

4th Sunday of Lent by Father Dave - (Joshua 5: 9 – 12; 2 Corinthians 5: 17 – 21; Luke 15: 1 – 3, 11 – 32)

A springtime reflection on planting a garden might provide us with some insight into the meaning of the Season of Lent which takes us into the Easter Resurrection. Planting potatoes in some parts of the United States is a ritual that takes place on St Patrick's Day or Good Friday, but the ritual is ancient. Before planting potatoes, you must first cut out those pieces containing eyes. Then those pieces are ready to be buried in the good soil of the garden. In a play on words we can see a similar relationship between Easter and the destruction of the "I." For without cutting out the "I," without the death of the ego, there can be no personal resurrection experience. Easter is a joyous event which we may express with elaborate alleluias, feasting, new clothes, candy rabbits and brightly decorated eggs. But it is a painful experience as well! Easter is the celebration of the resurrection, but a resurrection implies death. We are eager to celebrate life but reluctant to die first!

The death of Easter is more than the death of the body. It is that deeper death of a superpower – the ego, the "I" and its almost dictatorial position. If we seek holiness and wholeness, we must "cut out" the great "I" and bury it. This is no easy task, for the "I" reacts strongly to any effort to limit its authority. The "I" wants to have its own way and to have it right now, with no compromise and no opposition. We want what we want when we want it!

Part of the task is to find the "I" of the self, just as we locate the eye of the potato. In its daily demands for attention, the "I" wears a thousand and one clever disguises. The ego has mastered countless ingenious maneuvers to make sure that all of its desires will be met. But as long as the "I" remains above ground, refusing to die, it is doomed to death and sterility. Both the potato and the ego must surrender to the knife! But the strength of the "I" should not frighten us, for it is this very potency, which after being cut out and buried, will become the power of fertilizing a new and dynamic personality.

The death of the ego is the hardest of all spiritual sacrifices. The paradox of the Passover, the journey from Good Friday to Easter Sunday, is that we must surrender to death to find Life. When we struggle to say "no" to *our* needs, dying to the demands of the ego, so that we can say "yes" to the needs of others, then the self is freed from its cramped cocoon. When we can relate to the needs of others – to our family as well as to complete strangers – by lives of service, we cut out the "I." No marriage, no friendship nor community offers an easy, painless escape; it promises only the vital condition of common living. That common life is the rich soil for new life and growth. But unless we have first used a knife on the ego, the soil becomes only a battleground and smells of death and destruction. A wholesome spiritual life encourages self-giving service, that daily learning to say "no" to ourselves in order to say "yes" to the other. In their proper order,

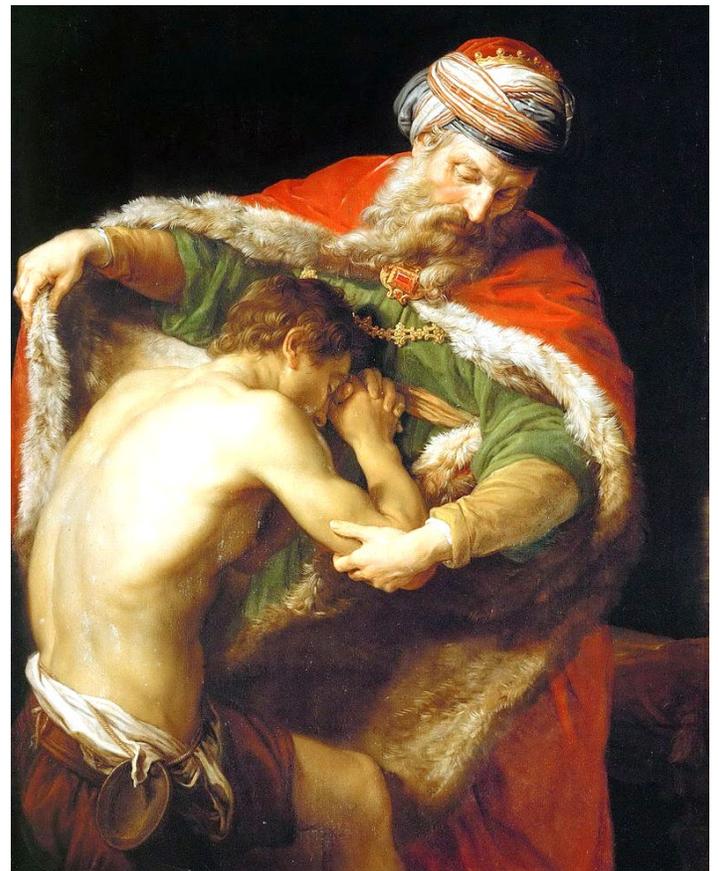
both are words of freedom. (from Edward Hays' "A Pilgrim's Almanac")

In the parable that we hear in this weekend's Gospel, we see the younger son returning to his senses. Having depleted his inheritance foolishly, he surrenders. He realizes how foolish he had been. In a sense, he has died to self and rose as a new person – returning home and admitting his foolishness.

This parable is often called – the parable of the prodigal son, because of his wasteful and reckless spending of his inheritance. On the other hand, this parable can also be called – the parable of the prodigal father, because of the way the father welcomed his son back home, and extravagantly set about celebrating the son's return.

The Church's Lenten Season is both for us – a call for us to come to our senses and return "home to the Father", as well for us to experience the Father's extravagant way of celebrating our return. Let's continue praying for our Lenten Spiritual Journey, and for the Journey of one another so that we can die to self and rise and new individuals.

Let us pray for the Conversion of the World
& for Peace



BULLETIN REFLECTION

by Father Rody

MARCH 27 2022...4TH SUN LENT YR
C...LK 15; 1-3, 11-32

*1 The tax collectors and sinners were all drawing near to listen to him,
2 but the Pharisees and scribes began to complain, saying, "This man welcomes sinners and eats with them."*

For our reflection let us take the term personality. By virtue of psychology, personality is always manifested/expressed. Manifestation/expression of one's personality would somehow leave an impression on the observers.

In our gospel reading we are presented with two sets of personalities; 1. Tax collectors and sinners, and, 2. Pharisees and scribes.

TAX COLLECTORS AND SINNERS can admit to their very selves 'I am dirty, I am not worthy, and at one point in my life I did horrible things.' This personality needs input from somebody else. Input that would help them realize things---to open the window of hope *'that you can be a good person again.'* **MT 10, 1** Then he summoned his twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits to drive them out and to cure every disease and every illness. **2** The names of the twelve apostles are these: first, Simon called Peter, and his brother Andrew; James, the son of Zebedee, and his brother John; **3** Philip and Bartholomew, Thomas and *Matthew the tax collector*; James, the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddeus; **4** Simon the Cananean, and Judas Iscariot who betrayed him.

PHARISEES AND SCRIBES, this personality thinks they are always good...holy...righteous...(PHARISAIC=*practicing or advocating strict observance of external forms and ceremonies of religion or conduct without regard to the spirit; self-righteous; hypocritical*---from **dictionary.com**)...they considered themselves as the standard. They **may** want to listen but in essence their act of listening is only geared to attack...criticize.

They love presenting themselves to be educated enough but when you ask their knowledge (about this and that) they can hardly show you anything...lastly they don't really have an intention to learn but only to complain, *'this man welcomes sinners and eats with them.'* Thus, Jesus Christ was so frank to them saying **MT 23, 13** "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, *you hypocrites*..."

With tax collectors and sinners personality, the chance of improvement is very much offered to each individual. We need this personality for this will eventually lead us nearer to our God (*confer LK 15, 1-7 the parable of the lost sheep*).

However, with Pharisees and scribes personality, the bible reminds us...**MT 5, 20** *I tell you, unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter into the kingdom of heaven.*

Which will you prefer, to be tax collectors and sinners who want to listen or to be Pharisees and scribes who love to complain?