

*32963 Faith Column, 4/18/11  
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## ***Homework***

This past week, we talked to a young friend of ours who was engaged in learning his math lessons. He was complaining to us about the unfairness of his math teacher. He had correctly answered all the problems on his recent math test, but the teacher had nevertheless taken points off his total test score because he had forgotten to show his work. We commiserated.

Do you remember that expectation from your teachers? We do. The teachers wanted to see equations. They wanted proofs, little calculations, all the chicken scratchings that demonstrated the working of our minds and proved we had some grasp of the subject matter. It all had to be there. We needed to show the teachers that we got it, or they couldn't be sure that the answers we gave were arrived at legitimately. The answers alone were insufficient. No good. No points. It was as if to say, "Unless you can demonstrate how you got to the end, you don't deserve any credit for getting there. Do your homework and show it!"

We Christians are working our way toward Easter, week by week, as we take the annual journey through the season of Lent. We've almost made it. But getting there may be no real credit to us if we haven't done our "homework." Sure, Easter morning will roll around no matter how we've anticipated the day and whether or not we've put any effort into readiness. But will we truly be able to claim the joy of the event if we have not prepared ourselves by doing our homework?

The traditional "homework" of Lent included the spiritual disciplines of solitude, silence, prayer and fasting. This hard work was assigned to faithful people with the expectation that it would help them to recognize their primary reliance should be on God alone, not upon the many distractions which cluttered their lives. When life was stripped of non-essentials, God alone remained to see them through.

Is this a lesson you have learned? Some of us learn it through the practice of spiritual disciplines, but some of us don't master that lesson until we are forced by circumstances beyond our control to rely upon the bedrock of strength and stability which God's love alone can provide.

Has illness or grief or hardship ever shaken your world and stripped your life of old certainties? Then perhaps without life's customary props and

braces and supports, you have turned to God and found you still had enough, in fact more than enough, to see you through and bring you to new life.

Have you learned this lesson about the utter reliability of God? Then you've done the homework necessary for a real Easter celebration! And of course, the demonstration that you've done your homework should be apparent for all to see. If you've done the work, let it show – in your hope, your confidence, your kindness, your willingness to forgive, and your generosity! And who knows? Seeing what you've learned may just may teach the lesson of Lent to someone else!