

As most of you know, I like to read. . . the other week while on vacation – I read 12 books. Last year I read 75 books – kind of average for me over the last 10 years or so.

You should probably know I spent the last two days in bed with a mild case of the flu – and between fluids and naps – I managed to read 3 books. . .

I think reading is the easiest way to expand one's mind and horizons, a way of igniting the imagination as well as the spirit. . . I spend little time watching television – and fill that time with reading. . . Currently I am reading a murder mystery, a book on hospitality, and one on the Vietnam war ---

I will read most anything except westerns and romance novels. . . When you are a reader, you are constantly coming across quotes that say something you have always thought – or put things exactly at you think they should be put.

And so in addition to being a reader – I have become a collector of quotes – at first filing them away in a what is now a very old-fashioned manner – writing them on 3 x 5 cards. . .

I mean, you never know when you're going to need a good quote on _____: and so I could find it by going to the file. . . These days, I usually by-pass this – and go directly to the internet. . . and type in quotes on _____. . .

So I started wondering several months ago – about Lenten homilies being based on quotes – quotes that I thought captured the Gospel reading or the sense of the season. . .

And so you get that result these 40 days. A quote, some connections, and maybe some questions.

Here goes for Ash Wednesday:

“Lent is a time for discipline, confession, for honesty – not because God is mean or fault-finding or finger-pointing --- BUT because God wants us to know the joy of being cleansed out and ready for all good things He has in store for us. . . –N.T. Wright

I think this quote gets at the very heart of why we do what we do during Lent. I mean all of us – from a very early age – have been taught to do something extra – or to give up something during Lent. . .

BUT WHY?

Maybe it was just because our parents told us to. Maybe it's because we thought God enjoyed the sacrifices we were making. . . Maybe because it was just the thing to do – everyone else was doing, and so should we.

Maybe we are doing it to get God's attention, or to “prove” our love to Him.

Maybe it is to get other people's attention – to show them that we are holy, able make a sacrifice, or are simply good enough to give something up.

Although those are reasons to do or not do something – they're really not the reason we should be doing it. . . We should be doing it to **MAKE OURSELVES BETTER PEOPLE.**

TO MAKE OURSELVES MORE AND MORE INTO THE IMAGE AND LIKENESS OF GOD.

And it takes discipline, confession, and honesty – in order to admit we aren't who we should be – and we are willing to make the effort to be the people God calls us to be.

So, how can I be a better person 40 days from now? If I break that addiction to alcohol, gossip, or candy crush??? So that I have more time and energy to be with those I love. . .

If I start buying what I need instead of want, cut down the time I spend on the internet, start reading and learning more about Scripture – will these things make me a better person at the end of 40 days?

What is it that I need to do or not do – not because God is mean or fault-finding or finger-pointing --- but because God wants me to know the joy of being cleansed out and ready for all good things He has in store for me. . .