

The abundance of Lent

By [Martha-Lynn Corner](#)

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The past year of my life has contained more than its fair share of sorrow. Like most lives, happiness and joy were there too, but those were not the dominant flavors. Too much of the year was like a gruel I wish I could forget—an enormous swill of a stew with fear and misery stuck to the sides like week-old oatmeal. Thick, unappealing, and nauseating. The kind of thing best tossed in the trash.

Except we can't bury time that way. We can't trash what's happened to us any more readily than parts of ourselves, try as we might to force the lid on the whole rotten mess.

This Lent, as suggestions for Lenten disciplines have so clogged up my Facebook and Twitter and inbox that I've almost needed a Lent away from Lent, I've found myself spending some time thinking about the notion of fasting. Of holding back, going without, and what is erased. I came to the solid and most certain conclusion that this year, this Lent, nothing will bring me closer to the Spirit than a whole-hearted walk with abundance.

There is much I regret. There is much I would throw away. I've spent months feeling sad, guilty, less-than, whittling away at my child-of-Godness until the words "Lord, have mercy" have become a desperate plea instead of an assurance or promise. I wore knee-holes in my sackcloth during Advent, Christmas, Epiphany. As the psalmist so poignantly wrote, "My tears have been my food day and night."

A diet like that tends to age a person. It's shocking to me how much older I look, all of a sudden—how very much of the child I've left behind as new wrinkles and gray hairs appear. I'm 36, but at times feel I'm going on 80, and part of this is a sort of spiritual thinness and exhaustion that Lent is actually helping to heal.

Instead of refusing treats, I'm eating more of them. In general I've abstained from alcohol, but I've made time and space for one or two luxurious glasses of pinot noir and have savored every drop. I've taken up running, the muscles on my legs stronger and less shaky every day. I take my breaths from deep within my belly. I sit

and stand and imagine deep roots growing from the soles of my feet, grounding me in God's love and nearness. I take some time for silence every single day, and notice how full it is with love and Christ and promise and even, to my surprise, hope. I take extended afternoons to draw with my daughter or cuddle with my sun, and my skin pinks up like a peach. It's like I'm ripening.

So this aging, then, is more than just the passage of time—it's coming into fruition. And that is right and good. I am not the child I once was. There is some grief in that, and I honor it, but every stage left behind means that a new thing is germinating, being planted, finding nourishment and space to bloom.

This Lent I lean into the promises of development and growth. I sit still and breathe and eat sugary sweet things that are delightful to taste. I am seeing God more fully and completely as I work to be more fully and completely who God created me to be, and it is a discipline in which I find rest and rejoicing and a rich foretaste of the banquet for which Lent seeks to prepare us. Instead of fasting, this Lent, I've taken up feasting.

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