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## NO MORE COOKIES!

I gave up cookies for Lent. For most people that would not be much of a sacrifice – but for those of us who can identify with Sesame Street's *'Cookie Monster'* it is still a very significant step to forgo one's daily ration of one of the most important food groups.

In the Christian tradition Lent is the 46 day period of preparation for Easter that begins with Ash Wednesday. I bet you thought it was 40 days! As it turns out the 6 Sundays in Lent do not count --- Don't believe me? Get out your calendar and count the days off! And did you know that the ashes for Ash Wednesday come from the Palms that are burned from the previous year's Palm Sunday? And for those who are still interested in Lenten trivia: Have you ever wondered why Easter seems to move around from year to year? I grew up assuming that somewhere in the Vatican's basement there was a huge calendar that extended out through the ages that listed out the dates of Easter. The real answer is disappointingly mundane in that Easter is always on the first Sunday after the first full moon in Spring! I never ever would have guessed that there was a lunar connection.

Although Christian Churches are all about 95% in agreement with each other about what they believe --- they do tend to sometimes focus on the 5% that is different! The old joke is that if two Christians were stranded on a deserted island – that within one year that island would have both a First Baptist and Second Baptist Church! Within the Christian community we have certainly provided choices and options galore!

For me 'giving anything up for Lent' wasn't part of what we ever did. It is a tradition that is variously interpreted to be a way to let our minor sacrifice be a reminder of the greater sacrifice of Jesus. Other interpretations include using Lent as time to add something to our lives --- typically prayer, reflection and study -- as a way to better prepare for Easter. For some, Lent is a time to give something up --- and for others it is time to begin something new.

There is a generational difference in how we approach '*sacrifice*'. While younger people will tend to want to receive acknowledgement for their acts of sacrifice and charity --- older people tend to want just the opposite. Older people do not want attention drawn to them or to the things that they do. Older people do the '*Right Thing*' not to impress -- but because they know that doing the '*Right Thing*' is for them its own reward.

Because where I work is a not-for-profit, we receive a lot of donations --- and one of the most interesting challenges I have is trying to convince older people to allow me to recognize their good works. For them it isn't about embarrassment -- it is because they really do not see any need to make a fuss at all. For them helping is its own reward.

Older people understand sacrifice --whether that be symbolically as part of religious preparation -- or practically as what they have always done in order to provide for their family. It is safe to say that for most older people giving something up for Lent would not be a sacrifice -- it would be for them a privilege.

We see that same spirit today with our young men and women in the Armed Forces who at the very least sacrifice being able to home with their families and at the most are prepared to make the ultimate sacrifice in defense of our country. Our men and women in uniform know what real sacrifice means.

What is inspiring to me about both the older people I know and about our Service people is how both groups never focus on their sacrifice -- they focus on the privilege of being able to serve.

The Big Lesson from my Older Friends and those in the Service: The best sacrifice is one the one that you embrace because of the satisfaction it gives you of doing the Right thing!

Age Well!

*Howard Chandler has worked in elder services for over 35 years and is Vice-President of Meredith Bay Colony Club along with being a Partner of White Mountain Eldercare Solutions. Your comments are always appreciated.  
chandler@metrocast.net*