

Doing without during Lent may not be by choice for some folks

Up Front/Commentary

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It looks to be a good year for observing Lent.

Whether or not you're religious, Lent is the time of year to give up something - usually something you like, such as beer or chocolate - and take time to make a quiet assessment of your life.

This year, because of the economy, many people will be giving up their homes or their jobs, and not necessarily for only the 40 days of Lent. Some people may be giving up meals, as well - not because they are trying to make atonement for their sins, but because they can't afford food and the box from the food bank has to last a week.

In other words, Lent is sure to have the penitential pallor appropriate to the season, but not necessarily because that's a choice.

You have to look on the bright side of things. Very few people can let go or give up something because they really want to. Letting go or giving up is usually forced

on us. Loved ones leave home because they're following the call of the wild. We give up sweets because our doctor tells us that if we don't our eating habits will kill us within a year.

And yet, letting go or giving up can have its rewards.

People lose their jobs and that's a bad thing. But they might discover a skill or a resource they didn't know they had before. Or family and friends might step up and give us the support we wouldn't have had if things had remained the same.

Others might decide to let go of possessions that, they discover later, really had more possession of them than they had of the possessions. Simplicity can be a wonderful thing, especially if it means having fewer objects to dust.

This economy thing is getting us all down. But there have been a few good things that have come out of it.

One of those is, it has laid bare the vulgar greed and corruption among some of the most privileged among us. It hurts to know so many people have been duped by people in positions of power and wealth. But now we know who they are and what they've done and now they're going to find out that it's no more fun for the rich and powerful to be behind bars than it is for your garden-variety crooks.

The other bright spot in this economic mess is it's given us all a chance to figure out what's important and what's not. I suspect for most of us having good friendships and loving families is of more value than keeping the money rolling in.

So that's the beauty of Lent. Even though it may hurt for awhile, there's always something wonderful you discover at the end.

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