

## **CELEBRATING OUR ROOTS**

Identity is a precious possession. A person has a keener awareness of who he or she is when they understand from where they came. An appropriate appreciation for one's roots makes for healthy growth as a person. In a way, coming to a greater appreciation of who we are is what we do during the Holy Season of Lent.

Christians are often referred to as a "resurrection people," a people of life. That is who we are. It is rooted in the fact that God, in the person of Jesus, rescued us from death and assembles those who believe into his community, called the Church, through the Sacraments of Baptism and Confirmation. That is how we came to be.

Lent affords us an opportunity to reflect on that calling, - the one that calls us to be the people of God's Anointed One, the Christ. As Christians, we celebrate that heritage in a special way at Easter. The Book of Tobit [Chapter 4] gives us an insight into what we ought to look like as God's people.

In it, we read, "Through all your days, keep the Lord in mind, and suppress every desire to sin or to break his commandments. Perform good works all the days of your life, and do not tread the paths of wrongdoing. Do not turn your face away from any of the poor, and God's face will not be turned away from you. Give to the hungry some of your bread and to the naked some of your clothing. Whatever you have left over, give away as alms; and do not begrudge the alms you give."

This particular exhortation concludes with, "At all times bless the Lord God, and ask him to make all your paths straight and to grant success to all your endeavors and plans."

Acknowledging and celebrating our roots is important on a non-spiritual level, as well. While our parish faith communities need to be totally Catholic, the responsibility for maintaining an awareness of who we are ethnically lies with us, - not saying that we cannot express that within the framework of our Faith.

Usually, we form associations for such a purpose. Every nationality has them. Those associations that are Slovak would have celebrated their evangelizers, Saints Cyril and Methodius, this past February 14. The Irish will be celebrating Saint Patrick's Day on March 17.

This year, that date falls on a Friday of Lent. It is a day of abstinence, when we may not eat meat. I hereby dispense from that obligation on March 17 all those who are of Irish ethnic background in any degree and those who will be celebrating with them. This I do on the condition that they pray at least once for more vocations to the priesthood for our Diocesan Church.

We need more Patricks, Cyrils, and Methodiuses. Moreover, we need more Catholic Christians who understand, appreciate, and faithfully live out who they are. Lent is a time for adjustment so that we might actually be the Christian people whose noble identity we celebrate, not only at the time of Easter but during the whole year.