

Message from Amy

Easter netted our household about as much candy as Halloween did six months ago. And now that Lent is over, I can gladly do my part to help empty the candy dish of the malted milk eggs the Easter Bunny left behind.

Like most Christians of the Protestant tradition, and unlike my Catholic friends, I did not grow up observing Lent by “giving up” something. I don’t recall attending an Ash Wednesday service or a Maundy Thursday or Good Friday service until well after college. Like many churches, those I attended went straight from the triumph of Palm Sunday to the exultation of Easter.

But over the past several years, I have developed a deep appreciation for the Christian season that has just passed us. Lent (40 days between Ash Wednesday and Easter, minus the Sundays) commemorates the 40 days and nights that Jesus spent in the desert being tempted by Satan (Luke 4:1-13; Mark 1:12-13; Matthew 4:11). During this time, many people give up something they like, such as chocolate or a favorite television show. Others forgo negative activities, such as gossiping or arguing with a spouse. Many others add something positive to their routine, such as prayer, Bible study or reading a devotional.

Whether something is taken away from or added to one’s life, it is intended help us examine our relationship with God, and make some room in our busy lives for God to speak to us.

To me, the entirety of Lent – from Ash Wednesday to Easter Sunday – is what church is all about. Lent is about living the full spectrum of life: the difficult times, the tempting times, the times of relief (when you can have that chocolate on Sundays), the times of betrayal and death, the times of triumph, and the times we know the ultimate victory, joy, love, and hope that God has for us.

So, I confess I miss Lent. I think it is good for my soul to tell myself “no” from time to time, to forgo an indulgence, to remember to pray, and to read what others have to say about Christ. But just because we are now in glorious Eastertide, and have set our sites on the celebration of Pentecost, that is no reason for any of us to stop whatever practices we may have started during Lent.

If you, like me, gave something up for Lent and added something positive to your life, let’s encourage each other to keep it up. And may these practices become good habits that will last our whole lives, and help us celebrate even more fully the glory of this Eastertide season!

Easter Blessings,

Rev. Amy Lignitz Harken

Text: Acts 9:10-19a. Title: “The Bad Guys”