

A View from the Pew

by Deacon Greg Kandra

Do-Si-Don'ts

Do-si-dos are my downfall. I've tried to be good this Lent. I have tried to give up sweets. I have been successful at my biggest sacrifice—meat—and have subsisted mostly on fish.

But in a corner of my office, on a shelf, is a box of Girl Scout cookies that continues to taunt me. They are called “Do-si-dos”—peanut butter sandwich cookies. I bought the box from a colleague who was selling them for his daughter. (Did you know you can bury them online?) They sat there on my shelf, quietly, for weeks. Meek. Unobtrusive. Politely minding their own business.

Now they are my tormentors.

As I finish a salad for lunch, they whisper to me. “Here we are,” they sing. “Nibble nibble. Wouldn't you like a peanut butter cookie? HmMMM? Just one?”

Before I can say, “Get thee behind me, Do-si-dos,” I've grabbed the box and shoved a fistful of cookies in my mouth. My desk ends up strewn with crumbs.

Bless me, Father, for I have sinned.

Most of us struggle like this every year, of course. Giving up something for Lent is like making a New Year's resolution, only worse. First, it comes just a few short weeks after New Year's. And then, it comes with all that bonus guilt. To backslide during Lent is to scramble down that slippery slope toward sin. Temptations loom larger.

Some people are able to handle the challenges of Lent, no problem. Once, when the president of CBS News arrived at a meeting on Ash Wednesday with ashes on his forehead, the staff asked him what he was giving up for Lent.

“Sugar,” he replied. Of course, he had a background in sports and was built like a jockey. He's disciplined. He's focused. I'm sure he never met a celery stick he didn't like.

Other people are more sensible. They give up things they know they can easily do without. Like, say, broccoli.

My wife, however, is in a class all her own. This year, in addition to forgoing meat, she decided to give up dairy products. Suddenly, soy milk appeared at the table. “It's really pretty good,” Siobhain told me over dinner, encouraging me to give it a try. She sounded like she meant it, but I don't for one minute intend to find out for myself. I'll just take her word for it. Got milk?

Of course, in a couple weeks, this will all be history. Our forty days of sacrifice are nearing an end. Next week comes Palm Sunday and then, at long last, Easter. (Alleluia!) We will rejoice in the resurrection, happily celebrating a world reborn. We will lift our voices and our hearts in thanksgiving. Christ conquered death and sin. Break out the cookies.

Until then, I'll try to ignore the little voices taunting me from the box on my shelf. Lead us not into temptation.

After all, at this late stage of Lent, the last thing I want to do is give in to what I've given up.

