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The End

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The End

Some films, and even some books and stories, were once concluded with the words, "The End." Nowadays, we do not expect to be told when a movie, a novel, or a play has come to the end. Perhaps the words were intended as a polite way of indicating that, no matter how entertaining the story might have been, nothing further was to be awaited. When good experiences come to an end, whether of fiction or real and present situations, we would usually like them to continue. Sometimes, even with fictional stories, and certainly with many of our human encounters, we might choose them not to end.

Imagination is one means for extending experiences, by remembering and relishing some particular elements, by constructing in our minds possible continuances, or by moving the stories or events forward through imagining ourselves in active participation. We come to the end only when we cease taking part in the experiences through memory and imagination. This process is exactly what goes on when people engage in imaginative contemplation of Scriptural stories.

The end of many of our experiences is often the beginning or point of departure for further involvements as we continue on to whatever is next, changed in some ways by what has happened. "The end" is a relative expression that has meaning, but should not be taken too literally. A story, for example, comes to an end, but it can be the beginning of a change of heart or of a new insight. Stories, whether written or when spoken, as when someone tells us about some aspect of his or her life, elicit resonances with incidents, encounters and other events in our own lives that in turn cause us to reflect, and to adjust our attitudes and beliefs as seems appropriate to us.

We know that many things do come to an end. We often desire to "have closure" on such things as a hurtful experience or an outburst of anger. But there are also many things that affect us strongly and which do not come completely to an end. We might come to the end of a particular event but the reverberations in our hearts or even our bodies might continue for a time and not be subject to our control. A traumatic experience does not come to the end at the moment the initiating cause ceases, as for example, when someone is involved in an automobile accident. We need to work with and through the incompleteness so that we can move towards a healthy conclusion for our whole selves, body, mind and spirit. And if we find the process daunting, we can choose to go directly to God, seeking healing at every level of our being.

Though we cannot stop every thought that comes into our minds, and are unable to control each and every affective movement within us, we do have

the capacity, and therefore the responsibility, to bring to a conclusion any patterns of negative behavior when we become aware of them. Though we might seek advice, counsel or support from others and pray to God for assistance in arriving at clarity of intention and purpose, we are the ones who must finally say, "the end," to hurtful ways of relating with others as well as with ourselves.

"The End."