

Life is a journey. Throughout our journey of life we make choices. These choices include wrong directions at times and the possibility of falling off the path on our journey when making bad choices; ending up at dead ends and in darkness. Life is uncertain - we are never quite sure where these paths will take us or when it will end. Sure, there is a sense of adventure, of possibility and of the unknown. There is even a sense of danger at times. But our journey doesn't stop. We keep on going with the help of family and friends and with the hope and our faith as well as skills that we may have to handle what may come. There will be sadness when things don't go as hoped, but we remain confident that God is there to pick up the pieces and make us whole again.

Lent is this kind of a journey. This is the season for journeys of the heart. Beginning on Ash Wednesday and ending on Easter, Lent is the amazing transformation of death into life, endings transformed into beginnings and in dead ends that become a source for new possibilities.

Lent gives us the chance to reflect on the journey of life and on ourselves. It helps us to think about life's limitations and missteps and dead ends. It leads us down a path that shows us what is good, bad and downright ugly about our human nature. We see how easy it can be to stray from the path that we were meant to be on or sometimes even fall off it entirely. Lent helps us to be honest about ourselves.

Through Lent, we see darkness turn into light and the realization that we are never alone on our journey. Eighteen years ago, I was fully initiated into the Catholic Church through the RCIA Program here at Our Lady of Perpetual Help. During the Easter Vigil, I received a tiny flame, a burning candle, with the words, "Receive the light of Christ." Well, that light still burns. Maybe it's dimmed. Maybe it is only a small ember now. Maybe it's had to struggle against wind and cold. Maybe at times I have ignored it, or forgotten it. But the light is still there. During this Lenten season I ask

myself how I can turn that flicker of a light into a blaze. How can I fan that flame and make it grow?

On Ash Wednesday, ashes - the remnant of a flame -- were placed on our foreheads. While Ash Wednesday is about the ashes and what they stand for- our belief, our commitment and even our hope; Lent is about the fire. And so began the great work of these 40 days to turn our flickers into a blaze. It is a work of conversion and repentance. The work of praying more faithfully, loving more deeply. It is the work of returning to the path and continuing on our journey; our journey home. We want to be home. God wants us home. Part of that is because we are seeking to draw closer to God - the source and summit of our happiness.

Lent and Easter make it possible for us to continue on our paths, in what ever direction they may take us and doing it in the company of family and friends and the never ending love of God. We travel with hope knowing that the unknown future is known, just beyond our reach. We use all the faith and skills we have to make a difference in our lives as Jesus, Himself did. We will find that we are people with a purpose and direction. The path will lead us home - to a life forever with the love of God. On your journey this Lenten season, do me a favor. Stop and strive to see your flame. And along your way, strive to bring others the light of Christ because these 40 days are much more than the ashes. They are about that light and about rediscovering something we may have too easily forgotten. Our journey continues and the candle still burns. . .