

This morning, a friend told me that March 1st
is her unofficial New Year's Day
Because January and February were such a blur.

The Post-Holiday Recovery.

The Snow.

The Flu.

The News.

The Grief.

Just two months in, 2026 has been a tough one for me so far.
Have you felt it, too?

According to my friend's philosophy about March 1st...
Today's a new day...a new season...it's time for a reset.
...and personally, I am so grateful it is time for Lent.

Being honest with you, I've never been more relieved that Lent is here.
Most years, it's Christmas morning I'm counting down the days for. This
year, though, I am ready for Lent, and God knows I need it...we need it.

Today is Day 12 of Lent...

On the 12th Day of Lent, what would we give each other?

Not 12 drummers drumming...wrong season.

This quiet season of Lent doesn't get much commercial attention, does it?
No Lenten blowups for the front yard or Lenten light displays.
No Lent calendars that pop open 40 days in a row, like in Advent...
Definitely no Lenten candy...that would be ironic.

There isn't even a Lent section in the Hallmark Store.
St. Patrick's Day, yes, and Easter too is on full display now,
But what about Ash Wednesday and Lent? They don't really have a market
for greeting cards.

Here's a thought on what I would give for Lent, in 2026.

If I could design a Lenten card...in a purple envelope...inside, it would say
simply this...

Be honest. How are you, really?

Just that.

Lent is about honesty.

Telling the truth about where our hearts might be broken, personally and
collectively.

For me, it's honestly not just January and February that have been a blur.
It goes back further.

Six months ago, on August 27...was the shooting at Annunciation Catholic Church in Minneapolis during an All School Mass.

My husband's best friend from grad school, Matt DeBoer, is the Principal there. And we used to go to church in Chicago with the parents of one of the children who was killed, Harper Moyski.

That tragic event shattered me.

In fact, over the weeks that followed, I would come here on Wednesday mornings to St. Margaret of Scotland, not to be inside, but to walk in circles around the perimeter of this building during the All School Mass attended by our children and parishioners...including my two little ones.

I felt so scared by the violence in our world, I couldn't bear to be more than an arm's reach away.

I imagine I'm not alone.

That there are others feeling anxious or sad about human suffering today. Maybe there are some here who've lost a loved one since last Easter... for whom this is the first Lent carrying that ache in your hearts.

I don't need to tell you about all that hurts and divides us in our country and in our world.

Of all the other things March 1st signifies, I also learned today that March 1st is also National Minnesota Day, which just felt significant in remembering Harper, and bearing witness to the hurt and division that our neighbors there and here are experiencing. You experience that in your own way.

What I am saying tonight is this.

Thank God for Lent.

I'm ready for Lent because this season is when suffering is **most visible** in the church. When loss is **front and center**. It's just **out in the open**.

In the form of ashes on our foreheads, and in the Stations of the Cross.

In whatever way we might be suffering, dear friends, here, we don't have to smile through it or just try harder or think happy thoughts.

Lent makes no such request.

We do not have to skip over the hard parts of our story and pretend that everything is really okay.

That is not what God asks.

During Lent, when God asks, "**Be honest. How are you really doing?**"

We've got time to really answer that question.

God isn't rushing us to wrap up the conversation, like small talk.

Hey, God knows, we may need **all 40 days**, and beyond, to recount the struggles, to confess our sins, to bear our wounds, to be honest with God about how it's really going on this human journey that's finite and hard.

After all, this is the season when Jesus himself was carrying the human weight of his own suffering, crucifixion, and death.

It may not make for a glossy greeting card.

But Lent gives us something even better than that.

It's the Good News.

The Good News, as Christians, is that we believe God knows from personal experience the **ache of human shoulders bearing a heavy burden**. God, too, knows the pain of loss and death.

There may not be such a thing as a life without suffering. But there is also no moment of suffering, not a single one, when God leaves our side.

One final message that could be inscribed on a Lenten greeting card comes from author Kate Bowler, whose Book of Blessings and Lenten Blog I'm reading right now.

As she wrote, just last week:

“Lent is the season made for exactly a moment like this.

Easter is coming, yes.

**But for now, we sit in the ashes of our broken dreams
and broken hearts, knowing that God sits here with us.**

So this Lent, we won't rush past the ache.

We won't apologize for it.

We will learn how to live with it, with enormous hope, together.”