

Sacrifices Can Make Room for Time with Others

Greetings!

“What are you giving up for Lent?” The question is common with school-aged children through older adults. Giving something up—making a sacrifice—is a type of fasting. Fasting, along with prayer and almsgiving, are disciplines practiced in a particular way during the season of Lent.

The practice of giving something up during Lent is so common that it can be easy to forget its purpose. Parents can explain to children that a Lenten sacrifice is not a diet, even if it involves forgoing sweets. It is not a self-improvement project, even though it helps an individual become more disciplined. It’s important for children to understand that the ultimate end of a sacrifice is to make it easier to be the person God has called us to be. Making sacrifices during Lent can be a way to return to God with the whole heart.

Giving up a luxury reminds us that we have all that we need.

To that end, people might sacrifice something that is keeping them from loving God and their neighbor more fully. Parents might suggest to their children that they spend some time brainstorming about what keeps them from being more present to God and others. This might bring older children and teens to examine their time on the phone or with social media. Children might consider their time on the screen or their ways of being with family and friends. They might examine how present they are while with family. Are they thinking only about what they want? Perhaps a child could be present with a parent by helping with a chore. Or a child might determine how to be present to a brother or sister. What could they



Family members can give something up to be present to each other.

do together to grow in relationship? A person who focuses on the negative might want to give up complaining and try to be grateful. Cultivating gratitude to God enriches the spiritual life.

Giving up sweets can help a person develop self-control. Giving up going to the movies cultivates patience, especially when everyone else has seen the latest release. Choosing to eat simple meals and donating the cost savings to an organization that assists the poor can aid a family in growing in justice. Habits of self-control, patience, and justice are essential elements of living out our lives as Christians.

Any Lenten sacrifice can help us to be grateful for the gifts God has given us. Giving up a luxury reminds us that we have all that we need. Choosing to sacrifice something we usually do automatically offers a reminder, with every break in our routine, of God’s presence with us. We become more open to listening to God’s voice and to knowing who we are called to be. In so doing, we prepare to celebrate the Resurrection with great joy!