

This week's Lenten Lesson is from Lay Chaplain Blake Singer.

The Journey of Lent

In Pope Francis' Ash Wednesday homily this year, he said that "Lent is a journey of return to God."¹ We often talk about Lent as a journey; a journey of return to God, a journey through the wilderness, and eventually, a journey to the cross. All of this is true. After all, who am I to argue with the pope? But I think there's an inherent danger in talking about Lent as *our* journey. It makes me feel like Lent is about me and the things I can do to do Lent right. It gives me a false sense of security, that in my acts of piety and fasting I can complete the journey on my own. I start to think that maybe, after 40 days, I can make myself holy, I can save myself, and I can return to God just by my own volition.

But what happens when I inevitably lose my way along the journey? What happens if I get distracted, take a wrong turn, and never make it out of the wilderness? What happens if the journey of Lent ends up being so overwhelming that I can't make it to the end? What if I don't have the strength within me to return to God by Easter?

That's the problem with talking about Lent as *our* journey. If it's solely up to us, we will fail. No matter how many things we "give up" or "take on" over 40 days, we can never complete it on our own. We can't make ourselves holy. We can't save ourselves from things like evil, sin, and death, and we'll never be able to return to God without God's help. This leads me to believe that Lent is less about saving ourselves and more about recognizing our need to be saved. It's ok to talk about Lent as our journey to God, but more importantly, Lent is God's journey to us. It's a journey that after 40 days always ends at the cross, the point in time and space where our journey and God's journey intersect, a tangible sign that there's no length God will not go to bring us back to God's self.

¹ [Pope at Ash Wednesday Mass: 'Lent is a journey of return to God' - Vatican News](#)