

With God's help, hearts change

Last week, we looked at the basic “wants” that keep us tied to the world – wanting approval, wanting control, wanting to be safe. The world, the flesh and the devil keep us looking for the answer to those wants outside of ourselves in the world.

Lent is the season that assures us that the answers to our deepest wants are within us. When we discover God within us we realize all the answers to life are within. Instead of wanting, we already have the ultimate approval of God within us, the only approval that really matters. We have the ultimate control, the power of God, our higher power, within us. We have the ultimate safety – God's life within us that even is stronger than death. Lent is the time to come back to our true self, rather than to the false self that seeks approval, control, or safety in the things of this world. False gods promise, but don't deliver.

Coming home to our true selves is what I believe Lent is all about. Just as the Prodigal Son would make the journey home to his Father, so we too have to come home to who we really are – God's own presence.

The discipline, the penances of Lent, are about letting go of what we are not and discovering who we really are. If we really believed God lived within us, how would we treat ourselves? If we really believed God lived in every person we met, how would we treat them? Human history is a matter of forgetting, and the resulting indifference and violence. Salvation history is remembering, and the resulting love and care.

A little prayer that I say each day, but one I find so helpful during Lent, is a prayer in which we let go of the pain of identifying with anything less than God, and in which we hold on to all the joy that results from identifying with God.

Here is the prayer: “Lord Jesus, gentle and wonderful God my Father, truly awesome and ever-present Holy Spirit:

“In my grief be with me and change my heart.

“In my anger be with me and change my heart.

“In my pain be with me and change my heart.

"In my doubt be with me and change my heart.

"In my wrongful passions be with me and change my heart.

"I am sorry for all my dark emotions, so change me into your likeness:

"Change me into your likeness so that I may walk in your joy.

"Change me into your likeness so that I may walk in your peace.

"Change me into your likeness so I may walk in your serenity.

"Change me into your likeness so I may walk in your certainty.

"Change me into your likeness so I may walk in your righteousness and holiness.

"All these things I humbly pray in the name of my most Blessed Lord, Jesus Christ, my mighty God and Father, and my ever-present Holy Spirit upon whom I can rely. Amen."

A lovely prayer, isn't it? St. Augustine said that in looking for true beauty (God), he got lost in the lovely things of the world. The disciplines of Lent invite us to let go of all that is less than God in us, and invite us to realize who we really are – human beings carrying the Divine Presence within us.