

Upfront

I went to the Cathedral (Basilica of St. John the Baptist) every day (except Saturday) during Holy Week. Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday and (a ridiculously overcrowded) Easter Sunday Mass. This is not a proclamation of my religiosity. For sure, I'm no saint, as the saying goes. And my daily pilgrimage didn't require an arduous journey – I live three blocks west and one block north of the church...it's a 7-minute walk if I go slow.

I don't share this to evangelize or advocate for anything. But, over the course of six days commemorating the improbably fantastic circumstances surrounding a gruesome death, leading to what-might-have-been a birthday party for the mother of my girls the day after the bunny and his baskets came and went, something happened to me. Something I can't eloquently describe. Some of my rage surrendered to calm. Peace sent anxiety away for a while. The voice in my head quieted itself to a whisper; and, often, its words were kind. I didn't do a single wrong thing that was "bad" enough to remember and regret.

In recent years, many theologians have suggested that believers perform good deeds or, in similar fashion, honorably affirm the positive aspects their faith. However, I, like many habit-bound Catholics, pursue the challenge of self-denial as a sacrificial vow. This year, I gave up sweets. Desserts. Chocolate (which I nibble on at least five times a day, every day). Pancakes with syrup. A spoonful of gelato in the middle of the night. These are things that I consume more of than you do...I am certain of it.

I "gave up" sweets last year, too. A commitment that lasted about three days, falling far short of the full Lenten 40. Somehow, though, I "made it" this year. Then, I binged on both pecan pie and chocolate cake at brunch to break the fast, and I was sick until well after dark on Sunday

night. Suffering leads to salvation; but overindulgence sends you right back to the bathroom again.

I am not sufficiently arrogant (does that come as a surprise to you?) to purport to know the answers to life's great questions, neither the existential nor the divine. But I know this: I feel better than usual, and it might be directly related to the way I celebrated Lent and its culmination, Easter week. I think I'll try the same routine next year.

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