

Being Catholic in Lent

by

Arlene Larsen

I would like to introduce myself my name is Arlene Larsen and I have just moved into St. Julia's parish this past December. Over the past fifty-five years I have lived in Waltham and have worshiped in both Our Lady Comforter of the Afflicted parish in Waltham and Our Lady Help of Christians in Newton. With my husband Andy of forty seven years, we have two adult children and one granddaughter. My profession over the years besides being a wife and mother has been a self-employed tax accountant and a certified hospital chaplain. (Two sure things in life, death & taxes).

Although Waltham has been my home city for so long and not far from Weston, when I moved into Weston I wanted to settle into a new place and a new parish. I started to go to morning Mass at St. Julia's and Colm was the first person that I met. We had a few conversations and he started to introduce me to parish life.

I was surprised (We have a God of many surprises) when I received an email from Colm asking me if I would share my experience of being Catholic during this Lenten season. As I reflected on this question, I put myself with Jesus in the desert. The 1st time I entered St. Julia's church was during Advent and on the table as I exit the church was a book called "Living Faith". I picked it up and one of the reflections was on the prophet who said "a voice of one crying out in the desert: Prepare the way of the Lord, make straight his paths" (Mk 1:3) Then the reflection went on about the Christian life is like the desert-sometimes beautiful and sometimes severe. It is a mixture of sweetness and pain. It is sometimes gentle, quiet, peaceful and sometimes difficult. It takes a lot of discipline to walk in the footsteps of the Lord. It's like walking in the desert-difficult yet beautiful. (taken from Living Faith). Again, during this Lenten season, we hear in Mark's gospel about Jesus forty days in the desert. (Mk 1:12-15)

As I reflect on my spiritual journey over the years my Catholic faith has at times been difficult but it mostly has been a blessing and a grace from God. It has given me the strength and knowledge that Jesus is always with me when I am in the quiet peaceful times and when I am in the desert during the difficult times. One of my favorite Psalm is the 23rd Psalm "The Lord is my Shepherd".

When I was at Our Lady Help of Christians, I was introduced by the pastor Fr. John Sassani to a painting of the fifth station of the cross called "Unison" (by Sieger Koder 1925-present) it is Simon carrying the cross with Jesus. The difference with this painting is that Simon is along side of Jesus and Jesus has one arm around Simon's waist walking side by side. This is how I see Jesus with me walking side by side. During this lent my prayer is that I try to discipline myself to be a faithful follower of Jesus and to walk in His footsteps. At times it may not be easy but I

know it will be beautiful with the Grace of God. Allowing Jesus to walk beside me this lent will determine for me the level of Joy I will have at Easter.

A Blessed Lent and a Happy Easter.