

I would hope that at some point, if not multiple times, someone came into our lives and opened our minds and hearts to new ways to experience life.

I remember a friend who convinced me to see a play called “Red” at Reno Little Theater. It was an incredible experience that awakened me to the power of Theater and also the artist Rothko. In fact, I saw one of his pieces in the New York Metropolitan Museum of Art and was moved to tears!

I also remember watching Sister Wendy Beckett on tv and she awakened in me a deeper understanding of modern art. I also have had friends and others who introduced me to new foods and new stores. And there are my teachers and profs throughout college, university, seminary who challenged me to think in ways I have never considered. And a therapist who showed me how I could choose to live in healthier ways.

We all need such persons since for so many of us we can get locked into patterns and ideas that inhibit us in our growth; that keep us stagnant in our thoughts and feelings. How many people live with ongoing resentments; actively angry because the world does not go according to their plans; lonely and discouraged because they seem unable to form relationships; fearful of being hurt and broken-hearted?

Last weekend’s Gospel was the Beatitudes. Jesus’ teachings on life and harmony, and on trust in God, and in the way of God. They are beautiful. They are powerful. This weekend continues these teachings of Jesus, but now these words become a direct challenge to ways of thinking. They take on an edge that will be disconcerting to many.

Jesus’ love is radical: love all, even those who you call enemies. Give of yourselves completely. Shocking to his disciples then, and shocking to us some 2000 years later. Love, see the good in democrats or republicans? See the good in people who look different than me? Treat all people with dignity, even though I object to their way of life?

Yes.

And this is not a “new” way. This is God’s way. The way of love, which always was, is and ever shall be.

Jesus invites us to return to the core of who we are in God.

Because this way, this path brings with it true life; a fullness of life.

Imagine being liberated from resentments through forgiveness.

Imagine stopping trying to play God of the universe, being angry when we can't control everyone or everything; and actually seeing the beauty.

Imagine finding the courage to open up and take the risk and trust; finding deeper more meaningful relationships.

Imagine not being controlled by things, having a sense of it's enough.

We celebrate, give Thanks for God's great love. Even though humanity rejected the Son of God and killed him on a cross; God forgave, turned the cheek, and gave the beloved Son back to us. What an incredible act of generosity.

We participate in this love, this generosity each Eucharist. The Son is given to us as a pledge of God's commitment to our lives, to love.

Our only response is to live, and live fully. To walk in the Way of Jesus as disciples: to love radically, completely and fully.