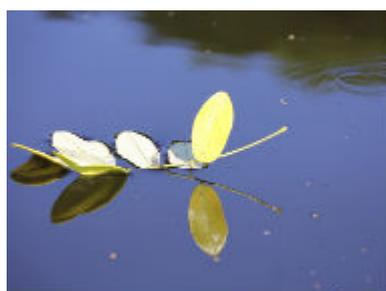


Wednesday of Lent Week 2



Let's come back to habits. Lent is about them. Mark Twain said that nothing needs reforming like other people's habits. (Take the plank out of your own eye before pointing out the splinter in another's).

Lent is about reforming our own habits.

There are habits that through low-level consciousness have already become compulsions or even addictions. It is hard and humiliating to admit this - especially to ourselves.

But, as with the twelve step program, we don't even get to first base without admitting when this has happened. How deeply engrained the destructive habit has become determines the cure that leads to a renewed sense of liberty in all aspects of our lives. An addiction ultimately poisons our whole sense of self and world-view.

There are also habits that are disciplines we have learned to implant in our lives. They become life giving, stabilizing forces and we feel thankful when they are established. But we can never take them for granted. Marriages are rocked after decades of complacency. And, even after many years of meditation, events or inner forces can shake a person and make them give up what seemed a once certain safeguard of health and sanity.

Disciplines are renewed daily by an act of faith. The choice that we once made to start needs constant re-iteration. It teaches us what faith demands, but also its immense rewards.

Some habits are rituals. They occupy a different frequency (in both senses) in our life. Rituals are periodic acts of renewed fidelity. They create the same situation in which we began the habit but they do not become stale. In fact they seem to rejuvenate us the more we repeat them. The Eucharist or other forms of communal worship express this. So does the weekly meditation group or annual retreat. Or, Lenten practices.

Such habits generate a momentum of transcendence propelling us into pure freedom.

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