

“I do not do what I want,” St. Paul.

We could call it addiction, or obsession - or besetting sin: *“I do not do what I want; I keep doing the very thing I don’t want... the very thing I hate.”* I live with hurtful compulsions. Such unsettling actions surround us. Any child moving from the delights of infancy into the “terrible twos” is starting a struggle that endures. St. Paul was a well-educated Jew and full grown Pharisee, a virtuous man by all standards; and he says, “I find it a law that when I want to do good, evil lies close at hand...I can will what is right but I cannot do it.” St. Augustine reflecting on Paul, says, “our hearts are restless, until they rest in you o God”.

The good news is after the discouragement- even despair- of doing the very things I don’t want, we are resurrected into God’s original blessings. We are, in God’s grace, given a mature infancy. We become a child of God again. Scripture never refers to us as the adults of God. We are the children of God, adopted by God in Christ.

Entering my second childhood begins with confessing with Paul that the terrible twos play out all of my life. “I know what to do, but I can’t do it on my own. The power of...whatever you want to call it- sin, compulsion, addiction, indifference... keeps sabotaging my best efforts. I don’t have what it takes. I can will it; but I can’t do it alone. Help! I need help.

Sin is bigger than I am. We all need outside help. Thanks be to God.

When Paul says, “those who walk according to the flesh, live by the flesh”, we might assume he speaks only of our physical bodies- as if sin is all about what we do with our bodies. Why don’t I have more self-control, I ask. The answer is I live in a much bigger web of influences than my body. Paul is referring to more than *physical* bodies. He’s referring to our self-centered will. Actually, the sins of the flesh- gluttony, lust and so forth- are the least dangerous. It’s the sins of the spirit- pride, envy, and failure to love God with heart, soul, and mind that are the most dangerous. Paul warns against “walking according to my ego, my self-centeredness.” We overcome the terrible twos not by getting rid of the body but

by growing into the bigger body of Christ. Entering God's bigger world. Resurrection is growing into the wider body of Christ.

How can we grow? The gospel gives a surprising answer: "I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and intelligent and have revealed them to infants; yes, Father, for such is your gracious will....come to me all you who are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you. For I am gentle and humble in heart." We are invited to become *child-like*, not *child-ish*. We need adult skills to navigate the world- but even more the child-like gifts of prayer and curiosity.

I had a wonderful three weeks away- camping, fishing, a baptism, and a week at a monastery painting an icon. One incident brought me back to the terrible twos. My oldest son, now in his mid-thirties, and I had returned from camping; and he had to go to work early the next morning. We agreed I would drive with him to his commuting bus, and bring the car home so I could use it during the day. At noon when I went to the car, the battery was dead. The lights were left on. I called my son and he disparaged me for leaving the lights on- even though he had turned the lights on when he was driving it in daylight; and I didn't know they were on; and in his old car you had to turn the lights *off*. I was annoyed.

At 6 o'clock in the evening, when I went to pick up him up, I went to the wrong place. He was annoyed. I was annoyed. We had a spat. We were both in our terrible twos, two strong wills colliding. I gave him the keys and walked home alone.

Thank God, he goes to church. And I go to church- to give up some of my self-centered will and invite God's bigger world of grace. Thanks be to God, whose yoke is easy and whose burden is light.