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Journeying into a different kind of Lent by Annemarie Paulin-Campbell

This year the journey into Lent feels different. In one sense, given that we have been living in a somewhat “Lenten” space for the past year, we may feel some resistance to starting Lent again. This Covid pandemic has been a time of letting go of many of our customary pleasures and a time of difficult sacrifices.

It’s also a time when many of our usual Lenten practices might not be so easy. Many of us do not yet feel safe enough to attend church physically – and numbers are limited. We may feel saddened by the knowledge that we will probably not be able to attend Easter services for a second year running.

So what might this year’s Lenten invitation be? What is God longing to give us? Often, when we go through tough times, our relationship with God can be negatively impacted. Perhaps we have been in a time of spiritual desolation where it has been difficult to pray or feel God close.

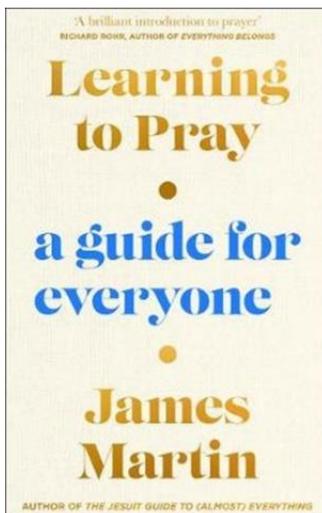
We can make the mistake of thinking that God is demanding more of us when, in fact, God wants to offer us something. As Jesus says to the woman at the well who is drained, depleted and thirsting for something more, he says to us: “If you only knew what God is offering; and who it is that is saying to you, “Give me a drink,” you would have been the one to ask and he would have given you living water.” (John 4:10).

Perhaps God is longing to do one of these things for you this Lent:

- To give you a renewed sense of hope
- To allow you to rest into his love
- To console you in your grief
- To provide you with peace amid the uncertainty
- To reignite a sense of purpose in you
- To draw you into deeper intimacy with God’s self

Ask God for what you need and desire in these days of Lent. Let it be a time to receive and be filled so that you can reach out to others from that place of renewed strength. God knows that we are carrying the strain of collective trauma. The physical, emotional and spiritual toll that the pandemic has taken on us is significant. This is, I suggest, a year to give attention to practising some of the lesser-known disciplines of self-care, spending time in nature; setting appropriate boundaries and taking time to simply ‘be’ in the company of God.

If we do this, we will surely come to Holy Week with the capacity to journey more deeply with Jesus, our friend, through his passion and resurrection. We will experience that he is with us now as we live the Paschal mystery of death and resurrection in our own lives.



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