

# KNOWING OUR AUTHENTIC SELVES

The title of my article this month might have you saying, "that's silly, I know myself better than anyone." I would respond by quoting the famous Scottish poet, Robert Burns who said:

**"Wad God but hae the gift to gie us, to see oursels as ithers see us."....**which roughly translated means: 'If only God could help us to see ourselves as other people see us.'

You know, we may think that we know and understand ourselves, but the human ego being what it is, tends, in most cases, to paint a very flattering picture. In other words, we see what we want to see.

Sunday October 24<sup>th</sup>, marked the founding of the United Nations, 59 years ago, on October 24<sup>th</sup>, 1945: The UN is an organization based on the radical idea that nations can and must work together for the mutual benefit of the planet and all its people, and it sponsors PEACE and good RELATIONSHIPS between all peoples as an achievable ideal. As we work through the process of coming to know our authentic selves, we very quickly find that the relationships we have with others are key to whether we are at peace with ourselves; are indeed key to whether we 'like' ourselves or not; are key to whether we even understand our own actions much of the time.

The greatest example of this is happening right now in the USA, as the Presidential race to the White House comes to its inevitable climax. The two prospects for that exalted role have increasingly been front and center of the media as their every word, and even their every action has been scrutinized, discussed, criticized, before moving on to the next flavor of the day. Even their families and loved ones fall under the spotlight. How many of us could

stand such a searching examination of our lives and intentions? It is a process which, sadly, seemingly highlights more of the negative aspects of personality than the positive. Were I in the position of having to make the decision of where to place my mark on a ballot paper, I think I would be resorting to the age-old question: "Which of the candidates would you trust to sell you a used vehicle."

Liking ourselves, and being with peace with who we are, become of critical importance to living a happy and fulfilling life. Our time on this planet is but a fleeting moment in the grand scheme of things, and it is in our own interests to use our 'moment' wisely. Being in conflict with self, with family or with friends is no way to spend precious time, a commodity that we have not yet found a way to replace. So what can we do? We can talk to friends in a non-judgmental way about our relationships, and in the process come to know and better understand our own strengths and weaknesses. We can also look to the past for examples which might help us in our elusive task of improving our relationship with ourselves and also with others.

As I prepared last week to talk on a similar subject to the people of South Bay and Cherry Valley, I was reminded of six words that are written in foot high gold letters in a tiny, 150 year old 'settlers church' in Durham Region of Ontario. The simply say:

## **"THE TRUTH SHALL SET YOU FREE"**

These words come from a book written 2000 years ago and yet their value is as good today as it was when they were first spoken. Much of the conflict we face in our lives is of our own creation as we take a rigid stance over what are often simple, non life threatening situations, misunderstandings, or worry over things that might never ever happen. Looking once again to others for ideas that might be of assistance in our quest for personal peace, there is none better than the 14<sup>th</sup>. Dalai Lama, Tenzin Gyatso who said recently:

**"The more we care for the happiness of others, the greater our own sense of well-being becomes."**

These are simple and yet, at the same time are profound thoughts as we re-learn the principle that, in large measure, our joy comes, not in the receiving, but in the act of giving.

Knowing our authentic selves means remembering that we are human and have failings; means accepting others in spite of their shortcomings; means loving ourselves; means seeking first the good and then working through the challenges that life and relationships place in our path.

A young person on a quest for knowledge was

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