Opinion



President Donald Trump speaks during a news conference at the White House in Washington, on Oct. 2, 2019. (AP Photo/Carolyn Kaster)



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President Donald Trump speaks during a news conference at the White House in Washington, on Oct. 2, 2019. (AP Photo/Carolyn Kaster)

I decided to give up Donald Trump for Lent, the 40-day period from Ash Wednesday (Feb. 26) to Easter Sunday when Catholics traditionally do penance. Most people give up something they love, like chocolate or television. Others give up something that is bad for them, like smoking or drinking.

For me, Trump is an occasion of sin that I should avoid. I need to cast him from my mind like a dirty thought. He makes me short-tempered, argumentative, angry and depressed. He is not good for my health, although he does get my heart pumping more than when I am on my exercycle.

I am not recommending everyone totally abstain from Trump, although most families would benefit from making the dinner table a “Trump-free zone.”

Cable news has made billions of dollars off Trump because both those who love him and those who hate him will tune in whenever he is on or discussed. I am going to change the channel during Lent, or just turn it off.

This may sound strange coming from a political junkie with a Ph.D. in political science. But why torture myself. I don’t need any additional information; I already know how I am going to vote. I also vote where the election outcome is preordained. Thanks to the Electoral College, my voting will not make any difference, although I will vote because I consider it a civic and moral duty.

Nor will campaigning matter unless I quit my job, move to a swing state and spend the rest of the year on the campaign trail. For numerous reasons, this is impossible.

Giving up Trump for Lent will help me relax and be more peaceful. I will be happier if I pretend he is not there, and this is probably true of many other people.

And think of all the extra time we would have if we gave up Trump. We could actually do something worthwhile with our time, like volunteering at a shelter or tutoring program. Then there are all those things we talk about but do nothing about, like global warming, refugees and racism.

I confess that I have not given anything up for Lent in a long time, but this year giving up Trump makes a lot of sense. After all, it is only for 40 days. He will still be there after Easter.

I will probably not be perfect in my abstinence. I can’t give up political cartoons. They are too much fun.

[Jesuit Fr. Thomas Reese is a columnist for Religion News Service and author of Inside the Vatican: The Politics and Organization of the Catholic Church.]

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