

Prayer provides proper perspective

It has been a pleasure in recent days to notice the gradual disappearance of the dirty snow piles that became such a part of our lives in January. I have a sense that all of us welcome this early hint of spring. Experience teaches there is winter weather yet to come, but we can hope that the worst of it is behind us.

Another harbinger of spring is our Rites of Election, which I mentioned last week. The first two on Sunday brought great delight to all of us who participated. I am sure that the remaining three will be the same.

Being with such enthusiastic candidates for the Easter sacraments quickened my own desire to prepare for the Easter feast as well as I can.

During this Lenten season, I have been drawn to an awareness of God's faithful love. There is a constancy to that precious gift that sustains us through the ups



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Along the Way

and downs of life. One of the beautiful biblical images that nourishes such prayer is that of the tree planted by the stream. It finds nourishment even in the dry times, and flourishes when rainfall is generous.

An awareness of God's sustaining love also helps keep the events of life in perspective. I wish I had a nickel for every time that I have stewed and fretted over some controversial issue and — in the midst of it — remembered that I was try-

ing to handle it on my own. Inevitably, when I re-noted myself in an awareness of God's provident love, I came to a much greater sense of peace with the matter at hand.

I am not suggesting that the problems go away, or that life becomes problem-free. I mean only that the thought, the effort, the struggle are much more in proportion to the issue at hand. The issue no longer becomes all-consuming because an awareness of God's presence allows remembrance, even enjoyment, of those aspects of life that bring joy and peace to the heart.

For me, the ability to come to such freedom relates directly to the rhythms and patterns of my life of prayer. When I stop to pray, I am much more likely to be aware of the quiet presence and power of God in my life. When I grow careless in prayer, amnesia sets in. It's as simple as that.

Our catechumens and candidates come to mind again. As I prayed with them at Corpus Christi and Our Mother of Sorrows on Sunday, I knew that I shared the moment with real people who are deeply immersed in life's challenges and problems.

Yet, their joy in the moment reminded me that there are life and joy beyond problems. Their message was not to let problems or worries isolate you; let them remind you to turn back to God, to place your life in God's loving hands.

As we come to the second Sunday of Lent, I hope that you are experiencing a call to renewal and deeper life in some way. If you are, I encourage you to think a little about how that came to be. Surely, such renewal is pure gift. But ordinarily such graces rest in our hearts at the point where God's love for us and our thirst for God intersect.

If you feel like you are treading water, don't fret or stew, just stop for a moment — or two, or three — and ask the Lord to renew your heart in preparation for the Easter feast. Your prayer will bear fruit in prayer for someone in need, in a return to Sunday worship with the community, in the fixing up of a damaged relationship, in a sharing of your goods with those in need.

I ask for your prayers during this holy time, even as I promise you my own.

Peace to all.

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