

STRETCHING OUT YOUR NECK...

I write this on Tuesday of the 1st week of Lent. The afternoon has been pouring rain, and the weather has been a delight (since I've been inside). Wind has been gusting; rain has been strong; thunder & lightning are often (yes, with a few power flickers). Thank the Lord, the storm has been coming from the east, which means, given the temperatures, I can keep the (west-facing) patio doors open.

I sit in my chair, wrapped in my prayer shawl, praying the Rosary and looking out behind the rectory. Back there is where I have my bird-feeder. In this storm it's really the focus of my thoughts right now.

A blue-jay desperately tried to get seeds from the feeder, but he had a virtually impossible task, at least as he saw it. The perches for the feeder (a cylindrical one, perhaps 12" tall, suspended from the rectory eaves) are all only at most 1" below the openings from which to peck out the seeds. This is perfect for the sparrows, baby cardinals and jays, titmice (titmouses??), house finches and others who frequent the feeder. Even cardinals are OK with this arrangement. But the jays are too big, so they get frustrated.

If only they perched on one level and ate from the level above (a definite possibility, given this feeder's structure), they could eat to their heart's (and gullet's) content. But somehow they don't see this option, or it doesn't compute for them. So they miss out.

Are we like this? Is there a solution to our prayers that is (so to speak) staring us in the face, yet somehow missed by us? Are we like the jays, crouching and crunching to fit into what we think is the "expected space" for us and our prayers, while God is all the while saying, "Stretch out a bit—there's plenty for you"? Human beings love to make things harder than they have to be—why is that? I'm not saying that the spiritual life has (or should have) the equivalent of the "easy button" in the Staples commercials, but we don't always have to climb Mt. Everest without oxygen masks, either...

Perhaps this is one aspect of what I referred to in the homily this past weekend—of the fundamental dis-connect between ourselves and God; of attitude more than behaviors. And perhaps God is ready to feed us, if only we'd stretch out our necks a couple more inches higher.