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Dear Friends,

Rebooting. Although I like the flexibility and range of opportunities technical devices offer, I think my ability to understand how they actually work peaked just before the introduction of the Selectric typewriter. The first computer I used was shared by our entire school, occupied a small room of its own, relied on punched paper tape to load programs, and could do just about anything, as long as the instructions were formulated in FORTRAN.

I had a vague sense of how this harbinger of the New Age worked; that it was really cool was much more apparent.

If adolescence is a time when we explore and develop patterns which persist well into the rest of our lives, then my relationship with the Digital PDP-8 gradually made its way towards the center of my world view. Don't really know how it works, but very cool. And, of course, as I began dating, repeated experiences suggested that this perspective had applications beyond math class.

But back to computers. Really. There is an inherent tension between not understanding and greatly admiring. When the device—no, I mean essential productivity tool—ceases to function, my interest in what it can do remains unchanged, but delight is replaced by frustration, fueled by something almost like betrayal: why isn't it working?

Over the years—and I admit it has taken me longer than it should have, but, remember, I really do not understand how these things work—I have discovered that much of the time all I need to do is reboot. Whether the screen is frozen, the track won't play, or the printer keeps adding documents to its pending list, or the wireless connection is unavailable, most of the time, when I turn off the power, wait a moment, and then start it up again, the system is restored and everything functions according to its original design. Harmony is restored.

Finally, the Point Lent, the 40 days from Ash Wednesday (February 22) until Easter (April 8) is an opportunity to reboot. It is an entire season dedicated to restoring our lives—and even the life of the world—to the way they are supposed to be. We realize that in various ways we have become frozen, we have lost our connection, work—literal or metaphorical—is piling up but not much is

getting done—we know that things are not as they should be, but we are not at all clear exactly how we should fix them.

So my suggestion is to reboot. Take some time to power down so you can power back up again.

The Lenten Reboot I have observed that when people are hit by a crisis, especially those with spiritual and emotional resources, they often step back and reevaluate their lives and its priorities. Patterns and habits that they pursued without thinking before are suddenly on the table for discussion. When you get a difficult diagnosis, maybe you think about reordering your priorities a bit, spending more time with the people who matter to you, paying more attention to the beauty of a landscape, a view of the sea, or just the rising of the sun. If you have just come out of physical therapy, waking up or being able to move without pain is no longer something you take for granted. If you have been out of work and land a new job, getting up to the alarm may not be your favorite thing, but compared to the alternative it does not look too bad. Too often it takes loss, or the prospect of loss, to awaken in us a deep and lively sense of gratitude.

Lent is an invitation to develop that heightened sensitivity to what matters most, to the blessings we have but do not always think of as blessings, and to all the ways we fall short of who we would like to be and of living the lives we would like to live. Lent is an opportunity to reboot without the precipitating crisis; it is a chance to get things right without the sense that time might be running out.

The Mechanism To restore our lives, we need a reference point, and that reference point is God, the one at the heart of our being in every perspective and dimension. We have tried putting ourselves at the center, or putting in that place some thing that we value or in which we take pleasure. The paradox is that putting ourselves at the center never gives us what we want. In Lent we have a special invitation to try out another way of looking at our lives and making sense of the world.

God has given us the freedom to acknowledge his place or to ignore it or to try to move it to some other location of our choosing. Our Lenten Reboot starts with affirming who God is. The Great Litany begins: O God the Father, Creator of heaven and earth...O God the Son, Redeemer of the world...O God the Holy Ghost, Sanctifier of the faithful...O holy, blessed, and glorious Trinity, one God, Have mercy upon us. We begin by addressing God, by describing God's fundamental nature and identity, and then by placing ourselves before God and seeking God's mercy and blessing.

And although we move fairly quickly to presenting our own concerns and anxieties, do not lose track of the fact that we begin with God. Perhaps the Lenten Principle here is: before you get to your list, spend some time contemplating God. To whom are you praying, and why? What makes you think that God cares about your concerns? Why do you think that God has anything to offer you, or anyone else? Your concerns are real, and so are the concerns of others—can God handle all of that? And what do you make of what God does, or seems not to do, in response to your prayers? It does not take much serious attention before we start to have some real, and often complex, questions. [“Am I allowed to think that? To ask that? Am I bad if something I am supposed to believe makes no sense to me? And would I rather just throw the whole thing over than feel bad or stupid? Is there really any serious downside simply to deciding that this might work for some people but just isn't right for me?]

Time Well Spent Time spent exploring—as adults, as thinking people, as people with some real questions—exploring our understanding of who God is, and what the implications of that understanding are, is time very well spent in the process of rebooting our lives.

So come to church in Lent hungry for some serious engagement with who God is and why we think that. At the end of each lesson, ask what that passage is actually saying about God and the life of people who seek to engage God. Whether the liturgy is Morning Prayer or the Eucharist, ask what it is saying, what assumptions it makes, how it challenges commonly held beliefs outside of church.

The purpose of rebooting is not to effect radical new change. It won't turn your DVR into a notebook computer. Rebooting is about restoration and recovery—reclaiming original identity and regaining the ability to be what something—or someone—was originally made and intended to be.

And Lent is a great season to begin again, to recover, before you have that crisis, a sense of priorities that will work for you. I'm not entirely sure how Lenten rebooting works, but I think it does, and that it does is very cool.

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