

## YOU OWE ME!

Over the years I have spoken occasionally of my longtime friend and classmate, Monsignor Thomas Herron who died back in 2004. We were close friends for forty years. He was actively dying right at the time when we were preparing to dedicate this church three years after our fire. He became semi-comatose, briefly woke up, asked if the dedication had taken place. When assured it was on for the next day, he became comatose. He died on May 2 and the Dedication was April 28. In one of many visits that I had with him during his illness, I was able to get a bit of time alone with him. He asked me a favor. He asked me if I would assist the Executors of his will by taking responsibility for handling his Parish Office and personal papers responsibility.

Having been his friend for so long I knew what his office looked like, often in great disarray. He had a very fine mind but there was often confusion surrounding him. About ten days after the funeral, I went to his parish and began to make some order out of his office and personal affairs. It took me many weeks working half days and some whole days to wind things up in an orderly fashion. I remember thinking somewhere along the line this though. "You owe me, Thomas. You owe me big time." I thought that way because what I agreed to, turned out to be way more than I envisioned. And I was going to call on him for his assistance down here while he was up there.

I do not believe I have ever said those words: You owe me, to another person in any serious way. But I have thought them more than once. So here is today's question. Have you ever thought those words—you owe me—of God? Have you ever thought that you have tried to be a good person, tried to keep the commandments, tried to follow the way of the Lord and live as one of his present-day disciples and slowly began to think that because you have done these things and acted this way, that the Lord owes you?

So. Does the Lord "owe" us because we strive to follow his way? What would Our Lord say to us if he were to read our thoughts or read our hearts, which He can do? He would say, "My child, I do not owe you. I do not owe you because you believe there is something that I have that I am withholding from you. And I am not holding back anything from you. The whole purpose of my coming was to extend, once again, my Father's original invitation to live for ever with us in His Kingdom. I came to bring good news to you. Remember my words to you from the very cross on which I died? "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do?" Do you remember what I said to the good thief when he asked me to remember him? "Today you will be with me in paradise."

My child I hold back from you nothing. All I have, all that has been created is for you—to be part of and to enjoy and to live forever. These things are yours, already offered. You just do not know how to see clearly yet, nor recognize yet what has already been given. You are in need of reminders. And so, I am the reminder sent by my Father.

Can you realize? Can you grasp? Can you accept? This is what I say to you always. In today's psalm the psalmist's refrain is this: If today you hear his voice harden not your hearts. First, God says that because God does speak to us. Secondly, God knows that we do not always surrender to his word. God knows that we harden our hearts to his word because we do not believe it, we do not have an experience of it. And we say we will not believe until we experience it first.

The apostles come to Jesus today and say to him simply: Increase our faith. I pray for that. You pray for that. Recently in my prayer journaling the Lord said an interesting thing to me. "Stephen, you know that I have told my disciples that they are to pick up their crosses and follow me if they would be my disciples. You have done so, my son. But I notice that you have actually carried several crosses. Crosses that I have not chosen for you but which you have chosen and seek to carry, by means of your own strength. Where do these crosses originate? In your sins, my son. You fail. You act selfishly. You substitute your will for my will. And you become aware, and you strive to make things right, carrying these crosses on your own. But they are not from me. They are from you. Of your own choosing. You cannot carry them even though you try. What can you do with them? Give them to me, my son. Give them to me. You can do nothing with them, and I can do everything which needs be done with them."

That is how our faith is increased. By trust. By trusting more in God's power and God's love. By entrusting all of our lives and responsibilities and cares and concerns into the hands of Our Lord. He owes us nothing because He has already given us everything. We have only to believe.