

Final Lenten Countdown

Soooo....how did your Lent go? Are you feeling lighter as the weight of what we think is holding us down is lifted in the spirit of contrition and thoughtful practice? I unexpectedly found the Lenten Meditations produced by our very own Episcopal Relief and Development to be of great inspiration this year. Every day I was given something contemplative to think about, a few breaths to slow down and remind myself that it's not all about the sugar.

Speaking of giving up sugar ...



This Lent found our family sick. A lot. While I managed to find myself thankful that this is the first time in Georgie's sweet six years that I've taken his temperature, I am now also grateful that the stomach flu, which hit three times, has hopefully been starved and killed by all those Clorox wipes I've employed as my mercenary troops. The silver lining is, I wasn't as tempted by sugar as I normally have been as I was on the BRAT diet (bananas, rice, applesauce and toast- lots of toast). I also found that the "only" food I could imagine eating was a smoothie which is fine, but then I somehow justified popsicles because it's essentially a smoothie on a stick, right?

Now that we are well, my hunger has come back with a vengeance. I found myself wanting to make a baked blueberry pancake for breakfast...which turned into eating it for lunch and somehow justifying it for a second lunch and then begging Jim to just eat the rest of it before things got crazy and I was eating it with whip cream, chocolate sauce, and- why not?- some sprinkles as it's my "meal".

What I've thought a lot about this year, is your Lent is yours, or as the young people would say, You do you (in Lent). Why yes, I'll eat blueberry pancakes for breakfast and I might even add some syrup- but for me, I draw the line at eating some syrup with a side of pancakes or adding whip cream. A friend of mine who is observing Lent with me for the first time by giving up sugar sorrowfully admitted that she had eaten some chocolate- given to her by a well-meaning friend when her dog died. I justified it FOR her- even Jesus hadn't been put to THAT test in the desert. Forgiving herself, she admitted it was dark chocolate so not even that much sugar, right?

I'm sure we all have our tempters and our naysayers (and not just the ones in our head). My mom likes to remind me that there are extra days in Lent to make up for Sundays, when you shouldn't fast. That's fine for her but I know I'd unconsciously start stockpiling sweets to eat which again isn't the point for me. I can still remember my father saying that Lent was over the Saturday before Easter, so go ahead...but I can't, I've made it too far and want to make it until Easter morning, Portland time, no matter that it's been Easter on the other side of the world for hours.

Having kids and fasting from sugar is another category of temptation I never considered. It's one thing to avoid sugar, but what about the 31st of the month at Baskin Robbins which celebrates with cheap cones? Sure, I could just pretend to forget about it (my kids are still a little blessedly slow when it comes to keeping track of these things) but they're not the ones giving up sugar. So I sat and watched as they ate in the excruciatingly slow way that only kids can eat ice cream and no way justifying a lick to "catch it before it drips off" as I normally do.

I know where I miss sugar and that's where I try to abstain. Right now I'm drinking my cup of morning tea and what I wouldn't give to have just a touch of a sweet to go with it but instead I'll eat some almonds and count my blessings. And keep counting them as I face my biggest Lenten challenge- helping the Easter Bunny divide up the candy for the baskets.

A Thoughtful Holy Week and Blessed Easter to you!

- Sally