

# Give up worry for Lent

Gary Zimak absolutely LOVED eating sweets. So for many years, he gave them up for Lent as a sacrifice for God. Though he stuck to his commitment, he came to realize that the spiritual benefits were lacking.

During a “Christopher Closeup” interview, Gary told me, “Several weeks into Lent, the focus shifted and I lost sight of why I was doing it. All I kept thinking was: Two weeks until cake! I would literally be standing at the convenience store drooling over doughnuts...It took me a while to realize, is this helping me grow spiritually?”

Gary suspected that a lot of other people may be having the same kind of results with their Lenten sacrifices, so he wrote a book of daily reflections geared toward the topic that he knows the most about: worrying. And he titled his book “Give Up Worry for Lent: 40 Days to Finding Peace in Christ.” Gary used to suffer from debilitating worry that caused him to endure panic attacks, stomach disorders, and heart palpitations. Though he was a cradle Catholic who went to Mass every week, his anxiety didn’t change until he had a “personal encounter with Jesus.”

Gary now travels the country, talking to church groups about how God can help them move beyond worrying, and he has discovered that the problem is widespread. He said, “I hear it over and over again. Kids worry, adults worry. People are stressed out about the state of the world, their finances, their health, you name it. It is such a powerful open door to lead people to Jesus. They’re looking for relief, and He’s the relief they’re looking for, even though they don’t realize it.”

In “Give Up Worry For Lent’s” first reflection, Gary shares a personal story about one of the most troubling times of his life. His wife was pregnant with twin girls, but they were given only a ten percent chance of survival because they had a condition called twin-to-twin transfusion syndrome. After going for treatment at Our Lady of Lourdes Hospital in Camden, New Jersey, the couple would go to the chapel.

“When you’re going through something like that,” recalled Gary, “you realize just how helpless you are and how much you need the Lord. Above the sanctuary were the words of Matthew 11:28: ‘Come to Me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I

will give you rest.' I remember looking up at those words while my wife and I were kneeling...[and] saying, 'Lord, I need rest. I need You.' That's the message for each of us, especially those who are worried. He wants us to come to Him. That's the answer."

Thankfully, the Zimak girls are healthy and now 21 years old. But Gary can never forget about the lesson he learned during that experience. In the book, he also shares a wise quote from Venerable Fulton Sheen: "Nothing is more destined to create deep-seated anxieties in people than the false assumption that life should be free from anxieties." Gary knows that quote is especially relevant in the modern age.

He said, "In John 16, Jesus said, 'You will have problems, you will have tribulations, but be of good cheer. Why? Because I have overcome the world.' Jesus never promised a problem-free life. He didn't have one. His mother didn't have one. St. Joseph didn't have one...So when we look to eliminate all our problems, we're trying to control something we can't control. Peace is found in the Lord."

*For free copies of the Christopher News Note EASTER BRINGS JOY, HOPE, AND NEW LIFE, write: The Christophers, 5 Hanover Square, New York, NY 10004; or e-mail: [mail@christophers.org](mailto:mail@christophers.org)*