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Not too many people miss Lent. After all, putting away your hairshirt, if you're a Carthusian, does not elicit the same post-holiday depression as packing up your Christmas ornaments. Moreover, Lent ends with most glorious feast of the Christian calendar, which is hardly comparable to January's ordinary time.

That said, I am drawn to many aspects of the Lenten season. The solemnness of Stabat Mater, the sacredness of the Station of the Cross and the public display of our faith on Ash Wednesday are all beautiful features of Catholicism. Beyond these, the traditional practice of making special sacrifices stands out as a hallmark of the Lenten period. I distinctively remember giving up sweets for forty days as a child, and then the rush I experienced on Easter morning when my teeth sank into my first piece of chocolate.

The practice of self-denial, however, is greatly misunderstood and neglected in modern society. Skeptics might challenge such practices by asking why God would want us to give something up that is good. Even Catholics probably wonder why we cannot eat meat on Friday and have to fast on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday.

I would suggest imagining our love as a pie that can be divided into different slices based on the objects we love. We would like the largest slice to be designated for God, but often we love money, a sports team, television, the internet, or food more than God. Lent is a time set aside to reevaluate our priorities. Moreover, they must be a two-step process by which we first remove some object from our daily routine, and then secondly, we replace it with something that draws us closer to God, thereby decreasing our love of self and increasing our love for Him.

Without the second element, resolutions would strengthen our self-discipline, which is a positive development, but they would lack a spiritual dimension. Even worse, they could make a person irritable and cause that person to cultivate a distaste for religious activities. The church did not intend Lent to be time for Catholics to be cantankerous and unhappy. By adding a religious replacement, sacrifices take on a new meaning. We are taking a slice of our love, which we were wasting on a lesser good, and designating it for a far greater good. The result is not displeasure, but profound satisfaction.

Over the past forty days, I decided to forego surfing the internet, with exceptions to communicate with people and to research answers to specific questions, but no more sitting in front of the computer without a plan. In the past, it would not be unusual to spend an hour a day perusing different sites for the latest sports and political news.

At first, it was difficult to change my habit, but I quickly realized that I could fill my extra hour with more beneficial activities: reading an inspirational book, helping my wife, or reciting some prayers. Less and less frequently, I went to bed frustrated that I had wasted part of my day. By the end of Lent, I was no longer missing the internet but glad that I did not know what any of the Kardashians were doing or that I completely missed the Manning-Tebow drama or that I completely avoided the overhyped reactions to the latest political gaffe.

Lent is over now. What happens next? Undoubtedly, we should celebrate Easter with the finest food and tastiest desserts, but the feasting should be focused on the Resurrection, not a return to pre-Lenten indulgence. In my own life, I have spent more time online the past few days, but it has left me with a bad, unsatisfying feeling, and wondering if Lent is meant to be a time to bring us closer to God, why should Easter, the holiest time of the year, be a time when we step away from Him. Perhaps this Easter, I will not with false-joy end my resolutions, but contemplate how to make some of them permanent.