

demeanor was meaner than it should have been. Less news, they colluded, might be just the remedy.

That's when I reached for a short stack of books, the first one being a biography of Gandhi. I had purchased The Life of Mahatma Gandhi by Louis Fischer (Harper and Row, 1950) at a dollar book sale several years prior. It looked like it would be big enough to prop up a dozen or more paperbacks all by itself, and that's what it did until I picked it up on Ash Wednesday. After seeing many quotes attributed to India's "Father of the Nation" in other books, magazine articles, and on bumper stickers, I thought it was time to meet the man in person.

Gandhi was born in 1869, two years after my maternal grandfather, and was killed in 1948, just a year before I was born. But in those nearly four score years, he captured the attention of the world with his witness of equality, simplicity, independence, justice, and non-violence.

Fischer provided more biographical data than I thought I could read and the plodding pronunciation of the names of his colleagues or the towns of pilgrimage delayed the turning of many a page. But because the author was a Gandhi contemporary and had spent ample time at the ashram, the many details were needed to account for the volumes that the Mahatma wrote, the miles that he walked, and the lives that were spared because of his dogged determination.

It might sound trite to suggest that Gandhi excelled in contemplation, dialogue, writing, simple living, and self-control, but the five hundred pages convinced me that these were just a few of his accomplishments.

And just when I was tempted to think the Fischer relied on the sheer volume of words to make his point, I came across a single line he used to capture the



impact of "Bapu": "His greatness lay in his doing what everybody else could do, but doesn't." In other words, our greatness would be within reach were it not for the vastness between our words and our actions.

When asked what he thought of Western Civilization, Gandhi once responded: "I think it is a good idea." And when questioned by a Baptist minister why he had not become a Christian, the sage quipped: "As soon as I see the Christians living the Beatitudes, I shall be baptized!" Gandhi thought we should be able to see what we believe in our everyday actions.

When I finished the book I treated myself to seeing the 1982 movie "Gandhi" starring Oscar-winning Ben Kingsley. It was a great way to close the book and conclude my Lenten fast.

I was inspired by what I read. It has energized my ministry. I humbly prescribe the same experience for you. You don't have to read Fischer's biography. There are many others to choose from. But before you see the movie again, do with a little less news and re-connect with the man who spirited the liberation of the largest democracy on earth.

After savoring the sweetness of Gandhi's greatness, I picked up another title that had waited nearly fifty years for me to get to it: Silent Spring by Rachel Carson. It is the 1962 classic that served as a wake-up call on the dangers of pesticides, DDT in particular.

Before I offer a few more lines to invite or entice you to reach for this artfully done piece, I think a word of explanation is in order. "This is a newsletter dedicated to the gospel and performing arts," you are thinking to yourself. "What's with the chemical alert?"

Nearly thirteen years ago, my life changed significantly. I was present for the birth of my son, David. I have not been the same since. And two years later, when Sarah arrived, I was tearful and speechless once again. Every year, every day since, I have been blessed by the mystery of life unfolding in my lap with questions, challenges, celebrations, expectations, and sacrifices. But the kids are getting bigger and I am getting older. More and more I am focusing on how to provide for them in ways that will endure, long after I am gone.

Even with a roof over our heads and food on the table, I cannot rest peacefully if the roof is