Acknowledge the abundance in our midst

Virtually everything we take for granted in our lives would seem like a “miracle” to most of those who have lived centuries before us.

For much of history, if you hunted and were successful, you had meat to eat. If you were unsuccessful you had no meat. If your crops grew in your garden, you had vegetables. If the crops failed, you might be headed for starvation. For most humans who lived on this earth centuries ago there was no protection from – or cure for – disease and pestilence. Clean drinking water would have been a bonus. People simply died with no understanding of why they died or what bacteria or viruses might be in the food or water. There may have been some herbal remedies, but not much more.

So, if those people back then could imagine the world we live in they would have to conclude that heaven had come to earth.

You walk into a store, and there are unlimited amounts of food of every kind. Screens on windows protect us from mosquitoes and disease carrying insects. We touch a button, and there is light. We turn a faucet and there is abundant clean water. We hit a switch and the home is cooled. We hit another switch and the building is warmed. How about indoor plumbing? For broken bones and diseases there is medical care of every kind, diagnostic tools unimaginable for most people of former ages.

I mention only these few examples. Obviously computers and televisions and modern communication would simply have been beyond their power to even imagine.

So, if they could envision a world of ease of transportation, where police protected communities and military protected our shores, they would have to imagine that we lived in a constant state of joy and gratitude. No doubt they would think that our churches and synagogues and mosques and various places of worship would be packed with grateful people. They would imagine there would be no violence. There

would be no crime, since there was so much abundance. Paradise seemingly would be right now.
Sadly, we know those people would be wrong. Our churches may be packed for special holy days, but not packed with grateful people daily. We don't dance for joy daily, and violent crime is a harsh reality.

What happened? The answer simply is in that magic word: "more." Our wants and desires and cravings seem endless. Where once there was lack of food and drink, and life was incredibly harsh, now there are addictions of every kind – to food and sex and drugs and shopping and on and on. Put simply, there is an advertising industry that feeds our craving for more. We are all conditioned by it to always want more, whatever the "more" might be!

In this season of Lent, as we try to curb our appetites and create space for God in our lives, we might want to focus on that wonderful old virtue called gratitude. We might simply want to acknowledge the incredible abundance most of us live in, be grateful for all the food and medicine and comforts of life that we take for granted.

And we might want to cultivate a life of simplicity, not just for Lent, but for always. As that wonderful saying goes, "To live simply that others might simply live."

Most of us pray daily for God's kingdom to come to earth. Yet we take for granted those many blessings from God we enjoy each day. Perhaps now might be a moment to still our restless hearts and acknowledge the God who lives in us and around us. When things go wrong we so quickly point to where we think God is not. But in the overwhelming good all around us we often fail to say thanks for where God so obviously is.