

**The old minister was having a cup of tea when the police knocked on his front door...  
Pastor...we are going to have to ask you to evacuate  
because the dam has broken, the rain won't stop and pretty soon the river  
will be at your front door....**

**Thank you, but no thank you, the minister replied...God will save me.**

**The flood waters continued to rise and pretty soon the fire department water rescue boat  
came by...and they knocked on his door and said...  
Please! Pastor...get into the boat.  
There is no end in sight to this rain and  
your life is in danger!**

**Thank you, but no thank you, the minister replied....God will save me.**

**Well, the rains continued through the night...the waters continued to rise until the minister  
finally had to take refuge on the roof of his house...  
and the national guard helicopter hovered over head...and the rescue crew said:  
Pastor...PLEASE...we are sending a rope down for you.  
Grab onto it and we will pull you to safety! Look, the waters are still rising...**

**And the pastor replied... "Thank you, but no thank you....God will save me."**

**Shortly thereafter the minister drowned in the flood.  
Once he arrived at the pearly gates, he asked St. Peter...What happened?  
I believed God was going to save me and here I am!...**

**St. Peter replied: "What do you mean...he tried 3 times!"**

**The story of Noah and the ark is a very famous one.**

**I have a lamp that I bought for the nursery when my children were infants  
of the ark and all the animals..**

**Most little ones recognize the ark and we generally find a very sweet and hopeful story.**

**But...today's reading isn't so much about the ark or the flood,  
but what happened afterwards...**

**Today's reading is all about the covenant,  
the agreement between God..  
and the rest of creation.**

**I hope you noticed that it isn't just an agreement between humanity and God..  
but between all beings, all of creation and the Holy One...**

**and I hope you noticed that it is God who establishes this universal, cosmic covenant.**

**Somehow along the way, though,  
humanity developed an arrogance, a uniquely superior position  
claiming God's favor and concern and excluded the rest of God's creation..**

**Clearly God intended this covenant to extend beyond people  
and to include all of what God had created...**

**Lent is the perfect time to re-member this covenant  
and find our place, once again, within the web of life...**

**If you would please, take a look at the front of the program....**

**I love this brief reflection on fasting and feasting...**

**because I find it challenging as well as hopeful.**

**I don't know your experience of Lent has been so far in your life...**

perhaps this season of Lent has not been part of your life experience...  
perhaps, like me, Lent was a very serious and somber time,  
full of rules and sacrifices...

When I was a kid, growing up Roman Catholic, no one was supposed to get married during  
Lent...too much joy! too much happiness! too much celebration! mmm....

but these days,

I've come to understand and to appreciate and to practice Lent differently  
so we'll be reflecting upon this over the next couple of weeks...

Traditionally, there have been 3 general rules for Lent:

1. Fasting
2. Alms giving
3. Prayer

So let's today, let's ponder on Fasting...

You know, it used to be that Lent was a great time for folks to lose those last 5lbs.

So lots of us gave up desert or chocolate or alcohol ...

I mean if the threat of committing a sin and God's punishment wasn't  
motivation enough to eat better and lose weight...

well, then I guess I was a lost cause.

Of course, that wasn't the official reason for fasting,

but that is how many of us practiced this rule ...

The list of what to fast from on our program cover, though

is far closer to the original intent of the rule than giving up candy or sweets..

To be fasting from doing things, thinking things, feeling things that are harmful not only to  
myself, but to others, leads us to living more rightly inside the reign of Heaven on Earth....

Just imagine what the world would be like if we could fast from words that pollute,

**complaining, discontent, and pessimism...**

**Just Imagine what the world would be like if we would feast on gratitude, appreciation, forgiveness and hope.**

**Just imagine what the we would be like, if we really concentrated, these next several weeks before Easter, if we really took to heart the bounty that we are invited to feast upon...**

**Truly our celebration of Easter would be genuine and authentically joyful. our world would be kinder and more compassionate... our relationships with others with be filled with more laughter and love.... our relationship with ourselves would be filled with more joy and peace and more gratitude...**

**If we could do the best we could to fast from all the angry, frightened, narcissistic tendencies that we as humans tend to find within ourselves, we would be able to wake up and see the feast already set by the Holy One...**

**Did you know that the most frequent image used by Jesus for the Kingdom of God was a banquet...no wonder!**

**It is important to be aware that we do not create the feast, really... we simply accept the invitation to dinner... to show up for the celebration... to be grateful for the diversity of creation that sits at the table with us..**

**and We must remember that God did not just create human beings...**

**that God created a magnificent, wondrous universe...filled with beauty, mystery, birth and death ...filled with such a diversity and plentitude of beings, most of whom we don't even know about yet and all of whom God cares about!**

**In this reading, care for the earth takes on a biblical priority...**

**These days many people share a concern for Global warming, for the extinction of species and for the polluting of our oceans, air and land...**

**These days, lots of people don't buy it and don't feel a particular need to be concerned about those things, perhaps because they doubt the validity of the scientific evidence...**

**But perhaps, this day we can find a middle way...**

**Perhaps, this Lent, as people of faith, we could fast AND feast and thus care for all of God's creation simply because God cares for all of God's creation...**

**We live on a magnificent planet...**

**we have been invited to participate in the glorious banquet of life...**

**We have been charged with taking good care of God's creation and because God cares for EVERYTHING that God as created and that, my friends, is no laughing matter! Amen.**