

GLIMPSE

Corny

Fr. Larry Gillick, S.J.

An elderly Jesuit Brother related to me about his arriving from Ireland in New York City. He was met by his sister who gave him a key to her apartment with directions. She told him that dinner was waiting including fresh corn on the cob. All he had to do was husk the cobs turn on the burner, boil the water and put the husked corn in for eight minutes. All this he did to the letter. Upon his sister's arrival back to her apartment, she asked how he liked the corn on the cob. (The Irish did not, at that time, grow sweet corn for human consumption.) He replied that he didn't find it very enjoyable at all. Upon inquiry she discovered that husking for him meant the corn kernels as well as the tight green leaves surrounding the cob. At the time of his telling me this, he still had not eaten corn in any form, including popped.

We have a saying, "There is more going on than is going on." There is always something going on around us and these events are similar to husks on the corn cob. The outer leaves are what's going on in one sense, but there is always more. The more might be what is going on inside us, because of how we experience the husks. The present husks might remind us of former experiences of husks and so that begins an inside-husking which we call *reflection*. The word literally means "bend-back". As we bend back the green husks to expose the corn we find that there is more than external wrapping. As with my Irish immigrant, we might not know what those yellowy nubbins are, but at least we know that we can check things out then or later. There might even be something quite tasty available; even more than chewing the cooked rough cob. Yuck!

We all know the difference between *eating* and *dining*. We eat at a fast-food dispensary. We eat on the run, even though we might be sitting. We eat then without tasting, just getting rid, temporarily, of hunger. We usually cannot remember a few hours later, what we did eat. It was just going on and we ate so we could go on going on.

Dining is not only a "sit-down" event, but a "set-down" event or series of events around a table of space and time. The expense might be the amount of time and interest we pay for finding out what is to be found-in. There is more than eating. There are tastes, digesting, enjoying and remembering. There is the possibility of real corn within the setting-down of running and going-ons. Dining is what *reflection is*. Real dining is intimate time invested in and with as well as for the other or others. Intimate means fruitfulness in time as a result of the dining-time. When dining, one might remember the taste of the corn, and so bodily nourishment, but what is remembered more is the depth and interior nourishment of the relationships experienced.

The table of life is set; it is not a fast-food counter. Bending backwards, reflecting, takes time and the awareness that there is always more than meets the ear or eye. It is not merely peeling things back to find out what is in it for me, but rather what of me is there to be made more available for others at other tables of life. We can miss the kernels of life by being fascinated by the husks of an experience, miss the kernels and end up being disappointed by the cobs of life. There is always more going on just inside the husks, but it takes time and a bit of cooking. It is maybe what life is really meant to be, nourishing. It is only a glimpse, enjoy your table.