

The Divine Comedy:

Notes from Pastor Darryl

March 2019

Lent is here (as of March 6) and with it comes my Lenten Fast.

Fasting is one of the three classic disciplines of Lent. And its purpose is to bring a person into closer relationship with God and with ourselves, each other, and the blessed and beautiful creation through the act of denial and abstinence.

But Fasting has gotten a bad rap in my opinion. It has gotten stereotyped as something that is akin to self-punishment and has often been the partner to religious shame and guilt. Punishment, guilt, and shame has nothing to do with Fasting. Fasting is a discipline that Christ, Moses, Buddha, Laozi, and just about every nun, monk, mystic, and seeker has employed to help them connect with God and discern God's will.

On Ash Wednesday, the traditional reading from the Hebrew Bible is from the Prophet Isaiah. Isaiah reminds the people of Israel,

“Will you call this a fast, a day acceptable to the Lord? Is not this the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of injustice, to undo the thongs of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke? Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, and bring the homeless poor into your house; when you see the naked, to cover them, and not to hide yourself from your own kin?” (Isa. 58: 6-7)

So, Fasting has a justice element to it, as well as a spiritual aspect to it. It has been used by our ancestors, by prophets, by Christ himself, to draw closer to God and be made more aware of those who live without adequate food and resources, and then to be drawn into a heart full of charity and compassion for the poor and poor in spirit.

I invite any of you to join me this Lent in this spiritual discipline. This Lent, I will be using the outlines of what our Muslim sisters and brothers use during the month of Ramadan. I mean, why reinvent the wheel when others have created something that works, right?

So here is the outline for Pastor Darryl's Ramadan-Inspired *Fast*:

- Begin the *Fast* on Ash Wednesday, March 6, 2019.
- Break the *Fast* with Pastor Darryl and others on Saturday, April 20, at 12:00 PM following the Easter Egg Hunt and the decorating of the Sanctuary for Easter services.
- During the *Fast*, you are invited to eat a humble breakfast before sunrise, and a humble dinner after dusk each day. During daylight hours, you may drink water, juice or herbal tea. All alcohol is abstained from during the weeks of Lent.
- If you need to take medications that require them to be taken with food, please eat! Or if you feel weak or nausea at any time during the *Fast*, please take nourishment! Again, fasting is never about punishing oneself and all medical advice ought to be followed.
- According to the classic rules of Lent, Sundays are considered “Mini-Easters” and are therefore Feast Days. You are invited, if you wish, to break your *Fast* each Sunday of Lent, or you may continue to *Fast* on Sundays, as well. If you Feast on Sundays, then you’ll fast 40 days, if you keep the fast on Sundays, then you’ll fast 46 days.
- Pastor Darryl will be creating an email group for those taking on the *Fast* and will send weekly Bible verses, prayers, quotes and articles for inspiration and motivation. This will be our way to be in this *Fast* together and to form community around the *Fast*.
- Lastly, you are invited to calculate how much, if any, money you will save through the *Fast* by skipping meals or not getting that afternoon latte. And then you are encouraged to donate those funds to an agency that works on food scarcity and/or global hunger.

In Matthew’s Gospel, Jesus tells his disciples, “when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, so that your fasting may be seen not by others but by God who is in secret; and God who sees in secret will reward you.” It has been my experience that God has rewarded me many times through the discipline of Fasting. I hope you’ll consider joining me in mine this Lent.

Peace. Love. Understand.

Pastor Darryl