

Dear People of God,

Our Lenten Journey continues and I was recently struck by the following phrase— “Lent . . . We are called to believe.” What does this mean? Believe in what? For what? The word “believe” comes from the root word “to give one’s heart to.” This is the root meaning of the word “believe.” How fascinating! What do I give my heart to in my daily living? What do I need to stop doing this Lent? What do I need to start doing this Lent?

No matter how we may think, act, or feel too many of us worry too much ! I share with you the following aimed specifically toward parents, but truly applicable to people of all ages.

WORRY

Is there a magic cutoff period when offspring become accountable for their own actions? Is there a wonderful moment when parents can become detached spectators in the lives of their children and shrug, “It’s their life,” and feel nothing?

When I was in my **twenties**, I stood in the hospital corridor waiting for the doctors to put a few stitches in my daughter’s head. I asked, “When do you stop worrying?” the nurse said, “When they get out of the accident stage.” My Dad just smiled faintly and said nothing.

When I was in my **thirties**, I sat on a little chair in a classroom and heard how one of my children talked incessantly, disrupted the class and was headed for a career making license plates. As if to read my mind, a teacher said, “Don’t worry, they all go through this stage and then you can sit back, relax and enjoy them.” My dad just smiled faintly and said nothing.

When I was in my **forties**, I spent a lifetime waiting for the phone to ring, the cars to come home, the front door to open. A friend said, “They’re trying to find themselves. Don’t worry, in a few years, you can stop worrying. They’ll be adults.” My dad just smiled faintly and said nothing.

By the time I was **50**, I was sick and tired of being vulnerable. I was still worrying over my children, but there was a new wrinkle. There was nothing I could do about it. My Dad just smiled faintly and said nothing. I continued to anguish over their failures, be tormented by their frustrations and absorbed in their disappointments.

My friends said that when my kids got married I could stop worrying and lead my own life. I wanted to believe that, but I was haunted by my dad’s warm smile and his occasional, “You look pale. Are you alright? Call me the minute you get home. Are you depressed about something?”

Can it be that parents are sentenced to a lifetime of worry? Is concern for one another handed down like a torch to blaze the trail of human frailties and the fears of the unknown? Is concern a curse, or is it a virtue

that elevates us to the highest form of life?

One of my children became quite irritable recently, saying to me, “Where were you? I’ve been calling for three days and no one answered. I was worried. **I smiled a warm smile. The torch has been passed.**

Life races onward much too quickly and our Lenten journey is nearly half over. “Lent . . . We are called to believe” and trust. May we always give our heart to the Lord—and drop worry along the side of the road.

Lenten blessings,

Fr. Greg