

A Fearless Lent

Courage is the most important of all the virtues, because without courage you can't practice any other virtue consistently. You can practice any virtue erratically, but nothing consistently without courage. Maya Angelou

Welcome to the second week of Lent! Lent is one of my favorite seasons. The invitation of this holy season is to create or renew a deeper connection with God; it offers us an intentional time to reflect and ponder those things we might do or things we do *not* do that impair a full and joyous union with God's purposes.

The sacred journey to which we are invited might find us encountering what I sometimes call those spiritual "hard places." Ironically, we might be met with these "hard places" just as we entering a new phase of our spiritual adulthood. This journey takes great courage.

In these times we might find ourselves confronting long held "baggage" that has become a stumbling block. Trembling on the brink of a new and deeper revelation and understanding of God's forgiveness for ourselves and for the world, for example, suddenly finds us confronting old issues we thought were long ago surpassed and forgotten. We might encounter old grief, anger, or fear; it could be a spectrum of things. Have you ever had that experience? Finding ourselves in these hard places may seem like a horrible detour on the way to spiritual fulfillment, but in fact these hard places are gifts; they are invitations to new life---new life unencumbered by old obstacles.

Sometimes it is just as difficult to let go of what we call "negative" emotions, and the behaviors that accompany them, as it is to say goodbye to something that has been life-giving, but has run its course in our lives. Our ability to grow into whole (holy) people, who are able to fully experience God's joy, requires that we face these obstacles honestly and without fear, knowing that Christ is our constant companion along the Way.

Lent is a perfect time to be very intentional about this holy and life-giving process of letting go. Encountered prayerfully, honestly, and courageously, Lent is a powerful and transforming season of faith. It is important to remember that the ashes we placed on our foreheads on Ash Wednesday were created some of the burnt palms of last Palm Sunday (thank you Bruce!). This wonderful tradition highlights the abiding truth that new beginnings often begin in the ashes of the things of the past which we allow to die.

New life out of death is at the heart of the promises of Christ and a foundational tenet of our faith. This is precisely what we are moving toward as we travel these great 40 days into the glorious sunrise of Easter Sunday. Lent, as does all of God's creation in nature, reminds us that the death of the old is a prerequisite for new life to begin. May this Lent bring us the courage to let go of old pain, old un-forgiveness, and all things that keep new and wondrous life out of our reach. The time to claim new life and joy is now!

Wishing all of you a courageous and joyous Lent,

Stephanie+