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Groundhog Day - by Carl E Beyer

I am not really sure how it happened but I missed Groundhog Day this year. The calendar I use from St. Thomas doesn't seem to have Groundhog Day marked. Can someone speak to Father about having this corrected next year?

For those of you that are now saying what is this crazy guy talking about, I want you to run down to your favorite video store and rent "Groundhog Day" featuring Bill Murray and Andie MacDowell produced in 1993. OK, are you back from watching the movie?

Now you have seen the movie we can start with the Groundhog itself. I know the movie centered around this little critter in all its glory but I am from the North East and spent many hours with the Groundhog. This pesky little critter is the spawn of all farmers. He tears up the fields ruining much of the farmer's equipment. So as a youth the Groundhog was predestined target material. I have a very clear memory of our Beagles cornering one of these critters and spending time tiring it out. Our hunting dogs had dinner that day. Just a second I will be right back OK, I had to check and ensure this critter was not on the extinction list after I had written about it that manner. Nope the great Northeastern forests are too vast for this to ever happen.

As a kid I really did not think much of this holiday. This was because most years February 2nd saw the Groundhog cozy in its underground den. The Groundhog was way too smart to pop his head up to check his shadow on a likely cold and snowy day.

Oops better review the folklore before we go any further. *If a groundhog emerging from its burrow on this day fails to see its shadow, it will leave the burrow, signifying that winter will soon end. If on the other hand, the groundhog sees its shadow, the groundhog will retreat into its burrow, and winter will continue for six more weeks.*

Here in the desert we could substitute the Prairie Dog for the Groundhog I suppose. But I have not seen a Prairie Dog very often. I know where some burrows are but I most often walk with four dogs which I am sure keep the Prairie Dogs in hiding.

Last weekend I felt a little like the Groundhog. Friday I pop my head outside and felt the warmth and started dreaming of spring. I dug out and fix some of the garden irrigation lines. Garden plans started to stir in my head. But I forgot to check and therefore did not see my shadow. Saturday I worked all day at my computer on various projects so I would have Sunday to enjoy the warmth of spring. Sunday morning, I went to the 10AM mass and all was fine but as we all know the weather took a turn for the worst later in the day. I stuck my head outside Sunday afternoon to be greeted by a very strong and cold wind. With that, my dream of an early spring went away. Sometimes with this great New Mexico weather, we forget what month we are in. February is still quite early.

I wonder how many of us have given thoughts to how great of a gift our God has given us with the seasons.

Each Spring we plant our seeds to see them grow. Some make it, some not, as in all life. We watch as the trees we plant give birth to new leaves. Flowers bloom to feed our eyes their beauty. Our garden plants and fruit trees blossom not for their beauty in the present but for the promise of the fruits and vegetables in the next season. We are reminded of our own birth and adolescent.

Our blossoming, our struggles, our promise of a great future.

Summer comes with its long days and warmth. Those flowers, that are there for beauty, continue feeding our eyes. The flowers on the fruits and vegetables have been replace with their produce growing bigger and bigger with each passing days, as we do in life, growing stronger and

wiser with the passing years. These long days give us time to play after a full day of work. It reminds us that man is neither happy in all play nor in all work but needs to strike a healthy balance. I have often wondered how people can buy houses and pay landscapers to finish their backyards before they have even moved in. What a pity that they have forsaken the pleasure of sharing in God's creation of a flower patch, a rows of fruit trees or a vegetable garden. Yes, we can enjoy the pleasure and beauty of a perfectly created landscape by someone else but that is not the same as when it is done by one's own hands. Always progressing, never perfected; that is the greatest of the backyards.

Then comes Fall. Time to reap the rewards of the work of Summer. Time to store up for the coming of the next season. The turning of the leaves is God's final glorious brushstroke of color in the seasons. Days get shorter, colder and in some ways harder. As in life, we are still productive but things slow down and our thoughts drift toward taking things at a slower pace. Time to not be a bystander as life is so busy it passes away too quickly. This is the time to take pleasure in seeing the beauty of life. Time to remember the Spring and Summer that has brought us such pleasure.

And finally the last season of Winter comes upon us. In our city life we forget what this season should mean. This should be the time to put our feet up; to enjoy quiet time by the fireplace. Time to relax, reflect and gather our strength for the coming Spring. And yes traditionally time to bake and make those food dishes to be dreamt about in the other three seasons. This reminds each of us that in life we will hit our Winter; time when we will leave this earth for the eternal springtime of Heaven.

What a gift God gives us in the seasons. Each year we get to enjoy the distinct differences of the seasons. We get to reflect on what season of life we are in. And best of all, God give us a chance to attempt to perfect what only God is able to perfect. We seek to live in God's shadow. Some years we do better than others, but on whole, we hope to be able to make progress for the greatest day of our life; our last day, the day we meet our maker.

I thought the movie "Groundhog Day" had a deep message, to wit, of learning to be unselfish, to only seek to help others, to find the simple pleasure of making someone else's day. And in doing so, find the deep inner peace we all seek. It was a simple message of Bill Murray's character who in the beginning tried to kill himself to no avail, then sought to pleasure himself in all vices and finding no pleasure in that. In the end, the perfect day was the day that was spent making other people happy. If only we could absorb this message into our own lives.

So go forth and dream of spring. Stare out the window and visualize those flowers to plant, vegetable gardens to plan and fruit to pick. But most of all go forth and thank God for the blessing of the seasons. God Bless you all.