

Fifth Sunday of Lent

We continue on our journey of transformation in the desert of our hearts, stopping at an oasis here and there to commune with our God, who has a message from the Readings of today for us: "Amen, amen, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains just a grain of wheat, but if it dies, it produces much fruit." (John 12:24).

The grain of wheat has to be buried in the cold damp earth. It has to die.

If it didn't die no new life would come forth but when it dies, a shoot of new wheat springs forth - life coming from death. Just as the grain of wheat has to die to bear fruit, so must we go through a gradual process of dying and rebirthing if we are to realize our full potential as human beings, and as beloved children of God. The dying seed never sees the shoot of new wheat. Our journey is truly a walk in faith and trust in God.

Opportunities abound for this transformation to take place in us, if we choose to surrender, to "die." If we choose to enter into the struggle, slowly but surely, our selfishness will diminish, our masks will slip off, our "true self" will emerge. In fact every time we pass from one stage of new life to another, something in us dies and something new is born. Yes, we are becoming the person God envisioned us to be when God called us into being. No one disagrees that the dying is difficult, is painful, is prolonged over time, but neither will anyone disagree that the new life is well worth the struggle.



The 13th century Persian poet, Rumi wrote:

"This human being is a guest house
Every morning a new arrival
A joy, a depression, a meanness
Comes as an unexpected visitor
Welcome and attend them all!
Even if they are a crowd of sorrows
Who violently sweep your house
Empty of its furniture, still
Treat each guest honorably
He may be cleaning you out
For some new delight."

As we experience this "cleaning out" we trust that the uninvited "guests" who often overstay their welcome are in fact bringing the "new delight" of tender compassion, inner strength, diminishing fear, new life that will prepare us "respond proactively and support and collaborate with others in addressing issues" that degrade the dignity of our brothers and sisters who are poor, powerless, voiceless at the local and national levels.

As we enter the home stretch of our Lenten journey let us gently lay "the grain of wheat" to rest within us and enjoy the "fruit"... the freedom to enter into a deeper and more intimate relationship with God.

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