



## *Reflection from Fr. Garry Richmeier*

Gandhi said "If it weren't for Christians, I'd be a Christian." This was after he experienced racism while trying to attend a Christian church service. He also was dismayed by seeing many Christians attempting to get all they could rather than following Jesus' example of giving of oneself. Gandhi continued to follow the teachings of Jesus, even though he, himself, was Hindu. He said he didn't follow the example of most Christians.

This Holy Week we focus on the core of Jesus' teaching: dying to self brings new life. But this message is at odds with our cultural values, philosophy, and lifestyle. Our culture values winning over losing, being first rather than last, having rather than giving, power over powerlessness, getting rather than doing without, and ease over difficulty. Gandhi's comment highlighted the conflict he saw between how many Christians lived the cultural values at the expense of the values Jesus actually taught.

Since all of us are caught in this dilemma, how do we live the true message of Jesus?

We first of all have to admit we and our society are not perfect, and will never be. Only with that humility will we have a chance to walk more closely in Jesus' footsteps. Then we consciously take stock of the many specific details of how we live to see if each aspect or behavior reflects giving of ourselves (dying), or indicates something else. The next step is to make one specific change that is more like Jesus' teaching rather than our culture's teaching. This may be where we buy groceries, how we use our free time, who we vote for, etc. After we make that one change, we look for another specific thing to change. We won't change our whole life in one fell swoop, but repeated little changes will soon make a big difference.

Lent is traditionally a time to look at our lives and see what needs to change. But following Jesus' core teaching is a year round call and requires year round attention and commitment. It is not an easy job, especially in the culture we live in. But it's our faith in the promise of New Life that can give us the strength and courage to step away from our cultural values a little more, and better follow what Jesus really taught.

*Peace,  
Fr. Garry*