

Over the years I have experimented with a variety of devotional activities during Lent. Not all of these endeavours have been successful – if by successful you mean that I was able to, say abstain from chocolate for the entirety of Lent. In hindsight, I find myself wondering if part of the reason for this failure is that the action was intended merely as a sacrifice and ultimately contributed little to growing closer to God or anyone else for the matter.

In contrast, the year I decided to walk the equivalent of the distance from Nazareth to Jerusalem meant that I made a daily commitment to go outside, spend time in prayer and experience nature. I recently came across a subsequent sermon where I included a reflection on the discovery of herons on the pond by our house during this time. The time spent in nature in prayer helped me grow closer to God and appreciate the beauty around me.

Similarly, the year I gave up sitting was also experienced as profound. The choice came from a reflection around the struggle of many low wage workers – cashiers, fast food employees and others who spend much of their day on their feet. I am also aware of places where homes do not have the comfortable couches and chairs we enjoy. So throughout Lent I spent as much time as appropriate standing. No, I didn't stand in the car or when I visited folks in their homes. But I did stand through services, some meetings and when I was working at my desk. My choice not only challenged my understanding but helped to raise awareness of the comforts we often take for granted with others.

As we move towards another Lenten season, I find myself contemplating, once again, what might be a meaningful discipline for this time. Given my passion for caring for the environment, I find myself pondering what it might look like for me to move closer towards a goal of zero waste. Of course, this is not an easy goal to achieve, particularly when there are others in the house. Thus, I may focus simply on my breakfast: What would it take to have a zero waste breakfast throughout Lent?

When God created the world, human beings were given dominion over all things. Evidence has shown that we are not always good at caring for the gifts of Creation. This why one of our marks of mission is to seek to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the life of the earth. Efforts like moving towards zero waste may seem to make little difference, but I have found, over the years, that every action in this regard has the potential to ripple outward challenging other choices and challenging others.

As I engage in discernment, I want to be guided by prayer. The collect for Rogation Days seems appropriate: Creator of the fruitful earth, you made us stewards of all things. Give us grateful hearts for all your goodness, and steadfast wills to use your bounty well, that the whole human family, today and in generations to come, may with us give thanks for the riches of your creation. We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ

the Lord. Amen. (BAS p. 396) I hope that you too can find a meaningful way to journey through Lent that will draw you closer to God, others and/or Creation.