

I remember a plumber who came to my house to do some work once, and I asked him if he did long hours in his job. He said that he used to, and many did, but that he doesn't anymore. He told me that lots of tradies, especially when they are younger work long hours and weekends as well, in order to get ahead. As a tradie, the more hours you work, the more you get paid, and so he said a lot of these guys would work 60 or 70 hour weeks in order to get ahead and make more money, so that they can have nice things for themselves and their families. But, he said he had often seen that after several years of them doing this, their partners would often leave them, because they were never at home, never investing in their relationship with their wife and kids; they were always chasing money and some better future.

I remember thinking how incredibly sad that was – that people would be so focused on some future goal that they thought would make them happy, that they lost the only thing that really mattered in their life anyway.

And it reminded me of another story I had heard – except that this story is more of a parable.

An American investment banker was at the pier of a small coastal Mexican village when a small boat with just one fisherman docked. Inside the small boat were several large yellowfin tuna. The American complimented the Mexican on the quality of his fish and asked how long it took to catch them.

The Mexican replied, “only a little while”. The American then asked why didn't he stay out longer and catch more fish? The Mexican said he had enough to support his family's immediate needs. The American then asked, “but what do you do with the rest of your time?”

The Mexican fisherman said, “I sleep late, fish a little, play with my children, take siestas with my wife, Maria, stroll into the village each evening where I sip wine, and play guitar with my amigos. I have a full and busy life.” The American scoffed, “I am a Harvard MBA and could help you. You should spend more time fishing and with the proceeds, buy a bigger boat. With the proceeds from the bigger boat, you could buy several boats, eventually you would have a fleet of fishing boats. Instead of selling your catch to a middleman you would sell directly to the processor, eventually opening your own cannery. You would control the product, processing, and distribution. You would need to leave this small coastal fishing village and move to Mexico City, then LA and eventually New York City, where you will run your expanding enterprise.”

The Mexican fisherman asked, “But, how long will this all take?”

To which the American replied, “15 to 20 years.”

“But what then?” Asked the Mexican.

The American laughed and said, “That's the best part. When the time is right you would announce an IPO and sell your company stock to the public and become very rich, you would make millions!” “Millions – then what?”

The American said, “Then you would retire. Move to a small coastal fishing village where you would sleep late, fish a little, play with your kids, take siestas with your wife, stroll to the village in the evenings where you could sip wine and play your guitar with your amigos.”

Sometimes, what we think will give us more in life, does not always give us more.

In the church calendar, we have just entered the season of Lent. Lent is the 40 days before Easter, and it is common during Lent for us to give up something, or to fast, just as Jesus did in the reading today.

In recent years Doctors have discovered many benefits from fasting:

**Balances Blood Sugar** – Fasting helps keep your energy levels steady by improving how your body handles sugar.

**Cleans & Repairs Your Cells** – Your body gets rid of damaged cells and makes new ones, which helps prevent diseases.

**Good for Your Heart** – It can lower bad cholesterol and blood pressure, which keeps your heart healthy.

**Gives Your Stomach a Break** – Your digestive system gets time to rest and reset.

**Improves Focus & Brain Power** – Fasting can help clear your mind, making it easier to focus.

**Better Sleep** – Some people sleep better when they fast because their bodies are more in sync.

**Makes You More Aware of What You Eat** – You pay more attention to food and how it affects your body.

**Can Help With Spiritual Growth** – Many religions use fasting to help people feel more connected and grateful.

**Slows Down Aging** – Some research shows fasting might help you stay younger for longer by reducing stress in your cells.

**Lowers the Risk of Diseases** – It may help prevent things like diabetes, heart problems, and even certain types of cancer.

Fasting isn't for everyone, and it's important to do it safely.

Fasting is one example of a spiritual discipline, that seems to take away from your happiness in the short term, but actually increases it in the long term.

At the core of spiritual disciplines is the idea that in letting go and losing, we actually gain more in happiness in peace. And Lent points to the ultimate message of Easter, which is that in dying to ourselves, we actually find unlimited life.

In Buddhism this is called attachment. Buddhism says that we suffer because of our craving and attachment to things. When we stop being attached, we stop suffering.

So, during Lent, why not think about something in your life that perhaps was good, but may have become an addiction and so now is not good for you. There are the obvious things like screen time, sweet foods or other bad habits. But sometimes habits that start off good can become bad.

Sometimes your gym habit can become an unhealthy obsession with perfecting your body that makes you unhappy every time you look in the mirror. Maybe having a break from the weights room is something that would actually make you happier in the long run.

Consider giving up something this Lent so that you may discover more happiness, space and peace in your life.