

He lives within my heart . . .

I spotted the ice cold sugar-free caffeine-free A&W root beer in the cooler and knew Austin, my grandson, would enjoy the treat. Although restrictions aren't as stringent as they were when he first started a medical diet to stop seizures, this root beer was one his mom gave the go-ahead on from the beginning (in limited quantities). Root beer sounded good to me as well for something different, so I took two to the cash register then anticipated Austin's excitement as I popped the cap and enjoyed the fizz myself.

Upon returning to town, we went to the Lutz home. As usual, Austin and his sister came running with hugs and exclamations to welcome us, creating that rush of excitement that warms my heart like none other.

Tayvin was excited about the licorice and I showed Austin what I had for him. "Thank you, Grandma!" was his initial reaction after which he hesitated and gave it back to me.

"I'm fasting from pop for church," he said rather seriously. "But you can save it and I'll have it later."

Oh my gosh. Was this really a 5-year-old who took a committed sacrifice to heart? He was among those in his Sunday school class and church who fasted from something for 10 days. He doesn't drink all that much pop anyway, but wouldn't you know that I'd show up. And he very admirably resisted.

Often times, people give up something for Lent from Ash Wednesday to Easter, typically something that you struggle to do without. Some are very committed and fight temptation no matter how difficult it might be. It seems others fall in to the New Year's resolution pattern when the good intention doesn't last long or is followed just when convenient.

Some faiths avoid having meat on Fridays during Lent. I recall my growing-up years when we typically had fish sticks or macaroni and cheese on Fridays at the school cafeteria. As a Methodist, we didn't follow those restrictions, but it wouldn't have been a real sacrifice for me as I've always loved macaroni and cheese.

We have a friend who works hard among numerous volunteers frying fish and serving beer at their church the seven Fridays prior to Easter. They serve lots and lots of beer. Churches are a bit more conservative in this area and somehow I surmise that the combination of church and beer might raise some eyebrows. But they make a tremendous amount of money to support their Christian school and it's a popular happening following tradition.

I recall the dinner party I planned once. It wasn't until everything was smelling pretty good and guests would be arriving when I realized that the chicken would be off limits for a majority of the people who were coming. It was Lent. Now what?

How rude to dangle a carrot in front of them as I didn't have another meat choice prepared. Oh well. It's not really a sacrifice if you don't have to fight temptation.

I didn't give up anything this season but attempted to make a conscious effort to take better care of myself. Okay, I slipped a few times. Some weeks were certainly better than others.

Despite anyone's commitment to sacrifice, there's still no comparison for the sacrifice Jesus made in order that our sins might be forgiven. What a gift. Christ withstood whippings and torture as people yelled in hatred. Did he yell back? No. He kindly asked that they be forgiven.

I was 4 when my Grandma Johnson died. I only vaguely remember her, but my Dad often referred to Easter being her favorite holiday. She was a church organist and I've been told she was quite the debater, be it Bible-related issues, political or whatever. Easter touched her heart as much or more than Christmas. It became a favorite of my dad as well, although his positive character found him making the best of whatever day he was experiencing.

Another Perspective

Written by Lori Pankonin

It seemed appropriate that we celebrated his life at his funeral service on Maundy Thursday seven years ago. Friends and family came together to share communion, a part of the historical events of Holy Week.

And Easter Sunday becomes complete when we sing that familiar tune with energy.

“He lives. He lives. Christ Jesus lives today. He walks with me and talks with me along life’s narrow way. He lives. He lives. Salvation to impart. You ask me how I know he lives, He lives within my heart.”

Hallelujah! Happy Easter.