

There is a fable told about a King and Queen who gave birth to their first-born son.

As the young prince grew, he was very handsome except for one thing.
He had a crooked back.

This defect caused him and his parents great sorrow.

This sorrow was so great that he was never the kind of prince
He wanted to be for his people.

One day his father, the king, commissioned the greatest sculptor in the land to make a statue of his son.

But the king wanted the statue made not with a crooked back,
but with a straight one.

The king wanted his son to see himself as he might be.

The statue was built and it was placed in the king's garden.

Many times the young prince would come and look at the statue.

He would study it...and he would think to himself.

"I like that statue; I'd like to look like that some day."

And so he began to visit the statue every day.

Each and every day he would study the statue...

Each and every day he would meditate in the garden.

Each and every day he would imagine himself looking like the statue.

And then one day a remarkable thing happened.

The prince found himself standing straight...just like the statue.

That story is a parable to us.

For we too, like the prince, were born into greatness

for we are created in the image of God.

But like the prince, we too have a defect, and that defect is called sin.

That defect in us takes many forms: selfishness, greed, gluttony.

Envy, jealousy, prejudice...dishonesty, hatred, anger...

And all of these keep us from being the kind of person

God created us to be.

And then one day just like the king did for his son,

God wanted to show us how we could be.

He sent his son, Jesus, into the world

to be the perfect image of what you and I could be.

But you know, right now, that is as far as the story goes.

It's unfinished....It's incomplete.

Whether or not we end up becoming like Jesus

is something that has not yet fully been determined.

Whether or not our story, like the one of the prince,

will have a happy ending has yet to be decided.

Which leads us to an important question:

How do you know if your story will have a happy ending?

The answer is really quite simple and it is found in the story of the prince.

Once the prince decided he liked the statue;

Once the prince decided that he wanted to be like the statue,
each and every day he would study it and meditate on it.

And just as the prince studied and pondered and meditated on the statue,
so too are we invited to ponder and study and meditate on Jesus.

He tells us so in our Gospel reading:

Come to me....learn from me....for I am meek and humble of heart.

Jesus tells us today to learn from him. How do we do this?

I'll offer today two suggestions:

First of all, the best way we can learn from Jesus is through his Word,
The scriptures.

Lots of Catholics today are becoming avid Bible readers.

You don't have to be a theologian, a priest, a scripture scholar,
to benefit from reading the Bible.

God has chosen this as a way in which he reveals himself to us,
but we need to seek out the message.

And if you don't like to read,

I know a lot of people who listen to the Bible on tape or CD's.

Going to and from work, working around the house,
while traveling on vacation.

The Bible is Jesus' story; it's God's story about God's relationship with us.

If we want to know Jesus....perhaps we should study his word....
ponder it....meditate on it...find ourselves in the story.

The second suggestion ties in with the first.

When you come to Mass, don't let the scripture readings pass you by...
listen to them more intently, more deeply.

Listen not only with your ears but also with your heart.

And as you listen, imagine yourself in the scene....

imagine yourself with Jesus.

Picture him as he says things. Try to imagine his voice...his eyes.

Try to feel what the apostles surely felt as Jesus talked to them.

Close your eyes for a minute.

Imagine yourself having had a really bad day...or week....

Imagine yourself going through a particularly difficult time in your life.
Get that image in your mind....

Now imagine Jesus coming to you and saying to you:

Come to me when you are weary and burdensome and I will give you rest.

Can you picture Jesus offering you refreshment and rest....

Like a much needed vacation....like a steady rain after a drought.

Picturing yourself in the scene...That's listening with your heart.

And so we come back to our starting point.

How do we know our life will have that happy ending?

If we are to grow in the likeness of Christ,

like the prince grew in the likeness of the statue,

We must do what the prince did.

We must look to Jesus...

We must study his life and ponder his word.

We must meditate on him...

Do this....and you'll have your happy ending...

and your soul will find rest.