

# Gleaning In The Fields Of Light

## Giving Up Lent For Lent?

By Ken Woodley

Lent can sometimes feel like a complicated intersection on the liturgical calendar and along our spiritual journey.

Should we give something up? If so, what?

I've lived Lent on both sides of that aisle. There have been years when I gave something up—or tried to—and other years when I decided to take something on: reading a new and specific spiritual book every day, for example.

I was raised “old school” where you definitely gave something up, generally some beloved candy, but that hasn't stuck. Gorging myself on chocolate after weeks of abstinence hardly seems the best way to celebrate the glory of Easter.

As I got older, and slightly—perhaps—wiser, I sometimes gave up something that maybe wasn't so good for me anyway. But then I felt bad on Easter when I took it up again. That ain't the way to celebrate Easter, either.

This year, I am taking something up: trying to heighten my awareness on a daily basis that I am a beloved child of God. Trying to make that be my first thought every morning and a constant companion throughout the day.

That would be a wonderful way to celebrate Easter and just keep on keeping on with that discipline for the rest of my life.

The bottom line, in my opinion, is whatever works for you. Whatever helps you on your spiritual journey. If that means giving something up,

then by all means give something up. If taking something on helps you more, then take that something on.

And who says you can't do both? Give something up and take something else on. There are no rules.

Take on two things.

You can take something on because it's good for your health, like walking each day, and using that time for prayerful meditation.

Mix it up. Find what works best for you and your spiritual journey.

Jesus, I believe, wants us to do whatever it is that helps us feel the loving proximity of God. Every day. Not just during Lent.

Lent shouldn't make us feel beaten down or bad about ourselves.

Make Lent work for you instead of you working for Lent.

As I have said before about our Lenten journey: let the ashes remind us of the flame.