



Office of the Vice President for Mission

TO: The Gonzaga Community
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Happy Lent!

When I was young the only positive aspect of Lent was looking forward to my birthday in the middle of it and realizing that Easter would mark its end. It held a negative image of penance and denial for me.

More recently (in the last 45 years) this image has shifted to something more positive. I take this from the gospel we hear every Ash Wednesday, in which Christ talks to his followers about not putting a proper compartment when we give alms, pray, or fast. These three activities of almsgiving, praying, and fasting speak to our relationships with other people (almsgiving), with God (prayer), and with the material world (fasting). These three relationships are the fundamental relationships in every person's life. As an individual I am related to God, to other people, and to the material world. And so I take as my Lenten theme every year an habitual contemplation of the richness and beauty and goodness of all that surrounds. Furthermore not only am *I* related in these three ways, but they are all interrelated with one another— God to other people, and other people to God; God to creation, and creation to God; other people to creation and creation to other people. Sound confusing? Just think of it all as being part of the ebb and flow of life.

What are some of the thoughts that come to me in these musings? Obviously, there are relationships that may be in need of some corrective attention on my part. I'm far from perfect, God knows. I may be consuming more of the created world than should be my share; or I may have neglected an old friend. But generally my sentiments are those of gratitude and love.

No doubt the imminent arrival of spring will enhance such feelings of love and gratitude. Have a Happy Lent!