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## Lend and Lent

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## Lend and Lent

“Please lend me a hand” is common in our language; less often do we hear someone describe an event that took place in the past: “Someone lent me a hand. Lent, as a season, might be seen as both a time to lend and a time to acknowledge what we have been lent. If we have lent something to others we became lenders. If someone lent something to us, they were lenders. God lends to us, and God lent to us.

Lent has always been a time to “lend a hand” to our neighbors: those near and known to us, those distant and complete strangers. When we lend, we do not commit to continuing the same action, but that does not lessen the value of what we do, and is often the most appropriate and immediately beneficial manner of caring for others. We express our love in a variety of relationships, from a one-time volunteer activity to an open-ended commitment. Marriages and careers are not situations where we lend ourselves. But our capacity for love is not bound up exclusively with long-term relationships.

Lent is a seasonal reminder of love that can be manifested short-term. Just as Spring is a season, there is a time in our faith-life to heighten both awareness and practices of our capacity to “love our neighbor as ourselves.” We are encouraged to lend ourselves to some practices that might make permanent changes in us, but are in themselves short-term. Thus, someone might take a few minutes to write a note to a representative, urging him or her to vote for a particular piece of legislation that will help the poor. The action is brief, though it might confirm an abiding attitude. When we lend our voice to a cause that is greater than ourselves, even if we do so only once, we manifest love in a high degree.

Perhaps we will decide to attend, just once, a prayer group, social action meeting, or Interfaith religious service, thereby lending ourselves to an activity that might or might not draw us into a longer term involvement. Lent is a time to lend ourselves to expressions of our spirituality, both familiar and new.

God often lends to us by providing particular inspirations that are exactly suited to our present circumstances, even if we were unaware of our needs. Moments of grace can set our hearts on fire, and then fade quietly away. What God lent us, even the briefest of inspirations, might lead us forward in trust, even to the making of loving

commitments. When God lends to us, repayment is not required. Yet, whatever we do to "the least of the little ones," we do to God.

Perhaps we will be able to say after Lent, that God lent us a hand and we became the better for it; that we followed this gracious example and lent others a hand. We have discovered the underlying truth of Lent and of Spring. We have blossomed and flowered, and have helped others to do the same.