

3rd Sunday of Lent B

March 4, 2018

Lent is Like Peeling an Onion

Have you ever tried to peel an onion... and if you have...how far did you get? If you haven't tried it... go home and try it...but don't leave quite yet!

The first few layers come off easily and then it gets much harder. The layers become thinner and thinner... they are almost impossible to see. Eventually frustration sets in when it becomes difficult and then there are the tears.

Lent is like peeling an onion. We pare back the layers of our ways of life as we strive for improvement. Some of the easy layers we can pare back with only a little effort... but as we keep going it gets harder and harder. Sometimes our inner layers are hard to see as they are simply that ingrained into who we are that we do not see the need to pare them away... yet we do. Once we go deep into shaving off the layers... then come the tears as we might resist the work of abandoning those things that get in our way of truly loving God and neighbor... as we peel back our layers of cynicism... our layers of prejudice... our layers of indifference... but as we do peel away...Layer by layer we move closer to God.

In today's Gospel we see Jesus peeling away some of the practices that have corrupted the People of Israel. We hear of the hustle and bustle in the Temple with its money changers... merchants...worshippers... and goods for sale... all taking place ... at the holiest time of the year... Passover... in the holiest place... the house of God.

The sacred and the profane come nose to nose and Jesus responds to this glaring contradiction... by setting things right... by cleaning house... and trying to put things in order. He is consumed with zeal for the house of God... because the house of God has become spiritually bankrupt... with empty ritual... vile practices... and unjust treatment of God's people... but these are the easy to see and easy to address issues... the outward layers of what needs to be pared away... the hard work comes in changing the heart and minds of people.

Jesus puts things in order... and isn't that what we are called to do in our life... to set things right... and live in right relationships... to clean house... address contradictions... so that we can live and work in the world... bringing Christ to all those whom we encounter.

We are approaching the midpoint of Lent and we have to ask ourselves honestly "how's Lent working for me this year?"

As we continue our Lenten journey... we can use today's first reading to examine our life and pare back the layers that need to be peeled away... and to set things right. We might use the Commandments to ask ourselves:

- Is God the center of my life? Do I practice my faith and give myself in prayer to talk with... and listen to God?
- Do I acknowledge God's gifts of creation... and reverence the holy name of God in speech and action?
- Do I honor my family and the family of all humankind?
- Do I promote the culture of life acknowledging that all life is of God's making and that all people share a God-given human dignity that is to

be respected regardless of stage of development and perceived quality of life?

- Am I free from envy, greed, and excessive materialism?
- Do I uphold the truth regardless of cost and proclaim the Gospel in word and deed?

These questions and others like them help us with our spiritual house cleaning during these remaining weeks of Lent.

In examining our life... we may find out that it's time to overturn the things that keep us away from God as did Jesus in the temple... because we are temples of God's presence.

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