

Growing up I lived in a nice little suburb of LA called San Gabriel. One of my grandfathers had moved there in the 1940's from Cleveland, Ohio.

San Gabriel is home of the famous San Gabriel Mission founded by Fr. Junipero Serra in 1771 and has withstood many disasters, especially earthquakes. The so-called "modern" bell-tower was rebuilt in 1812 after such an earthquake.

It was in that Mission that I made my First Communion, Confirmation, and went to high-school where I learned the pinnacle of pre-Vatican II Catholicism.

San Gabriel is also the home of the third In-N-Out Hamburger drive-through ever built, about a half of a mile from my home. It was thriving even in the 1950's. Their drinks cups always had a bible verse printed on the bottom: like John 3:16.

The hamburgers were delicious and you could see the guy though the window grilling the beef heating the bun and putting the very fresh produce of lettuce and tomatoes topped with the special sauce — Mmmmm.

They were 25 cents each— 30 cents if you wanted a cheeseburger. I was addicted to them and would frequently bike to the drive-through during the week just for the pleasure of having one.

But after hearing a discussion of Lent in school, which I took very seriously, I decided to give up hamburgers for Lent. I remember my father, God love him, looking at me incredulously. He knew how I LOVED hamburgers. "I don't think you can do it," he said. But I was determined.

Day after day I thought of In-N-Out. And day after day I suffered, in my own little way, a deprivation for Lent. I was so happy when the priest wore the rose-pink vestments for Laetare Sunday — I knew that Lent was about half over.

But I did it. And I was proud of myself. So was my Dad. And in retrospect I learned some things: a lot of things in my life were discretionary; not necessary. I could live without them and their addition was really "frosting on the cake." I had

more will-power than I thought. Doing something for God was a good feeling. Having a difficult goal and carrying it through gave me a sense of personal value.

We still give up things for Lent. That's one of the reasons for abstention and Fish Fridays. Where would we be without Fish Fridays?

However, it seems to me now-a-days that there may be more of an emphasis on ADDING something to one's life during Lent: being extra charitable, saying extra prayers, and so forth. Not bad goals, of course.

However, there is something inside of me that is Old-School.

So as Your Humble Lecturer this evening let me just leave you with this thought:

Give up Hamburgers.