



PILCHARD'S

LENT

POLONY

# [MEDITATION ON FEASTING AND FASTING' ∴∴ THOUGHTS ON COMMUNITY, FOOD, & THE IMPORTANCE OF THE TABLE]

"A few summers ago, after a season of vacation and celebration, I began a fast. It's a diet, for lack of a better term – limiting my food intake to only lean proteins, fruits, and vegetables, with just a few whole grains. No dairy, caffeine, or alcohol. No gluten or sugar. Loads of water, piles of greens. There should be a better term than diet, because diet conjures up sugar-free Jell-O and deprivation, aspartame and fake food, and years and years of shame and misguided discipline.

*The word that helps me these days is fasting, although I'll plead permission to use it loosely. I have fasted strictly, as a spiritual discipline, consuming only broth and juice for a certain amount of time. But I'm using the word fasting these days as an opposite term to feasting – yin and yang, up and down, permission and discipline, necessary slides back and forth along the continuum of how we feed ourselves.*

Maybe certain people can develop a food perspective that they maintain seamlessly twelve months a year. Good for them. Maybe that's something I'll be able to do when I'm all grown-up and filled with moderation and wisdom. Probably not, though. I think I just might be one of those people who will always need some

guardrails along the way.

I love the feasting part of life. I don't want Thanksgiving without stuffing or Christmas without cookies and champagne. I don't want to give up our family tradition of deep-frying everything we can think of on New Year's Eve. *But I'm learning that feasting can only exist healthfully – physically, spiritually, and emotionally – in a life that also includes fasting.*

The weeks between Thanksgiving and New Year's are, for me, a feast. Sage stuffing, sweet potato biscuits with maple butter. I love the traditions and tastes of the season – Aunt Mary's raisin bread, toasted and topped with melting sharp cheddar slices; my mother-in-law's apple-sized peanut butter truffles; my cousin's dark chocolate sea salted toffee.

For all those reasons and a thousand more, the holiday season isn't one I want to spend eating nothing but greens. I love being present to every bite of it, tasting it, absorbing every part of it. And then with January comes a time to fast, to recalibrate my appetites, both physically and emotionally. *Fasting gives me a chance to practice the discipline of not having what I want at every moment, of limiting my consumption, making space in my body and in my spirit for a new year, one that's not driven by my mouth, by wanting, by consuming.*

The other feasting season in my life is summer. We move up to the lake and pretend we own a bed-and-breakfast, a house full of friends and kids, an endless cycle of washing sheets and towels. It's no time for moderation. We take the kids to the beach and stop for pizza on the way home, balancing the boxes on our wagons full of sandy, happy, tired kids. We eat fresh blueberry pie for breakfast with strong, dark coffee, and gobble up steak tacos wrapped in tiny foil bundles from Su Casa. We stand in line at Sherman's Dairy, waiting for our number to

be called, debating flavours – chocolate malt supreme? Coconut almond fudge? Blue moon? – just the way we did when we were little.

And then the summer ends, and we pack up all the towels and life jackets and sand toys. When we get home, the fast begins – appropriate, timely, the right next step in the dance of feasting and fasting.

I'm a person of great appetites. I love to eat. I love to talk about food, think about food, play with food. The grocery store is my happy place, and the farmers market is my shrine. I'm never happier than when I'm planning a menu or passing bowls around my table, fragrant and full.

At the same time, though, every holiday season my jeans get too tight, and every summer I could swear that someone has shrunk my swimsuit bottoms. I so easily let my appetites get away from me – one more glass of red wine, one more slice of sharp cheddar cheese on raisin bread, one more forkful of vinegary, salty french potato salad every time I walk by it...

...But if the last few years have taught me anything at all, it's that *the very things you think you need most desperately are the things that can transform you the most profoundly when you do finally decide to release them.* The college I had my heart set on, the boyfriend I believed would be my husband, the job that defined me, the pregnancy I believed would end a season of longing and loss. Each one, pulled from my grubby fists, each one teaching me something fundamental about desire and transformation. *Over and over, I learned the hard way that the thing I'm clinging to can be the thing that sets me free.*

So I called the doctor, and on a warm summer night, he broke the news: no gluten, no dairy, no caffeine, no alcohol, no sugar. Didn't

he know that my favorite food groups are bread, cheese, wine, and coffee? But against all odds, I was ready. *No one changes their life until the pain is unmanageable,* and in all sorts of ways for me, the pain level had reached the unmanageable point. I followed his advice for more than four months. I felt great. I lost some weight, started sleeping better, didn't ache at all. Success!

But at the same time, I felt like I wasn't living in the same world everyone else was living in. It was like choosing to live with the volume turned all the way down, or going to the beach but not being able to put my feet in the ocean. My senses were starving. Eating such a restricted diet plan on an ongoing basis wasn't going to work for me. It worked through the fall, but began to fall apart in advance of Christmas, predictably, and unraveled completely on vacation – conch fritters, rum punch. To not eat and drink those things that were so connected to that place I'd come to love over the years felt counter to the way I wanted to live. *There has to be a way to live with health and maturity and intention while still honouring the part of me that loves to eat, that sees food as a way to nurture and nourish both my body and my spirit.*

*I'm working to find a middle ground – some fasting, some feasting. At some points, gobbling up life with every bite; in other seasons, mastering the appetites and tempering the desires. My work these days is to find that fine balance – allowing my senses to taste every bite of life without being driven by appetites, indiscriminate and ravenous. Some days I get it right, and some days I don't, but I do know that along the way, the process is healing me."*

(Shauna Niequist, author. "Feasting and Fasting" chapter excerpt from *Bread and Wine*. | Follow her @sniequist)

# INTRODUCTION TO LITURGICAL SEASON I

**Lent** [lənt] noun : (In the Christian Church,) the period preceding Easter, which is devoted to fasting, abstinence, and penitence in commemoration of Christ's fasting in the wilderness. In the Western Church it runs from Ash Wednesday to Holy Saturday, and so includes forty weekdays.

(New Oxford American Dictionary)

Lent (*from Latin 'Quadragesima,' meaning 'Fortieth'*) : "A solemn religious observance in the liturgical calendar of many Christian denominations that begins on Ash Wednesday and covers a period of approximately six weeks before Easter Sunday. The traditional purpose of Lent is the preparation of the believer through prayer, penance, repentance of sins, almsgiving, atonement, and self-denial. Its institutional purpose is heightened in the annual commemoration of Holy Week, marking the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus, which recalls the tradition and events of the New Testament beginning on Friday of Sorrows, further climaxing on Jesus' crucifixion on Good Friday, which ultimately culminates in the joyful celebration on Easter Sunday of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ. During Lent, many of the faithful commit to fasting or giving up certain types of luxuries as a form of penitence. Many Christians also add a Lenten spiritual discipline, such as reading a daily devotional, to draw themselves near to God. Lent is traditionally described as lasting for forty days, in commemoration of the forty days which, according to the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke, Jesus spent, before beginning his public ministry, fasting in the desert, where he endured temptations by the Devil. In most of the West, it begins on Ash Wednesday to Holy Saturday. This calculation makes Lent last 46 days, if the 6 Sundays are included, because there is typically no obligation to fast on the 6 Sundays in

Lent." (Wikipedia)

(Chris Kamalski,

Visual Liturgist | Follow him @chriskamalski)

A recent infographic in Mail & Guardian, entitled "**Poverty in South Africa,**" highlighted the stark disparity that exists throughout the Rainbow Nation in 2015. Released in the latest Stats SA report to reflect the current national and provincial poverty lines, the results were startling in their description of the harsh reality a majority of South Africans live in each day. Some of the results include:

- 54% of South Africans (27 million +) currently live below the national poverty line.
- Those within "upper bound" national poverty line, the highest of 3 actual poverty lines in South Africa, live on R779 per month (~\$68/month given February 2015 exchange rates) per person.
  - This translates to R25.50/day (~\$2/day) to survive on!

As human beings, let alone followers of Jesus, we have a mandate to empathise with, and compassionately engage with, this reality. This isn't merely a set of stark statistics designed to be retweeted and then promptly forgotten, but a daily reality that affects (many of) your neighbours, if not your own family or someone you consider a friend. Throughout the season of Lent this year, as we gather around the Table in community and prayerfully consider how best to embrace the classic Lenten disciplines of fasting, prayer, and almsgiving, we are convicted anew to move towards those less fortunate around us, with deliberate, painful acts of compassionate sacrifice.

Lent is a season of preparation to identify with the coming celebration of the death of Christ. What if fasting moved from a largely secretive, personal exercise in cleansing to an empathetic act of engaging in solidarity and justice with our neighbour? What if it was less

about what we limit (screen time, certain addictive behaviours, etc.) and more about *who we identify with as fellow human? To lighten the heavy-handedness a bit, what if we sought to deeply enjoy canned tins of pilchards and large tubes of polony, simultaneously breaking our stereotypes of what a meal should consist of?* How could our families, our neighbourhoods – heck, our neighbours! – be changed?

**Welcome to Lent 2015, 'Pilchards and Polony,' 3rd Place.** We pray that the journey of fasting in solidarity with the poor is deeply transformative for you, and more importantly, your neighbour, this Lenten season.

"Is this the kind of fast I have chosen, only a day for a man to humble himself? Is it only for bowing one's head like a reed and for lying on sackcloth and ashes? Is that what you call a fast, a day acceptable to the Lord? Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen: to loose the chains of injustice and untie the cords of the yoke, to set the oppressed free and break every yoke? Is it not to share your food with the hungry and to provide the poor wanderer with shelter – when you see the naked, to clothe him, and not to turn away from your own flesh and blood? Then your light will break forth like the dawn, and your healing will quickly appear; then your righteousness will go before you, and the glory of the Lord will be your rear guard."

(Isaiah 58:5-8, NIV)



**THE POVERTY LINE IS A MEASURE USED TO SEPERATE THE POOR FROM THE REST. STATISTICS SOUTH AFRICA CALCULATES THE POVERTY LINE BY DETERMINING WHAT FOOD AND NON-FOOD ITEMS ARE ESSENTIAL FOR DAILY SURVIVAL**

## [INTERVIEW WITH A MOM WHO DEEPLY EMPATHIZES WITH THE POOR::: WHY GATHER AROUND THE TABLE?]

Q: Why gather around the Table?

A: "Food is an equaliser, and food around a table even more so. We all need food to stay alive. So when we are all sitting, we are all on the same level partaking in this act that keeps us alive. Gathering around a table reminds us that we are still in this all together."

Q: How does fasting in solidarity with the poor change your own heart? Why not simply give money and keep living in the same manner?

A: "Firstly it gives you empathy – it gives you the opportunity to put yourself in their shoes and gain understanding of their reality. That not only should create a compassionate heart, but also should motivate you to do what is necessary to life the burden of the poor, not as a hero but as a compassionate fellow human. Secondly, our world is greedy and has created systems to put status and wealth as measurements of value. When we act in solidarity with the poor we break that hold and remind not only ourselves but the world that our value is not based on what we have or how happy our lives are."

Q: As a new mother of a 10-month old who is also deeply empathetic with the poor, how do you reconcile providing for our daughter with loving our neighbours equally well?

A: "This is probably the hardest thing to do since all any parent ever wants is the best for their child. The world would want to say the best is having all the latest gadgets and getting all the best stuff, but loving our daughter well means choosing what is best for her with what we have. The best includes spending time with

those living in under-resourced communities and sharing what we have whenever we have the opportunity."

(Maxie Kamalski is not only my amazing wife and an incredible mother to our daughter Mia, but is the most empathetic and kind-hearted person I have ever met. She loves the poor deeply, believes strongly in the dignity of their humanity, and has devoted much of her life to bettering the lives of her South African brethren.

@lovegoodmore, @maxiekamalski).

27 MILLION  
SOUTH AFRICANS  
LIVE ON LESS THAN  
R25 PER MONTH

THAT IS R25,50 FOR FOOD AND NO  
TRANSPORT, CLOTHING, SANITARY

## [LITURGY FOR THE SEASON]

Each week, gather family and friends around your table. While sharing a fresh cup of coffee or tea, join together in a fast of solidarity with *"the least of these brothers of mine"* (Matthew 25:40) giving witness through your identification with the reality and plight of our fellow South Africans in need all around us, while simultaneously taking seriously Jesus' teaching to fast *"so that it will not be obvious to men that you are fasting, but only to your Father, who is unseen; and your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you"* (Matthew 6:18). Through fasting, prayer, almsgiving, and thoughtful discussion in the Scriptures, engage the reality that Lent is a season to take seriously the invitation of John the Baptist to *"prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him"* (Matthew 3:3).

**Ash Wednesday** (Wed, Feb 18th) :: Joel 2:1-17; Is 58:1-12; Ps 51:1-17; 2 Cor 5:20b-6:10; Matt 6:1-6, 16-21

**Lent Week 1** (Sun, Feb 22nd) :: Genesis 9:8-17; Psalm 25:1-10; 1 Peter 3:18-22; Mark 1:9-15

**Lent Week 2** (Sun, Mar 1st) :: Genesis 17:1-7, 15-16; Psalm 22:23-31; Romans 4:13-25; Mark 8:31-9:9

**Lent Week 3** (Sun, Mar 8th) :: Exodus 20:1-17; Psalm 19; 1 Corinthians 1:18-25; John 2:13-22

**Lent Week 4** (Sun, Mar 15th) :: Numbers 21:4-9; Psalm 107:1-3, 17-22; Ephesians 2:1-10; John 3:14-21

**Lent Week 5** (Sun, Mar 22nd) :: Jer 31:31-34; Psalm 51:1-12, 119:9-16; Hebrews 5:5-10; John 12:20-33

**Lent Week 6** (Sun, Mar 29th, "Palm Sunday") :: Psalm 118:19-29; Phil 2:5-11; Mark 11:1-11, John 12:12-16

"The music, the prayers, the bowing and rising, the incense – all of it was breaking down my defenses. That's what good liturgy does. It breaks your heart open and turns you towards God."

(Fred Bahnson, Soil and Sacrament)

ON  
AFRICANS  
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ONE-FOOD ITEMS LIKE HOUSING  
WARE AND EDUCATION - EACH DAY

## 11 DINNER PARTY RECIPES ::: ENCOURAGING LIFE AT THE TABLE

As Julia Child (!) writes in *My Life in France*, “*No one is born a great cook. One learns by doing.*” Even the most natural chefs will admit to you if pressed that their skill and passion was almost always first borne out of repeated exposure learning in the kitchen with someone they loved. It’s as if the creation of gourmet dishes takes place most naturally in the company of community, belying the mythical image of the solitary chef slaving away in front of the stove. To spur the deepening of community (and incredible shared meals!), each liturgical season will feature recipes themed in the spirit of the season. *Bon Appétit!*

**Note for Lenten Fasts:** The recipes for the Lenten season are simple, healthy, and for the most part, require fairly affordable food ingredients available for all. Depending on your personal conviction and where you land in seeking to fast in solidarity with the poor in South Africa, feel free to adjust the recipes to save money/ increase your solidarity as you see fit. We stand with you in this experience of our neighbour’s daily reality!

### Robin’s Super-Healthy Lentil Soup

“When I’ve been doing a little too much feasting and need to bring things back a little bit, this is my go-to. I make a big pot of my friend Robin’s lentil soup, sometimes doubling the recipe. It’s so helpful for me to have something healthful and flavourful and – most important – already prepared. This is an endlessly versatile recipe, as most of my favourite recipes are. Sometimes I add leeks or shallots instead of garlic and onions, and I love adding fresh rosemary or a little rosemary salt at the end with the vinegar. A dusting of Parmesan dresses it up for guests, as does some fresh parsley or celery leaves.”

### Ingredients

3 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil  
2 cups onions, chopped  
1 cup celery stalks, chopped  
1 cup carrots, chopped  
2 garlic cloves, chopped  
6 cups chicken or vegetable broth  
1 and 1/2 cups lentils  
1 large can diced tomatoes in juice  
A splash of balsamic vinegar  
Salt and pepper to taste

### Directions

Heat oil in heavy large saucepan over medium-high heat.

Add onions, celery, carrots, and garlic; sauté until vegetables begin to brown, about 15 minutes.

Add broth, lentils, and tomatoes with juice, and bring to boil.

Reduce heat to medium-low, cover, and simmer until lentils are tender, about 35 minutes.

Season with salt, pepper, and a splash of balsamic vinegar.

### Serves 6 people

(Recipe by Shauna Niequist, excerpted from “Feasting and Fasting” chapter in *Bread and Wine*)

### Risotto with Cauliflower ‘Rice’

The secrets of a good risotto are not to use more than two main ingredients and to find two main ingredients that taste good together. Examples include bacon & mushroom or chicken & broccoli to add to this dish.

### Ingredients

50 g butter  
1 onion, chopped  
2 cloves garlic, crushed  
200 ml white wine  
500 ml cauliflower rice (See recipe below)  
500 ml fresh cream  
1 egg yolk

**Directions**

Melt the butter in a frying pan and sauté the onion and garlic.

Add the wine and bring to the boil.

Reduce the heat and simmer for 5 minutes.

Add the cauliflower rice.

Pour in half the cream and simmer for another 8-10 minutes until the cream thickens. If it becomes too dry, add more cream. The risotto should be creamy.

Remove from the heat and stir in the egg yolk.

**Cauliflower 'Rice'**

4 servings

**Ingredients**

1 head cauliflower

1 litre water

Salt to taste

50 g butter

**Directions**

Grate the cauliflower on the coarse side of a cheese grater.

Bring the water and salt to the boil in a saucepan.

Add the cauliflower to the boiling water and boil for 3 minutes.

Drain the cauliflower in a colander.

Transfer the cauliflower rice to a serving bowl and add the butter on top so that it melts into the rice.

(Recipes by Monique le Roux Forslund, excerpted from *Low-Carb Living For Families*)

## TABLE TALK ::: QUESTIONS THAT SPARK CONVERSATION

Think back on a few of the fondest family memories that you have in your past. Chances are high that a portion of this cherished memory takes place at or near a dinner table, in close proximity to a shared meal. What is it about tasty food shared around a common table that lends itself to transformative questions, chal-

lenging discussion (spilling over to argument!), and hilarious laughter? It almost feels as if good dialogue is only sparked in the midst of filling bellies and common shared space. Thus, our hope this liturgical year is to deliberately engage shared conversation – at least one per season – together, seated around your table. Here's a few questions to spark your dialogue:

- Why gather around the table at all? Why not simply eat in front of the TV or kitchen sink?
- What is it about shared food and common space that lends itself to great discussion?
- Plan a trip with friends to a grocery store that you don't normally frequent. Limit your purchases to the sorts of food poor people eat: *Milk, Instant Coffee, Canned Pilchards, Runners, Eggs, Polony, Boerewors, Mieliepap, Cabbage, Potatoes, Tomatoes* and purpose to "fast in solidarity" for a several day period over Lent: the same day each week, the same meal each day, for several days kicking off Lent on Ash Wednesday.
  - What does the experience of dramatically limiting your food purchases feel like? What sorts of compromising choices (limiting healthy or fresh options, meat, etc.) are you forced to consider making? How does this make you feel less human? Less free?
- Track the money you are saving through fasting in solidarity with your neighbour. Prayerfully discern as a family or community how to use that money to bless your neighbour. Plan an extravagant –yet secret! – gesture of compassion and kindness from the space created by your fast. Several options for communal giving will be announced at 3rd Place throughout the Lenten season as a means to encourage a more corporate sacrifice.
  - How does fasting in solidarity with the poor change your own heart? Why not simply give money and keep living in the same manner?





