**Lent**

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**In the 1600s, the Catholic Church ruled that beaver meat was “fish,” and as such could be eaten on Fridays during Lent. *(Don Voorhees, in The Perfectly Useless Book of Useless Information, p. 172)***

**In the seventeenth century, the Roman Catholic Church, at the request of the bishop of Quebec, ruled that beaver was to be classified as a fish for the dietary restrictions during Lent. The rationale was based on the fact that a beaver is an aquatic animal. *(Don Voorhees, in The Super Book of Useless Information, p. 101)***

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**An Ohio man has given up all food and drink except beer for Lent. Del Hall, who works at a brewery in Cincinnati, said he was inspired to the unusual 40-day fast by 17th-century Bavarian monks who also fasted on "liquid bread" during Lent. "I've run a full marathon before, 26.2 miles, I've done big challenges, but this seems very daunting, "said Hall. "So, I'm just curious if I'm up to the challenge." (*The Week magazine, March 29, 2019)***

**Some Bible scholars believe that Aramaic did not contain a way of saying “many” and used a term that has come down to us as forty. This means that when the Bible refers to forty days it actually means “many days.” *(Noel Botham, in The Ultimate Book of Useless Information, p. 170)***

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**My friend ushers for a church. One year, after the Good Friday service, he stood in the back of the church with the pastor as the congregation filed out. Attendance had been poor. My friend turned to the pastor and said, “Too bad more people didn't show up today.” The pastor answered, “There weren't too many people for Christ on Calvary, either.” My friend said, “Calvary? Where's that church?” The pastor smiled. My friend was embarrassed. *(Frank Weidenfeller, in Catholic Digest)***

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**Heart: “Why do I have to give up something for Lent? I go to church! Isn't that enough?” Mom: “You don't have to give something up, Heart. But it's nice, once a year, to challenge your power to resist temptation.” Heart: “OK, I'll give up candy.” Mom: “Ah, Buono! That's a good little Catholic.” Heart: “Mom never lets me have it anyway. I might as well get some God-points.” *(Mark Tatulli, in Heart of the City comic strip)***

**Heart: “Dean! What is that?” Dean: “Uh! A candy bar, they're all the rage.” Heart: “Uggh! I gave up candy for Lent!” Dean: “Actually, it's an Almond Joy. You know, you can share half and still have a whole!” Heart: “Get thee behind me, Satan! Yaaaaaaa!” Dean then says to himself: “Is organized religion strange, or is it just girls?” (*Mark Tatulli, in Heart of the City comic strip)***

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**One of the most unusual traditions associated with Good Friday is that of children flying kites, practiced in Bermuda. The custom originated many years ago when a Bermuda Sunday school teacher encountered difficulties explaining Christ's ascension into Heaven to his pupils. So he thought up a novel and dramatic method of visually demonstrating the phenomenon in terms the children would understand. On Good Friday he met the children on the highest hill in the 21-square-mile island of Bermuda and, helped by the children, he launched a large kite on which he had painted a picture of Christ. The kite rose into the sky until it had reached its maximum height. Then the teacher cut the strung and the children watched the kite hover above them momentarily, then take off, soaring higher and higher, until it was no more than a speck in the sky. Finally it disappeared entirely. The lesson had been satisfactorily explained. Although modern day kites seldom bear a likeness of Christ on their cross-bars, youngsters of all ages still delight in perpetuating the tradition. (S. S. Chronicle, in London Watchman Examiner)**

**Among Christians giving up something for the 40 days of Lent, 31 percent say they’re “fasting from technology,” with 16 percent forgoing social media such as Facebook and Twitter. *(MarketWatch.com, as it appeared in The Week magazine, March 21, 2014)***

**Just before Easter, I bought a box of Girl Scout cookies from one of my first-grade Sunday school students. But I mentioned I couldn’t eat them yet because I’d given up sweets for Lent. The next Sunday, her mom walked up to me before class and noted with a big smile that she’d heard I couldn’t eat cookies because I’d given them up for the dusty stuff you find in the bottom of your pockets. Guess what the lesson for that Sunday was! (*Darlene Johnson, in Country Extra magazine)***

**A Cincinnati man who subsisted only on craft beer for Lent lost 44 pounds and claims he's never felt better. Del Hall said he was inspired by 17th-century Bavarian monks who spent all 46 days of Lent without eating and limiting their caloric intake to a hearty beer called doppelbock. Hall, who works at a craft brewery, said that he "lost his addiction to food" after the first week. "My health is so much better," he said. "My blood pressure. My cholesterol. Everything has improved. Craft beer is the way to go." *(The Week magazine, May 17, 2019)***

**Good week for: Actual human contact, after Christian clergy said a large number of people have given up Facebook for Lent. Facebook “is almost compulsive,” said Lutheran pastor Dan Hues. “That’s why it makes sense to give it up for Lent.” *(The Week magazine, March 25, 2011)***

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**One of the most valuable ways of observing the Lenten season is to fast from (loose and let go) the belief that men or nations can stand in the way of God’s good will for man. Now is the time to affirm the power of the Christ Spirit indwelling in all men everywhere and influencing their thoughts, words, and actions to work for the good of the whole. *(Georgiana Tree West)***

**Here is the fast you must keep for God: Serve the Lord with a pure heart; keep God’s commandments by walking according to God’s directions and do not let any evil desire enter your heart; have faith in God. *(Shepherd of Hermas)***

**Fasting is an act of homage to the majesty of appetite. So I think we should arrange to give up our pleasures regularly – our food, our friends, our lovers – in order to preserve their intensity, for the moment of coming back to them renews and refreshes both oneself and the things one loves. Sailors and travelers enjoyed this once, and so did hunters, I suppose. Part of the weariness of modern life may be that we are entertained and fed too regularly. Once we were separated by hunger from food and families, and then we learned to value both. *(Laurie Lee, in I Can’t Stay Long)***

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**I asked my 12-year-old daughter what she was going to give up for Lent. “Why, my New Year’s resolutions, of course!” she replied without hesitation. *(Marcia Bougine)***

**If you resolve to give up smoking, drinking, and loving, you don’t actually live longer – it just seems longer. *(Tom Stoppard, playwright)***

**During the Lenten season one year, my family and I visited a friend’s church. As she was pointing out the beauty of the stained-glass windows, my eye was drawn to a large, wooden cross to the right of the altar, to which dozens of pieces of paper were attached. The parishioners, we learned, had written down what they hoped to give up for Lent and had placed them there as a weekly reminder. We all smiled in understanding when we saw, attached to the very top, someone’s evidently over-used MasterCard. *(Charles E. Miles, in Reader’s Digest)***

**In Taos, New Mexico, Alyce Frank was out with her son, Ross, age 10, when they ran into a girl hippie who said she had given up pot for Lent. Later Alyce asked Ross if he knew what pot was. "Sure," I know what pot is," he replied, "but what's Lent?" *(Jerome Beatty, Jr., in Saturday Review)* Q226994**

**As they are walking along, one child says to another: “My whole family’s giving up something for Lent. Mom’s giving up cookies, Dad’s giving up cake, and I’m giving up squash.” *(The Lutheran Witness cartoon)***

**In the past Lent has been described as “giving up” something or doing without something for a short period of time. I like to look at Lent as a time when I “Give Up” trying to do everything myself and let God work with me in my life and “Give Up” all that I have to God and pray for His will to be done in every aspect of my life. (*David J. Seibert)***

**Mom: “Hey, little Heart, what are you giving up for Lent? Tomorrow is Ash Wednesday, ya know.” Heart: “Can I give up homework?” Mom: “No, you know the rules. It has to be something you like.” Heart: “Fine. I give up dancing the Hoochie Coochie in my underwear in front of the entire P. T. A.” Mom: “Something within reason.” Heart: “But you gotta admit, that sounds pretty fabulous.” *(Mark Tatulli, in Heart of the City comic strip)***

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**Dolly says to God: “Does God answer prayers on Good Friday or is this His day off?” *(Bil Keane, in The Family Circus comic strip)***

**Heart: “Why do you suppose they call today ‘Good Friday’ if something so terrible happened?” Friend: “All I know is, any Friday I have off school is a Good Friday.” *(Mark Tatulli, in Heart Of The City comic strip)***

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**The last week of Lent is called Holy Week. It includes Palm Sunday, Maundy Thursday, and Good Friday. Palm Sunday, the Sunday after**

**Easter, commemorates Jesus’ entrance into Jerusalem when the people strewed palms in His way. Maundy Thursday, the Thursday before Easter, is a corruption of the Latin word mandati meaning “of the commandment,” and refers to the command “This do in remembrance of me” spoken by Jesus in regard to His breaking of the bread and drinking of the wine at the Last Supper. Maundy Thursday commemorates the event of the Last Supper. Good Friday, the Friday before Easter, probably known as God’s Friday, commemorates the crucifixion of Jesus. *(Charles Fillmore, in Keep A True Lent, p. 138)***

**Mardi Gras is a French term meaning “Fat Tuesday.” It came from the custom of parading a fat ox through the streets of Paris on the Tuesday before Ash Wednesday. The fat ox symbolized the merrymaking of a meat feast before the fasting required on the next day’s onset of Lent. *(Charles Reichblum, in Knowledge in a Nutshell, p. 231)***

**One cannot live a meaningful life unless there is something one is prepared to give it up for. *(Anthony Kronman, educator)***

**Before people gave up meat for Lent, they celebrated with a “carnival.” That word stems from “carne vale” meaning “goodbye, meat.” *(L. M. Boyd)***

**Back in the ‘70s, Elizabeth Taylor starred in a movie about a middle-aged woman whose husband, she fears, is abandoning her because she is no longer young. The movie chronicles the myriad ways she tries to erase or deny the reality of her mortality. Painful cosmetic surgeries, acquisition of expensive clothes, and association with younger people cannot change what is happening, nor does it prevent the loss of her husband. He leaves her because she convicts him of his own mortality from which he is still running. The film is entitled Ash Wednesday, and Ash Wednesday and the subsequent days of Lent confronts us with what Elizabeth Taylor faced: our humanity. A frightening day, not so much because of what we have done, but of who we are – a collection of bones – dry, bleached bones. And it is the coming to terms with who we are that is at the heart of Lent! Yet, while that is frightening, it also offers freedom from that fear. It offers us restoration through God’s Spirit, a breathing into us of new life, a transformation of this mortal life to an eternal and peaceful one. *(LectionAid)***

**Mother Goose: “Grimmy, I thought you stopped eating out of trash cans.” Grimm: “I'm giving up my new year's resolution for Lent.” *(Mike Peters, in Mother Goose & Grimm comic strip)***

**The Lenten season gets off to an unusual start in the village of Ivrea, Italy, each year: 360 tons of unpeeled, overripe oranges are hurled by 4,000 residents at each other for three days. “The Battle of Oranges” pays homage to the local peasants’ battle against tyranny during the Middle Ages. Broken noses, bruises, and eye injuries are the most common side effects. *(Kathy Wolfe, in Tidbits)***

**Today is February 16, the day of the Pancake Races in England. Pancake races are a Shrove Tuesday tradition, a time for indulgence before Lent. Wearing chef's hats and aprons, racers run laps while flipping pancakes in a frying pan. *(The Daily Chronicle)***

**Long ago, Lent was a time of sadness, when Christians felt they should suffer. For 40 days they ate no rich foods; no meat, cheese, eggs or even milk. They ate fish, and they baked a bread shaped into arms crossed, a symbol of rest and meditation as Christians sadly contemplated their sins. They called this bread Bracellae, the Latin word for “little arms.” Christian customs spread to central and northern Europe. But the people there said betzel instead of bracellae, and in time the word betzel became pretzel. The Sunday before Ash Wednesday was known as “Pretzel Sunday” to remind people to think about the meaning of Lent, and to bake this bread for use during Lent. Pretzels were never served after Palm Sunday. *(LectionAid)***

**At over four feet long and weighing over a hundred pounds, the South American capybara is the largest rodent in the world. In the sixteenth century, the Catholic Church classified it as a fish so that it could be eaten during Lent. *(Harry Bright & Jakob Anser, in Are You Kidding Me?, p. 10)***

**Our minister announced he'd be starting a series of sermons based on the number 40. On successive Sundays the topics would be 40 days, 40 nights, 40 weeks and 40 years. Halfway through the homily, a parishioner dozed off, and the man sitting next to me commented, “The series must have started early. This one is 40 winks.” *(Kenneth H. Yount, in Reader's Digest)***

**My wife, Diane, was chatting with her brother, Charles, a business executive who had retired last year. While discussing the joys of his new leisure time, Charles remarked that he had been compelled to give up skiing, a sport he had enjoyed for many years. “Afraid of injuries?” Diane asked. “Well, now I am,” he responded. “Before, I could drag a cast into work and still do my job, but now I’d be messing up my golf game.” *(Leo Grant, in Reader’s Digest)***

**A friend of mine says that everybody ought to give up something during Lent. He gives up watermelon. In a place where I once lived, there was a minister who always gave up smoking during this period. A conical colleague once remarked that it was an inspiring sight to see the smoke pouring out of that fellow's study window again on Easter morning. *(Gerald Kennedy, in Pulpit Digest)***

 **To observe Lent according to the spirit rather than the letter we must fast from criticism and condemnation and feast in brotherly love; fast from false beliefs in sickness and weakness and feast on the truth of God's omnipresent, perfect life; fast from false beliefs in lack and limitation and feast on the truth of God's bountiful good will. Ideas such as these form an excellent basis for Lenten meditations that help establish permanent spiritual values in heart and mind. *(Georgiana Tree West)***

**On another show, a young lady of eight gave me a new insight into Holy Week. “What's Good Friday?” I asked her. “That means there's no school the next day,” she replied. *(Bill Cosby, in Kids Say The Darndest Things, p. 34)***

**When we withdraw our attention, interest, and support from the false and the unworthy, this is true fasting. When we give that same attention, interest, and support to the enduring good, we are feasting on the things of the Spirit, and this is true prayer. When we have truly fasted in the Christ way we have increased our ability to respond to God’s good will. *(Georgiana Tree West)***

**The pastor of our tiny church ended his annual give-something-up-for-Lent sermon: “As an example of penitence to the rest of the community, this congregation will worship in an unheated church for the whole of Lent.” As we made our way out into the chill February Sunday, the pastor addressed my elderly neighbor. “Ah, Mrs. James, and what have you decided to give up for Lent?” “Church,” she replied firmly. *(Anne Sutcliffe, in The Countryman)***

**When I noticed a broken vise grip in the trash can, I decided to buy my husband a new one for his birthday. I went to the hardware store and asked the salesman, “Do you have any heavy-duty vises?” “Sorry,” he replied. “I gave them all up for Lent.” *(Gloria Severson, in Reader’s Digest)***

**The word "Lent" comes from the Anglo-Saxon word for spring, which is derived from a verb meaning to lengthen. Lent comes in the spring when the days become noticeably longer. *(Charles Fillmore, in Keep A True Lent, p. 138)***

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