

Getting Ready for Lent: It's time to tell the "Bacon Story."

Sometimes the "Bacon Story" finds its way into a sermon. This was the case at St. Matthews, Charleston, West Virginia, where I once served as rector. I have to wonder if the ease by which young Perry McGhee remembered the story some years after the telling has to do with the almost irresistible fragrance of this most seductive of *less than best for you* food choices.

However, the story took an unexpected turn just about four years ago at St. Peter's, Huntington, West Virginia. Lent came earlier that year. I was just getting to know the young children. I asked if they had any questions they would like to ask their priest. One asked if I liked being a priest (YES!). One asked about the collar around my neck. I took the collar off and all had the chance to wear it for a moment. Then Fiona asked me a question that was truly unexpected (but so Fiona as I came to learn!), "Do you like bacon?" Of course, I do, I replied and then gave a brief synopsis of the "Bacon Story."

That very afternoon I checked into Facebook on internet and found that Perry McGhee had written, "It's about time for Father Bill to tell his bacon story." Coincidence or GOD-incidence? I think the latter. This also forced me to post on Facebook the following Lenten discipline (or lack of discipline) story in light of both Perry and Fiona being the ones God used to remind me of my failings and my total need for God.

When I was in seminary at Nashotah House (located just outside Milwaukee, Wisconsin) during the late 1980's, we seminarians gathered for breakfast in the refectory after "mandatory and required" attendance in Chapel. Often bacon would be served. There's nothing quite like mounds of bacon that you don't have to cook nor have to clean-up afterwards! As my Lenten discipline during my first year of seminary, I decided to give up bacon. It only took me until the fourth week of Lent to finally do it. During my second year, it only took until the second week. In my senior and last year, I managed to keep my discipline from Ash Wednesday onward.

Since ordination to the priesthood, I have tried from time to time to give up bacon during Lent. Bacon is insidious in that it can show up in the least likely sandwich (thank you, Wendy's, I think not!). I did not every try last year.

This year, however, I need a tangible discipline. So I plan to say farewell to bacon (even on Sundays when I could take advantage of the little Easter provision of Sunday not being one of the 40 days of Lent). Pray for me!

Bill

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