

Commentary on the Gospel for Tue, Mar 8th 2016

As we reflection writers rotate through about every six weeks (I am just coming off a sabbatical from writing in an effort to recharge my batteries), we all get one during Lent. Mine hits right about in the middle.

I have a perpetually ambiguous relationship with the season as do, I suspect, many other Catholics. It slowly builds toward the day I consider the most joyful day of the year: Easter. I think I've written before about my son's and my somewhat non-religious (but hardly blasphemous) tradition of a discreet fist bump when Simon Peter goes into the tomb to find it empty with the burial shroud on the ground and the rest of burial dress rolled up neatly in the corner.

And if one were to harbor doubts about the literal accuracy of this account, who would make up details like this? If it were a fable it would be some generic reference to Jesus rising from the dead. So as we build toward that day my spirits begin to lift.

But there's the part of Lent that's harder for me. The self-examination required is really difficult if you're going to do it right. There's more to it than going to the parish fish fry and drinking beer (which I happen to have given up this Lent). I suppose there's a bit of sacrifice there; perhaps you really wanted a steak and not fish, but realistically that's not much of a sacrifice — just a tradition.

But let me get back to the self-examination part. I'm at the point in my life where I can take a good long look backwards but I've been blessed with good health so probably I can figure on a good long look forwards. We all stand on that uncertain path that we call our lives. We've all done things that we aren't proud of and we get 40 days to examine them, and I hope I do a good job. But the real joy — at least for me — is when I can muster the resolve to truly leave them behind and bound towards Easter with a heart that genuinely wants to do better.

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