

Mardi Gras is over, Ash Wednesday has come, and we have entered the season of Lent, a time of penitence and reflection. Many of us observe some kind of fast, known popularly as “giving something up for Lent.” I hope that whatever you chose for your Lenten fast, that it is not too easy, like a nonsmoker giving up cigarettes, and that it will bring you closer to God. I know that often our choices are not easy and I offer inspiration from this story:

A little boy was playing in his sandbox with his box of cars and trucks, his plastic pail and a shiny, red plastic shovel.

In the process of creating roads and tunnels in the soft sand, he discovered a large rock in the middle of the sandbox. The boy dug around the rock, managing to dislodge it from the dirt. With no little bit of struggle, he pushed and nudged the rock across the sandbox by using his feet (he was a very small boy and the rock was large).

When the boy got the rock to the edge of the sandbox, he found that he couldn't roll it up and over the little wall. Determined, the little boy shoved, pushed and pried, but every time he thought he had made some progress, the rock tipped and then fell back into the sandbox. The little boy struggled, pushed, shoved – but his only reward was to have the rock roll back, smashing his fingers. Finally he burst into tears of frustration.

All this time the boy's father watched from the window as the drama unfolded. At the moment the tears fell, a large shadow fell across the boy and the sandbox. It was the boy's father. Gently but firmly he said, “Son, why didn't you use all the strength you had available?” Defeated, the boy sobbed, “But I did, Daddy. I used all the strength I had!” “No, son,” corrected the father kindly. “You didn't use all the strength you had. You didn't ask me.” With that the father reached down, picked up the rock, and removed it from the sandbox.

How many times have we tried to do it all ourselves when a little help would have brought success? I promise you that I will fail with my fast unless I have some help from God, and from my friends who are there to support me. I want to use all the resources at my disposal!

Look at what you have on your plate right now. Is there anything someone could help you with? Perhaps you are the help someone else needs. Is there someone around you who needs a little help from a friend? And don't forget that God helps us in times of need. Ask your Father; God wants to help.

In Psalm 18, the psalmist writes, “The Lord is my rock, my fortress, and my deliverer, my God, my rock in whom I take refuge, my shield, and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold. I will call upon the Lord, who is worthy to be praised, so shall I be saved from my enemies.” (Psalm 18:2-3). Call upon the Lord, who is ready to answer.