



Mary and Bob often find themselves sharing common ground when it comes to philosophy and ministry. When approaching ministerial concerns from different angles, He Said - She Said is a venue to share differing perspectives. WE Said reflects some mutual food for thought. (And then again, sometimes we're exactly on the same page - just sayin' - Bob)

Here We Go Again

Bob and Mary's Perspective

Are you one of those people who diligently “gives up something” for Lent? Each year, millions give up things like gossip, alcohol, or sweets during Lent as a sign of sacrifice and to exercise self-discipline. The main purpose of “giving up” things in Lent is to bring us closer to God, to prioritize God, and to make God the focal point in the center of our minds and lives. While that is certainly one approach, there is something to be said for “doing” instead of (or in addition to) “giving up” as a reminder to be more intentional about prioritizing our relationship with God.

For several years now, we have used the weekend before Ash Wednesday to focus on spiritual growth in preparation for Lent. Right before life shut down due to the Covid 19 pandemic, we offered a retreat for 100 of our musician colleagues, challenging participants to “roll the block” throughout their Lenten days and pray for the intention that arose to the top. (Sidebar note on this one – perhaps one of the intentions we should have written was not to set the seminary chapel on fire... but we digress...)

Last year, we offered a Lenten Warm-up: a deep dive into the Gospels of the Lenten season. We challenged attendees to be more intentional in connecting to Scripture during Lent. This year, along with a priest friend, we spent an afternoon exploring different prayer techniques. He spoke eloquently about praying Liturgy of the Hours, and how that connects us to Scripture, to the Universal Church, and opens us to a deeper spiritual awakening. We also explored the Sacrament of Anointing of the Sick, Eucharistic adoration, and private “Jesus and Me” time. Father likened the balance of private and public prayer to the process of inhaling and exhaling. You can't have one without the other. If I only attend Mass but don't find time for quiet prayer, it's like only exhaling but not inhaling. We resonate with that analogy.

With this in mind, we offer you, dear readers, this suggestion. Lent is upon us once again. How will these 40 days be transformative for you? If you “give up” something, will you be intentional about your relationship with God, especially in those times when you are missing whatever you gave up? Will this year be just like every other year? Perhaps this is the year to *do something!*



Adding prayer to each day doesn't cost anything other than some time. You could make it a point to stop in a local chapel, perhaps once a week. You could decide you are going to pray Morning Prayer at least a couple times throughout Lent. Maybe you'd like to participate in My Daily Prayers, offered by the Diocese of Cleveland. Like a challenge? Perhaps commit to praying Night Prayer each night of Lent. It is the shortest of the Divine Office – we want to make your commitment achievable, after all. Even offering our Lord five minutes before you climb out of bed in the morning, and five minutes before you go to sleep each night will bring you closer to God. Remember that conversations are a two-way proposition: certainly talk to Him, but also make it a point to settle in quiet and listen for Him.

Want a little more guidance? Check out these websites:

<https://divineoffice.org/>

This free website offers Liturgy of the Hours, in both written and audio formats. Concerned you don't have time to add more to your day? Perhaps you could cue the audio to play in your car during your morning commute.

<https://www.buzzsprout.com/2282374/>

This is the landing page of My Daily Prayers. You could bookmark it in your browser. Prefer a reminder? [Click here to subscribe to My Daily Prayers](#), and a link is emailed each day. Each daily installment lasts seven to eight minutes, and we have found it to be soothing and a peaceful start to the day.

The wonderful thing about engaging in an extra spiritually-nourishing activity (doing something or giving up something), especially during Lent, is that it can develop into a positive, life-giving habit. Many psychologists will say that it takes anywhere from 21 to 66 days to become proficient in some activity. However, after only a couple of weeks, when a new activity is undertaken on a daily basis, a psychological yearning to continue it starts coming into play. The easier the activity, the quicker it can become habitual. For example, Bob has done Morning, Evening and Night Prayer (Liturgy of the Hours) on a regular basis for years. This past Advent, he decided to do something just a little extra for the season, so he engaged in the aforementioned My Daily Prayer, which lasts for an average of 7 minutes each day. By the time Advent was over, it became ingrained in his daily life. Something very simple and easy is now a positive habit.

Whatever you do or give up or however you make Lent a holy time, know that we journey with you. These suggestions are things we have tried and found effective. Have other thoughts? Please share! We are all parts of one body, and there is strength in our connectedness.