

The Talking Heads (from the 80's) have a song "Once in a Lifetime"

The opening lines go as this:

And you may find yourself living in a shotgun shack

And you may find yourself in another part of the world

And you may find yourself behind the wheel of a large automobile

And you may find yourself in a beautiful house, with a beautiful wife

And you may ask yourself, **"Well, how did I get here?"**

Have we ever asked ourselves that question: How did I get here?

How does a shy, small boy from a very small town in southeastern Ohio, end up in Reno talking to large groups of people, walking with them through births, weddings, deaths, traumas and joys; spending time in Rome, meeting a Pope, skiing, fishing, being in mountains, having friends from all walks of life; and being alive after some really stupid actions.

How do any of us end up here; married to the person we sit with, or recovered from heartbreak; having those little ones that drive us crazy but we would go to the end of the world to protect?

How do any of us get to where and how we are as a person? How did we get through our own personal heartbreaks, struggles?

For centuries, millenia, we as Westerners have followed a philosophy of Idealism. This comes from the Greeks, Plato and Aristotle which Christianity absorbed. In this, there is the belief that every object has an ideal form from which it derives. This includes us as humans. Life then is a discovery of this ideal and living up to this ideal.

The past centuries thinkers have questioned this notion. What if there is not an ideal form to be discovered, rather we become who we are; there is a creation of who we are.

An identity not based on some specific model, but created through our connections, our relationships, our networks.

Thus, wow we get here, and who we are when we get here comes through our connections; and the quality of those connections.

The Hebrew people were enslaved. God comes to them and says I am your God and I will free you from slavery; trust me. God frees them from Egypt and then in response to that the former slaves enter into a Covenant with God. They connect to God. God reveals God's self to them through the Torah, and through their relationship they will become more than slaves. They will become a great people who by their relationship with God will draw others to God. Well that was the idea.

The Hebrew people had to wander for a generation in the desert because they would not live up to the relationship, the covenant.

Now in our first reading the new generation is poised to enter into the land promised by God and Moses speaks to them. He reminds them all that God has done to get the people there at this point. He reminds them of God's love for them, even though they were slaves. Moses Reminds them that in God's love they have flourished.

Their only response is to love God in return, to maintain the Covenant. And that as they maintain that connection with God, they will continue to grow and prosper as a people.

The great lie of our times: "I am my own person. I control my destiny. I control my life. I decide for myself."

We are who we are through others.

We are who we are through our relationships.

We are consciously and unconsciously influenced by who is around us.

The quality of our personhood can often come down to the quality of our connections.

Jesus calls us to that ancient covenant of the Torah; to help us remember that we need right relationships. The life we have comes from Love of God and love of others.

God desires nothing but for us to become, to be; to prosper and grow.

God wants humanity to be in covenant so that we can create life for ourselves and others. A full life. A life of love

Love is always outward looking. Love means to see those around us.

We prosper, we grow, we thrive as persons and community when we remain outward looking and outward connected.

As we trust ourselves to a Higher Love and a love of others, we can grow.

Life is created when there is love, when there is connection. This is the nature of God, and the nature of our world.

People thrive, children thrive not when they are necessarily indulged, but when they are affirmed and supported. When they are shown how to connect well with others; to accept good from others and to give.

People and communities diminish and become small when their connections are focussed inward, narcissistic; only about their own needs, wants and desires.

When we think our lives are too small, too empty...

It is God then calling out to us to begin to live differently, to engage in life. To engage in others.

The Christian challenge will be always to remain connected to God and to the community around us.

Connected through Jesus Christ through sacraments and through prayer; we seek to love; we seek to grow others, we seek to lift others up.

Clearly we have our struggles, as Church and society; we have had our failures. It is because we have failed to love, we have failed to seek to grow others, to lift others up. At times with devastating results.

In his recent encyclical, "Delixt Nos" Pope Francis calls us to remember we are loved in Christ; and when we forget this and put our efforts into "external activities...projects" "that have little to do with the Gospel" there is a loss.

Yet, when we have succeeded, when we have kept love at the heart of our efforts, there has been so much healing. There can be more. Throughout our history saints have arisen reminding us of this, calling for us to return to love; Francis, Teresa of Avila and John of the Cross, the Little Flower.

And when we come to the end of our personal journeys, we can say "I got here because I was loved, and have been loved."