



# A Time for a Breakthrough!

Prompted by our catechism teachers, as children our first question for the Lenten season was often, "What are you giving up for Lent?" Giving something up for the 40 days of Lent is a custom that, when we were children, helped us enter into the season with a sense of purpose and greater awareness. As we have advanced in age, as youth and adults, we might want to consider looking at Lent in a deeper way. We are probably much more settled into our behaviours and patterns of life and sometimes giving up something is where we begin – and end – our reflection for Lent. It can be tempting to say "I am giving up chocolate" or 'FB' or 'junk food', etc. But without more reflection, it can simply become a way I show God how strong I am. It is more about me than anything else.

Lent is not simply about us 'giving up' something. The real grace is when we recognise that Lent is a season in which God wants to **give us** something. God wants to help us transform our lives and make us more free as people – not just free with God, but in the way we live our lives and love our families, prayer groups, fellowship groups, households, communities, etc.

It is easier for us to simply choose something to give up and thus dismiss Lent! "I am giving up TV for Lent." "I am giving up movies... snacks... beer." We give it up and exercise our willpower for 40 days to prove to ourselves and to God that we can do it. And at the end of Lent we return to what we gave up.

During this Lenten season we might reflect and ask a deeper question: What is God inviting me to change during this Lent? How do I know what God might be stirring in me? I begin by listening to the movements in my heart. Where am I feeling uncomfortable with the choices I am making? With the things I have done? With the habitual ways I respond? The Lord will be speaking to me in those small nagging moments of discomfort in my heart.

Asking what we would like to change about ourselves this Lent requires a little reflection. What pattern of behaviour in my life needs changing? What do I need more of in my life? Patience? Unselfishness? More loving behaviour towards my parents, children, spouse, cell group members, team members, colleagues, etc.?

Each of us can easily think of something that gets in the way of us being loving and self-sacrificing. Too often the ordinary conflicts, divisions and difficulties in my family life/service teams/prayer groups/households, etc. result from simple selfishness on my part. I choose to fight. I choose to defend my opinion. I choose to use things I know about my partner, my children, my parents, my team members, etc. against them. I choose to hurt them.

We may ask: What would it cost me to change this particular behaviour? What would it mean if I did not walk around my family acting crabby all the time? What if I decided to be much more loving and patient with my children, spouse, team members, etc.? What if I did decide to "give

up” something really destructive in my life, like alcohol, pornography, too much time on social networks, chat rooms and friendships...? As I ponder, I might realise that changing a particular way I live is coming to me as a call from God and I don’t have to do it alone. God is moving my heart to reflect on these changes and God will remain faithful and help me to stay open to the grace being offered to me for change.

Paying heed to the Master, the disciples experienced a change in their particular situation of life. The disciples were out in the sea whole night working hard, but they caught nothing (Jn. 21:1-6). Jesus appears to them at day break and at his command, they let the nets down again and they had a great catch. The season of Lent is a time we tune our lives to listen to God, trusting in His Words and moving our lives according to His commands for a greater catch.

I may need help. It may be something that I don’t want to change or acknowledge. I don’t think I can change it. But that is where talking to God can make the difference. I am not doing this alone; I am doing it with God. While asking God’s help, we might ponder upon one of the many healing passages of the Gospel, like Mark 2: 1-12. In this story, a group of friends carried a mat with a paralysed man to Jesus, who was teaching inside a house. So many people crowded around the outside of the house that the friends were unable to get the mat inside. So they went up to the roof and moved aside the tiles and lowered their friend on the mat to Jesus below. The words of the Gospel say that the friends on the roof had “broken through” the tiles to lower their friend into the house for healing. Their breakthrough led directly to the healing.

Where do we need a breakthrough? What is the barrier that keeps us from asking for healing? In our own lives, we need to breakthrough our denials, defensiveness and unwillingness to look at ourselves. Discovering what the barrier is in my life is critical. If we don’t know what the barrier is, these weeks of Lent are a great time to reflect upon it. When we identify the barrier, we have made the breakthrough. That is when Jesus can heal us of it.

This might be a good Lenten penance, because it gets my attention where I live every day. It allows God’s grace into my soul and into the place where my real life exists. That is where Jesus stands with me every day, waiting for me to be lowered from the roof so He can touch me and heal me.

For many of us this might be an experience of the paschal mystery that we celebrate during the Lenten season. In the whole process of the change we bring about in our lives, we go through an experience of the passion, death and resurrection – the struggle and resistance against what we want to change, dying to a pattern of our lifestyle or behaviour pattern and ultimately a breakthrough into a new life and a new freedom.

Wish you all a very fruitful Lenten season!

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