

Thursday after Ash Wednesday



Realizing you have really lost something sends a shock through your whole system, a pang of grief mixed with anger and confusion. It might be your car keys or someone you love; the intensity and duration of the shock will be different but the immediate resistance to losing what we (think) we possess is built into our psyche.

Yet finding what we lost fills us with a higher degree of joy and gratitude. The possession we thought we had lost returns as a gift and whenever we experience giving (from or to ourselves) we become more alive, more generous and more our real selves.

Life teaches us this truth about finding and losing anyway. But we can also apply the truth and to some degree pre-empt the pain and shock of losing. The more it's called letting go. The more attached and possessive, the worse the pain of loss. Letting go is a kind of voluntary losing – a paradox that transform loss into finding.

Lent - and whatever simple discipline of self-control we have undertaken during the next 40 days - can teach us how to let go at every moment, with every breath, every meeting, in every relationship. St Benedict says that life should be a continual Lent for this reason. It empowers us to live with a freedom and spontaneity and ultimately a fearlessness that permits our full humanity to flower. We just have to trust and leap. "Anyone who wants to save his life will lose it." We do this by degrees – the gentle shift of direction which our daily meditation definitively makes happen.

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