



Grace Notes

Brief notes for the members, families and friends of Grace Episcopal Church



Listen. Reflect. Deepen.

I invite you, therefore, in the name of the Church, to the observance of a holy Lent

These words, from the liturgy for Ash Wednesday, mark the beginning of the season of Lent. Historically a time of preparation for baptism in the ancient church, Lent is a time of special devotion – a season when we are reminded of our own mortality and encouraged to reorient our lives, seeking a deeper connection with God. It is a season of prayer, self-examination and repentance.

Our theme for Lent is: **Listen, Reflect and Deepen.**



Reorienting ourselves toward God means first taking stock of our lives – where we have been and where we are right now. This Lent, we have special Adult Forum series that will help us do just that. Come and listen as three members of the clergy share their spiritual journeys:

- March 4** Rev. Michele Hagans, Associate Rector
- March 11** Rev. Nancy Noall, Episcopal priest and parishioner
- March 18** Rev. Andrew Walter, Rector

Then, on **Sunday, March 25**, in the concluding Adult Forum of Lent on Sunday, Rev. Andrew will lead eve-

ryone in an exercise to reflect on their own lives and journeys.

Rev. Andrew will also be leading a **Lenten book discussion on *Toward Holy Ground* by Margaret Guenther**. The second half of life—which we can enter at any age—is that time when we begin the process essential to a mature faith: discovering who we are and exploring our relationship with God. Margaret Guenther, well-known author and spiritual director (who also happens to be on staff at nearby St. Columba's) shares her insights with those of us on this journey toward "holy ground." Anyone who seeks to *deepen* their awareness of themselves and God will benefit from Guenther's wisdom and experience. **Meetings will take place on the four Sundays in March immediately following the 10:30 service.** The church has pre-ordered books. If you would like one (cost is \$13), please contact Rev. Andrew.

The next installment of our **Music of Grace** series takes place on **Sunday, March 18 at 5 p.m.** and features our highly regarded Junior choristers. Many of our young parishioners *deepen* their connection to God through participation in our incredible music program. They enhance our worship services every Sunday, but working very hard under the tutelage of Mr. C, they have also been preparing for this performance on the 18th, when many of them will sing solos.

March 2012

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Special points of interest:

- Reflection on Lent
- Seabury Lunch N' Learn
- One More Note from Rev. Andrew Walter

Lenten Carbon Fast Calendar from Pennyworth

Included in this issue of Grace Notes, is the annual Lenten Carbon Fast Calendar from Pennyworth. In it you'll find lots of ways you can put your faith into action to lower your energy use and your impact on the environment.

Pennyworth hopes that this calendar and the activities it inspires help your on your path of spiritual growth and greener living!

Lenten Carbon Fast 2012
The Pennyworth Shop of Grace Episcopal Church

Lent is a time when many Christians prepare for Easter. During Lent it has often been the custom to "give something up." Fr. Rex, John Chase, Bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Washington, has suggested a "Carbon Fast," addressed on a program begun in 2007 by Fr. Rex. James Lewis, Bishop of Liverpool England, has "Carbon Fast" he indicated has increased awareness of what each of us, young and old, can do to make a difference in decreasing our "Carbon Footprint."

We hope that you will take time during Lent to reflect on your personal stewardship of the Earth. May your thoughts and prayers lead you to action and a deeper relationship with God who has given to each of us the awesome responsibility of being stewards of our fragile planet, Earth, our shared home.

This calendar and the suggested activities have been adapted from: "Please Join Me in a Carbon Fast This Lent!" <http://www.chaplain.com/faith/faithnews/2012/03/05/please-join-me-in-a-carbon-fast-this-lent/> The Environmental Outreach Committee of the Archdiocese of Washington. Tearfund and other sources from Greater Washington Interfaith Power & Light, www.GreenByChurch.com

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
22 "No whatever you give alms, do not wear a trumpet before you... so that your eyes may be drawn to you and your father who is in secret will reward you." Matthew 6:1-8 Ash Wednesday receives on the forehead a mark made when one is kneeling in prayer. From ash being blessed with the dust of last year's Creation, usually rubs into one's forehead, on hands, and on cheeks, and one's eyes will be made to fasten.	25 "Remember your day of rest, and keep it holy." Exodus 20:8-11 Removes one light bulb from your house and be without it light for the next 40 days. This will decrease your energy use, and act as a reminder of your Lenten Carbon Fast.	26 "Remember your day of rest, and keep it holy." Exodus 20:8-11 Removes one light bulb from your house and be without it light for the next 40 days. This will decrease your energy use, and act as a reminder of your Lenten Carbon Fast.	27 "Remember your day of rest, and keep it holy." Exodus 20:8-11 Removes one light bulb from your house and be without it light for the next 40 days. This will decrease your energy use, and act as a reminder of your Lenten Carbon Fast.	28 "Remember your day of rest, and keep it holy." Exodus 20:8-11 Removes one light bulb from your house and be without it light for the next 40 days. This will decrease your energy use, and act as a reminder of your Lenten Carbon Fast.	29 "Remember your day of rest, and keep it holy." Exodus 20:8-11 Removes one light bulb from your house and be without it light for the next 40 days. This will decrease your energy use, and act as a reminder of your Lenten Carbon Fast.	30 "Remember your day of rest, and keep it holy." Exodus 20:8-11 Removes one light bulb from your house and be without it light for the next 40 days. This will decrease your energy use, and act as a reminder of your Lenten Carbon Fast.

A monthly publication from the Grace Church Communications Committee

GRACE EPISCOPAL CHURCH

Grace Notes

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Grace Notes

Linda Caleb

**Dining With Grace at the Movies
Friday, March 2**



As our Lenten season begins, please join us for a special film "Chocolat" on Friday, March 2nd. It is the story of a young mother, an expert chocolatier who arrives in a small French village with her six year old daughter and opens a small chocolate shop. Her chocolate quickly begins to change the lives of the townspeople as they begin to observe the forty days of Lent.

A potluck dinner precedes the film and a brief discussion on the spiritual aspects of the film follows. All takes place in the undercroft from 6:30 p.m. (dinner begins) until approximately 9:15 p.m. Please bring a dish that is designated for the food item that is associated with the **first letter** of your **last** name:

- A - H Salad or Vegetable
- I - Q Dessert or Fruit
- R - Z Main Course or Casserole

For further information contact:

**Lola Crawford - (301) 571-2321
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Scenes from the Shrove Tuesday Pancake Supper



Reflection on the Season of Lent

The word “Lent” conjures up a variety of images and feelings, often from childhood memories of being required to “keep a holy Lent”. This generally meant no feasting, no parties, no fun; for some it also meant going to confession and fasting on certain days of the week. These weeks before Easter have popularly been known as a season of sober self-denial, with an emphasis on repenting from sin and receiving God’s forgiveness. If we move beyond popular conceptions (and often misconceptions), Lent holds the possibility for real change in our lives as well as for rich and lasting spiritual growth.

The ultimate purpose of Lent is to strengthen our spiritual lives. In Lent we step back and consider the ways we need to change, to renew our relationships with God and one another, to let ourselves – to use a Church word – be converted anew. I once had a conversation with a bishop who had spent Lent in the Holy Land. There, to his surprise, he found the desert in full bloom, the trees laden with olives and figs, and everywhere there was the hazy smell of ripe fruit and the sound of insects. It was during this experience of Lent that he came to understand Lent as a time of being refreshed by a loving God instead of a time of arduous effort to improve. I’ve never forgotten his gentle, generous words.

In Lent we step back and consider the ways we long to be refreshed. How are we living the gospel in our lives, our homes, our churches, our schools or places of work? What areas of growth or signs of renewal can we celebrate with gratitude and joy? In what ways have we grown stagnant or cold-hearted, or failed to love God by embracing new life when we encounter it? These are the kinds of questions we ask of ourselves during the weeks of Lent.

There are a number of traditions that can help us ask those questions.

- One tradition, drawing on ancient Jewish and early Christian traditions of preparation, (especially for baptism at Easter) involves fasting. Today, the church invites us to fast on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday, and many people find this way of expressing Lenten devotion through their bodies to be very helpful for cleansing the mind and focusing the soul.
- Another approach is not to give something up but to “take on” a spiritual discipline or practice. Some discover that it is not what they eat or drink that is separating them from God but their lack of time spent in prayer or study, their neglect of worship or the way they spend their time and money. For such people, making a commitment to spend a half-hour each day in prayer or to attend a Lenten Book Group or Bible Study once a week or to devote an evening to doing something special for a friend can be a valuable Lenten discipline.

Whatever you choose to do, Lent gives us an occasion to clear away those things that stand in the way to a vibrant spiritual life.



Lenten Ideas for Children and Youth

The children of the parish will be marking the days of Lent with daily prayers that accompany a Lenten calendar (a bit like an Advent calendar, with a sticker to apply each day). The prayers, stickers and calendar are a gift to families at Grace from the Sunday School and will be available to pick up in the Undercroft on the first Sunday in Lent and thereafter in the Parish Hall during Sunday School.

Teenagers in Youth Group will be exploring different ways of making space this Lent to let God do something new in their lives. For some, that will mean giving something up *and* taking something on. Here are some of their ideas:

- Give up dissing classmates and, instead, work on speaking words of encouragement
- Give up texting on certain days of the week and instead take up more face-to-face conversations
- Drink only water for two weeks and with the money saved by not spending it on soda, coffee, tea or sports drinks, donate it to an organization that helps dig wells.
- Try different ways of praying
- Adopt the discipline of helping out a friend for one hour a week doing odd-job chores: spring yard work, helping with grocery shopping, washing the car

Watch the Undercroft walls for their reflections and suggestions over the course of the 40 days!

Daughters of the King - Lenten Prayers

As members of the Order of the Daughters of the King, we have three Rules of Life that we seek to live by; Prayer, Service, and Evangelism. The Friday, February 10, 2012, "DAILYWORD®, Daily Inspiration From Unity", posted an online meditation about "prayer" that really addressed why Prayer can be so meaningful in our lives. As we enter into the Lenten season, I wish to share this meditation on Prayer with you.

PRAY FOR OTHERS

I pray for you and see you whole and complete.

Many times during his ministry Jesus would stop and pray for others. He knew the power of the spoken word and the effect that faith has on the spirit, mind and body.

When I pray for others, I do not need to know the details. Whether the concern is for healing, guidance, divine order, safety, prosperity or any other desire, my prayer is one of affirmation and gratitude that the answer is already established. I know the spirit of Truth, the spirit of Peace, the spirit of Love touches each individual I hold in prayer.

Prayer keeps me open and receptive as a conduit for the power of God to express. What a blessing it is to pray for others!

He was praying in a certain place, and after he had finished, one of his disciples said to him, "Lord, teach us to pray."-Luke 11:1

May today you be blessed in all that you do.

For His Sake,
Helen Spence, Treasurer
Grace Chapter 1606, Daughters of the King



Grace Parishioners Stay Busy During Winter Months



Stewardship and Lent

The following is adapted from an article, "Seasons of Stewardship", by William C. Green.



Originally a time to prepare candidates for baptism, Lent became a period of penitence for those who have been baptized, a time of spiritual discipline in preparation for the celebration of Easter.

At root, penitence, like repentance, concerns a fundamental turning away from self-reliance to trust in God, a change of mind and life direction evoked by the good news of Jesus Christ.

At heart, stewardship is about where we place our trust. It is less about possessions than *possessiveness*. Our capacity to love is hampered by our need to have. This is an issue of control: how much must I maintain to feel secure? Understood this way, stewardship is a spiritual discipline that loosens our grip on what we have for the sake of what we love. Loving and trusting God in the spirit of Christ, we live and give more freely and openly, less anxiously, less selfishly. So it is that in his classic work, *Being and Having*, the French thinker, Gabriel Marcel, says, "there is neither freedom nor 'real life' without an apprenticeship in 'depossession.'" This is less a matter of giving up possessions than giving up an attitude—turning over to God trust that had resided in our own ability to regulate and control what we love and care about. With this turning over, giving itself becomes more natural, virtually inevitable.

An ancient rabbi wrote, "We are born with our fists clenched and die with our hands wide open." The plain facts of life and death confirm God's will and point to God's way for us. In effect, we have to find a way to hold onto life with open hands. That **is the Lenten discipline of stewardship: learning how to hold what we have less tightly, without clutching, more openly.** The lesson is summed up well by Andre Gide, who wrote: "Complete possession is proved only by giving. All you are unable to give possesses you."

How are "possessiveness" and "control" issues in our own lives? During the season of Lent, what is sowed is an awareness of the tension between loving and "possessing," enjoying and control-

ling, being and having. What is reaped is a truer sense of giving as *repentance*—"repentance" understood not morbidly, as turning against oneself, fists clenched, but hopefully, as turning toward God, hands open. "Gifted by God" with freedom and confidence we could not grasp with closed hands, "we offer ourselves in praise," knowing that in giving we receive what in possessiveness we lose.

Begin a discipline of daily or weekly prayer based on your experience of temporarily changing some habit upon which your lifestyle relies. See how these experiences *add* to you knowledge and appreciation of your life, the lives of others, and the world around you, rather than seeing them as detracting from what you're accustomed to.

Some suggestions:

- ◆ If you usually drive to work and your town has public transportation, take the bus or train instead for a week.
- ◆ Don't use credit cards for a week. See what it's like to use cash or a debit card for all transactions and purchases.
- ◆ Unplug all electronic devices (TV, iPad, computers, iPhones, iPods). See what else you can come up with for relaxation and entertainment.
- ◆ If you enjoy shopping for fun, try something else instead for the period of Lent. Go to a movie or a concert, go bowling, take a walk around the neighborhood, ride a bike.

Keep coming back to the following thought to ponder as you try the discipline suggested above during Lent:

Think how happy you'd be if you lost everything you have right now—and then got it back again.

Emphasize how "repentance" places distance between ourselves and what we often rely on, not to reject those things, but that we might receive them back as gifts, not just givens, to be enjoyed in the spirit of Christ.



RECYCLE YOUR CHRISTMAS CARDS!

Grace Church's team of crafters will convert your old Christmas cards into creative gems for next year's Bazaar ... please bring your old Christmas and holiday cards and place them in the marked bin on the Undercroft stage. Thank you!

Music of Grace to Feature Young Choristers

Grace's Music Ministry is blessed with a large and active youth program that provides exemplary musical opportunities for our children. Under the leadership of Danny Catalanotto, the music program has grown on an average of 32% per year over the last five years, with most of the growth occurring in the children's and youth choirs.

One highlight of the program is a special Music of Grace event, the **Spring Concert, which is performed by the Grace Junior Choir and soloists**. This year, this special concert will occur on Sunday, **March 18 at 5 pm**. This concert highlights the talent and energy of our youth choristers as they perform a variety of anthems and solos, singing in multiple languages. Currently totaling 49 members, the Junior Choir consists of Freshman, Junior and Senior sub choirs, and

each experiences the challenges, joys and rewards of music offered to the glory of God, while also having a lot of fun at the same time. Practices for these choirs are held one night a week and on Sunday mornings. As part of their music education, Junior Choir members can elect to participate in the Royal School of Church Music theory training program, an international, interdenominational curriculum that is dedicated to promoting effective and inspiring music-making in worship and the wider community.

These music theory classes, which culminate in a written exam, result in choristers earning a medallion on a colored ribbon and worn over their vestments. Students progress through light blue, navy blue, red ribbons before they can obtain the highly coveted yellow ribbon.

In addition to our youth choirs, the music program at Grace also reaches our younger children through the early childhood music program, which includes children as young as 4 year olds as well as early elementary school age. The program for these children provides an age appropriate quality musical education, specifically tailored to engage young children. Activities include movement to music, instruction in percussion and chimes, and basic music theory in age and skill appropriate weekly classes and periodic Sunday service performances.

For any additional information about the Music Ministry programs for youth and young children, feel free to contact Danny at [:danny@graceepiscopalchurch.org](mailto:danny@graceepiscopalchurch.org) or at Coffee Hour in the Undercroft after most 10:30 am Sunday services.

Music of Grace - Silly Goose and Val



Would you like to support The Pennyworth Shop, but work during the day? Mark your calendar and come to an evening Sorting Party!

We gather in the basement at Grace House on the 3rd Wednesday of each month, from 6:30p to 9:30p. In addition to sorting donations, we enjoy dessert, fellowship and fun. It really is fun! If you can't be there until 8:30p, or have to leave before 9:30p, no problem. Even an hour is a huge help and we'd love to have you.



Dates for the remainder of 2012:

March 21st
August 15th

April 18th
September 19th

May 16th
October 17th

June 20th
*November 14th

July 18th
December 19th

**Moved to 2nd Wednesday to avoid evening prior to Thanksgiving.*

Questions? Contact **Lisa Summers** at 301-587-0880 or summers-ryder@starpower.net

For 59 years, the Pennyworth Shop has provided an important service to Silver Spring families, contributed to local, national and international social service organizations, *and* has financed substantial improvements to Grace Church. For more information, see our web page on the graceepiscopalchurch.org site.

The Pennyworth Shop

949 Bonifant Street in downtown Silver Spring
Open Tuesday – Saturday from 10a to 4p
301-587.6242

Seabury Seniors Lunch N' Learn

Grace Church recently hosted a Seabury Seniors Lunch N' Learn. A panel composed of Fr. Vincent Harris (St. George's DC), Peter Clopton of Life Matters, Stephanie Chong of Seabury Resources (Care Management Division) and Chuck Thornton (Seabury at Friendship Terrace) presented information focused on "Five Questions to Ask When.... you, a family member, or "the person affected" is faced with life-changing illness (chronic or acute) or death. "

Chuck Thornton provided definitions of senior housing from independent to the varying levels of assisted living to medical care. Choosing to move from "your own place" can be a hard decision but his five questions are an aid for clarifying the "when to move". Is your house getting away from you? This question helps us answer "how do I cope with the world around me".

Stephanie Chong offered questions about

dealing with chronic/acute illness. How much do you know about your illness? She encouraged us to do the research about the specific diagnosis and to find medical providers knowledgeable with geriatric conditions and medication treatments. She gave the example of the knowledge base of a geriatric psychiatrist versus one who worked with general populations as medication doses, treatments change with older adults as does nutrition. Consider that your family might not be the ones with the time to provide all that you want/need. Some of your "team" might be neighbors or friends). What plans do I need to put in place. Key is to research your options early, before you are in crisis.

Father Harris began by asking "Have you read p445 in the Book of Common Prayer"? That rubric from the service of thanksgiving for a child, urges us as Christian people, to provide for the prudent well-being of children. One of our

society's greatest taboo is death. We don't talk about it. Father Harris urged us to believe that the best time to talk is NOW. While we are in our right minds while we can say what we want and do not want. Plan everything now. Life changes. He offered a pamphlet resource for churches: Care Notes and read some of the leaflet titles.

Fr. Harris asks us to consider: Have you made out your will? Have you completed your living will or advanced directives? Have you discussed your wishes about the end of your life and listened to your family's concerns too? Does your church know who are your next of kin, and end of life plans? Have you planned the details of your funeral and shared with your family and clergy?

Peter Clopton followed with his insights on in-home health care and urged thoughtful consideration of wants/needs prior to actually requiring services.

Some basic questions to ask whenever anyone is ill and in need of care:

1) Where will your loved one thrive? Will they thrive in their home or a facility? It depends on the person and their specific situation. Home care can assist in the private home, independent living facilities, assisted living facilities, nursing homes and hospitals. When choosing care it really depends on the person's safety and socialization needs.

2) What is the plan/goal for your loved ones care? Who is in charge of moving forward with this plan? Are the family members all on the same page? This can be a very difficult process.

3) Does the family have access to re-

sources they need to reach the goal?

There are two very important things to remember when considering using a home care company. Will they match your loved one to an appropriate caregiver and provide training? Is the company willing to meet with the family one on one to ask questions or set up caregivers interviews? This will make the transition to care a lot smoother than meeting the caregiver the first day of care.

Questions:

Is the home care company you are using a licensed certified Agency or a registry that uses independent contractors? Note that 85% of the home care companies in the DC metro area are registries and or have a registry side to their business.

Does the home care company provide national criminal background checks or just local background checks? The states aren't connected to each other in terms of background checks.. You could have a caregiver with an assault charge from another state move to the area and a local background check would not have a record of the assault.

What is the home care company's retention rate? You don't want to work with a company that will send a revolving door or caregivers.

What is the home care company's hiring process? What is their accessibility? Can you reach a live human being 24 hours a day 7 days a week?

This meeting, hosted by Grace Parish & Seabury Congregational Resources is one of a series of meetings for parish representatives for older adult ministries and is open to anyone with a heart for older adult ministries. For more information: www.seaburyresources.org



GEDS Welcomes Malcolm Lester



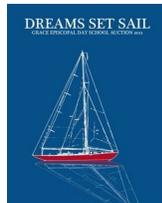
The month of February began with a well attended reception welcoming our incoming **Head of School, Malcolm Lester**. He was joined by his family, friends and the larger Grace community.

Malcolm discovered when speaking about Grace to different friends, that they had connections to Grace that he had not known about before. It just made his decision that "Grace Is the Place" all that easier.

The following week, the whole school turned out for **Art Night**. The children, parents and faculty joined together to make mosaic tiles depicting the animal life of the Chesapeake Bay. Older students put together a large mosaic depiction of Bay life during art classes. The mosaic will be installed at the Kensington campus as a culminating activity for the integrated units of study across the grade levels. Our youngest students

created a mural that represents plants and animals in the Bay.

The PTO **Winter Ice Skating Social** was well attended. Many alumni families came back to enjoy the festive evening. PTO is gearing up for the annual spring auction. The theme this year is "**Dreams Set Sail**" Set your sails to join us on **April 21st** at the Kensington Armory for an evening of bidding, delicious food and catching up with friends. The most important part of all is the raising of funds for the students of Grace School.



Donna Harshman
Acting Head of School

Fiscal Officer Report

The operating budget for 2012 remains on a pace to be in balance in 2012, consistent with trends seen during the last six (6) months of 2011 and during January. Pledge giving remained strong during January, with a total of **\$37,278.87 received in pledges during the month, equal to an average of \$9,319.72 per Sunday**. The 2012 budget was based on an average of \$9,245.28 in pledge giving per Sunday (remembering that there are 53 Sundays in 2012).

Reflecting everyone's efforts to fulfill their pledge payments in 2011, only \$598.75 was received in "prior-year" pledge payments during the first two (2) months of 2012, sharply below trends seen in previous years. While the budget estimate for this area was reduced by 50% in 2012 from the 2011 budget level (from \$8,000.00 projected in 2011 back to \$4,000.00 projected in 2012), it appears that receipts in this area could fall as much as \$2,000.00 below the reduced projected level in this area for 2012 based on trends to date.

Reflecting the great success of our Every Member Canvass for 2012, and the increased commitment to pledge (an increase of 34 pledges was seen in 2012

over the total of 188 pledges received for 2011, an increase of 18%), only \$2,815.00 was received in "no pledge" giving during the first two (2) months of 2012, including a total of \$1,310.00 in "no pledge" contributions received during February.

Despite the fact that the budget estimate in this area was lowered by \$8,500.00 in FY 2012 from the 2011 level of \$36,000.00 (a drop of 23.5%), it appears that actual receipts in this area could fall as much as \$10,000.00 below the budget estimate in this income account in 2012. Offsetting this decrease to a large extent is the high level of "plate offerings" received each Sunday – a total of \$2,758.50 was received in "plate offerings" during the first two (2) months of the year, which is on a pace to reach almost \$18,000.00 in 2012, an increase of roughly \$6,000.00 over experience in 2011 and the basis for the 2012 projection in this area of \$12,000.00.

Finally, the higher-than-anticipated level of space use contributions during the first two (2) months of year indicates that income in this area could exceed the budget estimate for space use by approximately \$3,000.00.

All of these fluctuations in income combine to indicate that income in 2012 could fall slightly below projected levels. At the same time, the "good news" in the area of expenses is that we have had only one unanticipated maintenance expense during the first two (2) months of the year (repairs to the church sound system) – combined with the warm winter which has produced an offsetting savings in snow removal costs and somewhat lower than anticipated utility costs, at the present time it appears that operating expenses can be managed to ensure a balanced budget in 2012.

As always, members of the Church Finance Committee and the Vestry can respond to concerns in this area, and I am happy to answer any questions as well.

Gib Baily
Church Fiscal Officer

One More Note . . . from the Rev. Andrew W. Walter

The Super Bowl is over. Another football season has come and gone.

Historically, the Super Bowl is not the most exciting game of the season, but for the last several years, the “big” game has been thrilling, often coming down to one crucial play or drive late in the fourth quarter. In 2008, the New York Giants defeated the New England Patriots when Giants’ receiver David Tyree made, what is now known as, “the helmet catch.” A year later, the Pittsburgh Steelers overcame the Arizona Cardinals with a 78-yard drive, culminating in a spectacular touchdown reception by Santonio Holmes. And this year, Mario Manningham made an incredible catch to turn the momentum in favor of the Giants who were once again playing the Patriots.

It happened with only a few minutes remaining on the clock. The Patriots had the ball and a 17-15 lead. Needing only a first down to maintain possession and essentially win the game, the Patriots couldn’t do it and were forced to punt, giving the Giants the football on their own 12-yard line – the end zone, and Super Bowl victory, 88-yards away.

Manningham lined up for the Giants’ first play. Only one Patriots’ defender faced him from across the line of scrimmage. When the ball was snapped, Manningham started to the inside, before cutting outside, and then streaking down the sidelines. The Giant’s quarterback, Eli Manning, threw ball toward Manningham, arching in high and long so as to avoid the two defenders now closing in on Manningham. As the ball flew in over his shoulder, Manningham grabbed it with both hands, just as he was hit – and hit hard – by the Patriots defenders, knocking him out of bounds.

The referee signaled a fair catch. But in all the blur, no one could tell for sure. Did both of Manningham’s feet touch the ground inbounds? Or, was he out of bounds? The Patriots’ coach challenged the call. The referees went to the instant replay. The television showed the play over and over again, in slow motion, from all sorts of different angles...

Imagine if you could do that with your life. What if you could look at your life in instant replay? What if you view certain moments over and over again, in slow motion, from all different perspectives? What would you see?

Well, that is what Lent is all about.

The first Christians prepared for the annual observance of Christ’s passion and resurrection with a season of penitence and fasting, and ever since, Lent has been a time of abstinence and sacrifice. On Ash Wednesday, which marks the beginning of Lent, the priest invites us to the observance of a Holy Lent “by prayer, fasting and self-denial,” and people customarily forsake some personal indulgence or comfort during Lent to the point that the season embodies what an old mentor of mine once described as “boot-camp” for the soul, a crash course in denying ourselves some worldly pleasure – chocolate, perhaps, or alcohol. Just the other day someone asked me, “What are you giving up for Lent?” – a common refrain this time of year.

Lent, though, is much more than 40 days of no sweets. Lent is the time of year when we try to find our spiritual bearings, to turn away from those things separating us from the Lord and reorienting ourselves in a more God-ward direction. We often hear the word “repentance” during the season of Lent, and “to repent” means simply “to change.”

Changing our lives begins by examining them openly and honestly, to see what is working and what is not. So, Lent is a time to look at the instant replay of our lives, in slow motion, from different angles, and to recognize those times when we are “inbounds” and “out of bounds.” This is not to make us feel guilty or bad about ourselves, but only to us stay inbounds and keep us moving toward our end goal - a deeper connection with God.

Lent is here. Let’s go to the videotape.



Mario Manningham's reception in Super Bowl XLVI

Have thoughts, comments or questions about Andrew’s articles (or even his sermons)? He would love to hear from you.

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