

What Jesus hopes for you this Lent

Every year as Lent approaches, I wonder what I should do for Lent. Should I add a specific prayer regimen? What could I sacrifice for the 40 days between Ash Wednesday and Easter? Should I introduce some new Lenten tradition to my family?

Then Lent begins. And most years my crosses find me. The children get sick or I get bogged down in projects outside my control. Some years, even without a particular cross, my plans get derailed. I end up feeling disappointed in my Lenten journey and sometimes even guilty.

But here's the thing.

Jesus doesn't care whether we successfully give up iced tea or cream in our coffee. He isn't sitting there with a stopwatch making sure we say a Rosary every evening. Lent isn't a test we will pass or fail.

It's an opportunity.

It's an invitation.

Jesus wants this season to be a time for us to grow closer to Him. He longs to be close to us. He loves us so very much. Yes, we can carefully plan out our meatless Friday dinners. But what Jesus is really asking us to do is walk with Him, listen for Him, and try to grow in love for Him.

Your Lent may mean embracing sacrifice and prayer and almsgiving. It may mean taking a few minutes of quiet now and then—or even incorporating a little extra care for yourself so you can become the person God intends you to be. It may mean going to confession or finding time for an occasional daily Mass. Or it may mean intending to do all of that and not managing to because daily life and responsibilities get in the way.

Whatever Lent ends up looking like for you, I hope it won't be a burden or a point of stress. Lent can be a beautiful time of anticipation and joy, a time to open ourselves up to Jesus.

Lent, after all, is about our love for Jesus and His for each of us. He rides that donkey into Jerusalem knowing what lies ahead for Him. He knows he will suffer and die for us. But He does it knowing He is paving our path to Heaven.

However we experience our Lenten journey this year, we have the opportunity to open ourselves up to Jesus' powerful, divine love in a special way. Let's approach this season as a beautiful time to grow closer to our Lord so He can show us how great His love is—and prepare our hearts for the magnificent joy of His resurrection.