and other large American cities. A vibrant Christianity would actively get in the way of this affront to human dignity; vibrant Christian churches would rub salt into the earth of this violence; vibrant Christian witness would be a city set on a hill.*

*Consider the tens of millions of unborn eliminated since Roe v. Wade. I would be willing to bet that the vast majority of the mothers and fathers of these murdered children came from a Christian background. Why wasn't their Christianity strong enough to function as salt and light? Why wasn't their faith illuminating enough to shine a light into the darkness of what they were doing?*

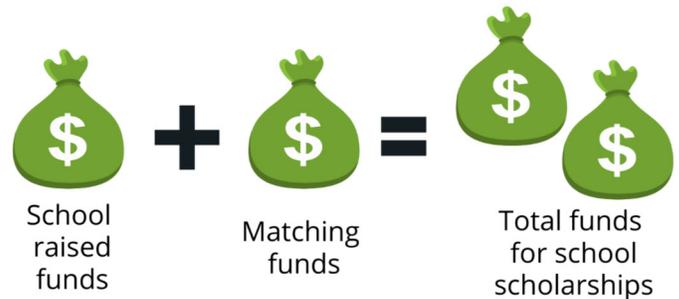
*The clear implication is that, without vibrant Christians, the world is a much worse place."*

May you have a fruitful Lenten journey and discover ways that you can be the salt and the light so that Jesus and His Church may be glorified.

## MATCHING GIFT CHALLENGE:

Through the Invest in Kids Act, students living at or below the federal poverty level can receive a scholarship to attend St. Mary's School. Scholarships cover up to 100% of private school tuition and fees. We have 25 students who have qualified and are on the waiting list, hoping to receive a scholarship for the 2020-2021 school year. We are pleased to announce that a generous donor has created a 1-to-1 matching gift program. For every dollar donated, this donor will match the gift up to \$25,000! We need to raise \$25,000 by April 1 to unlock the full gift. All donations must be made directly to Empower Illinois, our Scholarship Granting Organization. Donors will receive a 75% state tax credit for their donation. If you can help, call the school office at (815) 844-6585 or email Development Director Danielle Gill at [gill.danielle@stmaryspontiac.org](mailto:gill.danielle@stmaryspontiac.org).

## What is a matching gift program?



## Giving Back Love This Lent

By Alison Tarr

When a person does something for me, my first response is (hopefully) gratitude. Often times my next thought is, how can I repay them? Or, what can I do in return?

I think about this scenario from an earthly standpoint of acts of charity and receiving favors from others. But as I look at the blessings in my life and the wonderful family and friends I have, I realize that I should also desire to thank and give back to the One who gave me those gifts.

We have a Good Father.

I started thinking about giving back to a Father who is constantly giving.

We can offer our best to Him, but our best is the best because of Him. Not because of anything we have done on our own.

So...what gift or thanks do you give the person that has everything?

What can you offer someone who has everything good because He IS goodness?

Well, I think that question can be answered by asking what every Father

wants of their son or daughter. What does a parent want more than anything from their son or daughter? Love.

Love...in spending time with one another, through prayer.

Love...in being in communion with His son Jesus, through the Eucharist.

Love...in coming to Him for forgiveness, through the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

Love...as Jesus says in Scripture: whatsoever you do for the least of my people, you also do for me (Matthew 25:40). Through works of charity, kindness, and giving of self.

So this Lent I challenge myself to have the same "how can I repay you" mentality not only with the people I walk with on earth, but also with the source of all Goodness, God our Father.

He desires it. And He's willing to keep giving love to us, no matter what we give in return.

But I'm going to at least *try* to give back love.



# Catholic Schools Week 2020 Highlights

Prayer, Saint Dress-up, Classroom Fun, Badminton, Hot Dogs, Bingo All Part



Photos Courtesy of Danielle Gill & Kelly Krenz



# From The Back Page

by Mick Peterson

As Ash Wednesday approaches and we enter the season of Lent, I think the question in front of us is NOT "Do we need Lent?" Instead, the focus should probably be, "Why do we need Lent?" What makes these forty days so special each year?



The answer is pretty obvious, although some "diehards" may not want to admit it. We're sinners. We're sinners, and we need to get our lives in order. I remember when I was a child growing up, the total focus during Lent was what I was "giving up." Candy. Pop. Hostess cakes. Desserts. In-between meal snacks. Sound familiar? I was taught that Lent was only about what I was taking out of my life. In a way, it's almost like dieting. Lent is NOT about dieting. It involves a change of lifestyle. I can always do

better; WE can always improve. Lent reminds us all that we screw up; we're fallible in need of a God who is Infallible. But oftentimes, we get caught in a rut of doing the same things over and over through the years, and therefore Lent can lose its meaning.

So, based on what appears on Page 1 of this edition of *The Voice*, I humbly offer these suggestions that eliminate the negative aspects of Lent (the "giving up") and develop a simple plan to make Lent more meaningful. With a little effort, which of these could you and your family members do?

1. Attend Mass on Ash Wednesday. Ash Wednesday traditionally has the largest non-Holy day attendance rate for Masses among Catholics. There's meaning to the day.
2. Come to at least one of the KC Fish Frys. What, you ask? A Fish Fry? How does that help me in Lent? FELLOWSHIP is a key ingredient in the total development of the Catholic principles. No better place than that. Great food and good company.

3. Consider attending the WATCH weekend or if you are a high schooler, the Gonzaga weekend. Both will be uplifting and inspirational.
4. Spend 30 minutes with Our Lord on Fridays with the Stations of the Cross. Try this once.
5. It might be tough with your work schedule, but attend one extra Mass during the week.
6. Thursdays at 5pm we host a weekly Holy Hour, complete with Adoration, Exposition, and Benediction. Try that once. If that time doesn't work, maybe fill in for one of the openings in the Adoration Chapel.
7. Our Lenten penance service is March 31 at 7pm. Put that on your calendar or any of the numerous opportunities offered each week.
8. Finally, join *Best Lent Ever*. It's a beautiful way to begin the day with soul-searching ideas, and if you read Matthew Kelly's *Rediscovering the Saints*, the daily references to that book will only add deeper meaning.

Just think – attend ONE extra Mass during Lent, ONE Holy Hour, ONE Stations of the Cross, ONE Fish FRY, ONE time to the Confessional. Maybe a retreat weekend too. And a daily email to get you started. None of this is negative, and you just might find it will make the seasonal fasting and abstinence that much easier to understand and appreciate. And if you want, you can still eat chocolate AND desserts. Or come up with your own ideas that could work better for you.

We have to learn that we need to depend on God...totally. In my case, I have to remind myself what IS really important. Eternity. Judgment Day. Cuz, in the end, that's what it's all about. Not my house, my car, the way I spend my retirement. If I don't have my act together, none of that will matter when I face the Eternal Judge.

So, I need Lent. After examining matters, I believe I actually WANT Lent. I need Reconciliation, I need those daily reminders from *Best Lent Ever*, I need sacrifice, fasting, and abstinence. I need to get my act together.

I invite you to do the same. One thing, one day at a time. You'll be glad you did.

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