

St. Martha's Adult Formation
April 8, 2008 – *FORGIVENESS*
7:30 –9:00 PM

HOLY and RIGHT RELATIONSHIPS

"Be perfect, therefore as your Heavenly Father is perfect." (Mt 5: 38)

Our Original Purpose - The First Principle and Foundation

**The goal of our life is to live with God forever.
God, who loves us, gave us life.
Our own response of love allows God's life
to flow into us without limit.**

All the things in this world are gifts of God,
presented to us so that we can know God more easily
and make a return of love more readily.

As a result, we appreciate and use all these gifts of God
insofar as they help us develop as loving persons.
*But if any of these gifts become the center of our lives,
they displace God
and so hinder our growth toward our goal.*

In everyday life, then, we must hold ourselves in balance
before all of these created gifts insofar as we have a choice
and are not bound by some obligation.
We should not fix our desires on health or sickness,
wealth or poverty, success or failure, a long life or short one.
For every thing has the potential of calling forth in us
a deeper response to our life in God.

**Our only desire and our one choice should be this:
I want and I choose what better leads
to God's deepening his life in me.**

-St Ignatius as paraphrased by David L. Fleming S.J.

Our Final End

One of the nuns at the Carmel of the Most Holy Trinity wrote to me that in
his book *Living in Hope*, Ladilaus Boros' theory is that our whole life is
basically a training period, a practice session, getting ready for the most
important moment and whole purpose of our life: THE moment in which we
give God our personal response of Faith, Hope and Love and step from this
world of shadow into true life.

“Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.”

*When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them,
“Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven;
if you retain the sins of any they are retained.” (Jn 20: 21-23)*

RECEIVING AND BEING FORGIVENESS

1. Love is the fundamental and innate vocation of every human being. Made in the image of God that is a Trinity - a communion of love - human beings are created with the capacity and responsibility to live in “love and communion”. Our God is Holy (“perfect”) and we must be holy (“perfect” or at least perfectly human”) as well.
2. Our lives are lived in relationship with others and our vocation calls us to live with each other in holy and right relationships. Our daily experience tells us that it is no easy task. The hard truth is that all of us love poorly. We need to forgive and be forgiven every day, every hour - unceasingly.
3. Forgiveness – the forgiveness of God – is at the heart of Christian holiness and is the mission of the Three in One Love revealed in the mystery of Christ crucified into Resurrection. (Image of *earthrise* in Vince Donovan’s *Christianity Re-discovered*.)
4. We often hear it said that it is hardest to “forgive ourselves”. It is not hardest; it is impossible! We cannot forgive ourselves; we can only and must first *accept* forgiveness. “Receive the Holy Spirit” – we must humbly accept the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Love and the ultimate form of love, which is forgiveness.
5. It is only if we accept and receive God’s forgiveness that we can then forgive others and ask others to forgive us. (“Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us.”)
6. Forgiveness is moral in two senses. First, as I forgive, I give up the resentment to which I think that I am entitled. Giving up resentment in this context is moral (and paradoxical) precisely because I am giving a gift to the one who injured me. The gift is that I no longer resent the injurer even though I have a right to resentment (i.e. resentment as “I am angry and you owe me”).
7. Second, forgiveness is moral in that the forgiver reaches out to the other who injured him or her with at least one of three moral

principles: merciful restraint, generosity, and/or moral love (*hesed* in Hebrew; *agape* in ancient Christian writings).

- i. *By merciful restraint*, we mean that the forgiver refrains from deserved punishment.
 - ii. *By generosity*, we mean that the forgiver actually begins to give good things to the injurer, such as attention, time, favorable judgments, and so forth.
 - iii. *By moral love*, we mean that the forgiver give of oneself toward the rehabilitation and betterment of the injurer. (*A definition of forgiveness*, R. Enright).
8. These three moral principles seem to me to parallel the three degrees or phases of humility as described in *The Spiritual Exercises* of Inigo de Loyola.
- i. *The first phase: the way of the commandments*. I live to obey God who speaks in my spirit. For I know this: God has placed deepest in me a desire for Himself and I have chosen to enact my desire to belong to God before I enact any other desire, and I will enact no desire that would separate me from God.
 - ii. *The second phase: the way of creative, active indifference*. I begin to find in myself the desire to find God and to grow to love God. It is not so much that I want to keep from offending God and violating my own honesty and integrity. I have changed in this, that I have chosen to love God, not just to obey God.
 - iii. *The third phase: the way of imitating Christ*. In this phase, I come to see the earth and all that is in it through other eyes: the human eyes of Jesus of Nazareth.
(*Choosing Christ in the World*, J. A. Tetlow, SJ)

REDEMPTION

redeem *v.t.* 1. to buy or pay off; 7. to make up for; make amends for (some fault)
9. *Theol.* to deliver from sin and its consequences by means of a sacrifice offered for the sinner.

redemption *n.* 1. the act of redeeming. 3. deliverance; rescue.
4. *Theol.* deliverance from sin, salvation. 5. atonement for guilt.

1. We are not the sum of our mistakes and failures. We are the sum of the Father's love for us and the real capacity to be the image of his only Son." - John Paul II at World Youth Day in Toronto, 2002.

2. According to anthropologist, Rene Girard, the central dynamic of human history is *scapegoating* – the endless cycle of remembering hurts and then getting retribution and revenge. In thinking family systems that same dynamic is the central way we bind our anxiety – i.e. justify and blame.
3. Christianity is the only religion in the world that worships the Victim and makes Him the “Lord of History” (Cf. A.D.) Jesus, the Paschal Sacrifice/Victim, though his life, death and resurrection redeems us and shows us a way out of the endless cycle of revenge. (Scapegoat liturgy – Lv 16)
4. “When the shepherd of all humanity, the living God, himself became a lamb, he stood on the side of the lambs, with those who are downtrodden and killed. This is how he reveals himself to be the true shepherd: “I am the Good Shepherd...I lay down my life for the sheep,” Jesus says of himself (Jn 10, 14). It is not power, but love that redeems us! This is God’s sign: he himself is love...God, who became a lamb tell us that the world is saved by the Crucified One, not by those who crucified him. **The world is redeemed by the patience of God. It is destroyed by the impatience of man.** “ - Pope Benedict XVI
5. A poignant scene in Leon Uris’ novel *Redemption* gets its right and wrong. Right that we do make the same mistakes; wrong that redemption is a human power. It is a power given to humans through the third way, the way of the Cross.

Liam was bewildered and ashamed. His being felt soggy.
 "Oh, Jesus," he wept.
 "Want to hear about me and my family?" she said with irony.
 "Why do we make the same %\$#^&! mistakes our da's made with us! Why the %^\$# don't we learn anything!"
 "I think it's called life," she said.
 "Is there anything I can do?" he cried.
 "I'm not a Catholic," she answered quickly.
 "Is there anything I can do!" he pleaded.

"God figured out when he separated us from the rest of the creatures that if we have the power to reason and justify and make decisions, then we are going to make a lot of mistakes passing through. Big, big, big mistakes. God understood that, then gave us the ultimate human power, the power of redemption.
6. Forgiveness is neither fight nor flight. It is the “third way” - the way of the cross, of Jesus crucified into resurrection. It is the contemplative way - the way of prayer, of taking a “long, loving look at the real.” It requires that we learn acceptance.

ACCEPTANCE AND APPROVAL

1. *Acceptance* is an attitude that is essential to having both clarity of mind as well as being emotionally generous.
2. If we are to deal with our *experience*, it is necessary to become *conscious* of it and then it is necessary to *accept* it for what it is. That kind of acceptance is not easy. Too often we think that consciousness of our experience automatically involves acceptance. As Herbert Alphonso points out in the first appendix of *Discovering Your Personal Vocation*, “the fact is that we have a kind of spontaneous inner dynamic of *nonacceptance* operative within each one of us”. It is too easy for us to justify, blame, excuse or deny rather than truly accept our experience for what it is.
3. Alphonso makes a clear distinction between *approval* and *acceptance*. Approval or disapproval is a *judgment*; acceptance is an *attitude*. God accepts each of us unconditionally without approving of all that we do. And what God does for me I need to do for myself. If I do so, then my being will be gracious, my understanding will be clear and my acting will be loving. And as a full-hearted disciple I will enact the virtues of faith and hope and love.
4. **Faith** – Paul Tillich tells us “faith is the courage to accept *acceptance*”. If we are to be mature disciples able to listen and to share we must have the kind of faith that is marked by the fortitude and courage to accept God’s unconditional acceptance of us and to do so for ourselves and for all others as well.
5. **Hope** – “Hope is the theological virtue by which we desire the kingdom of heaven as our happiness, placing our trust in Christ’s promises and relying not on our own strength, but on the help of the grace of the Holy Spirit.” (CCC No. 1817) And therefore, we can be hope-filled companions to each other.
6. **Love** – The English word does not capture what the Greeks meant when they talked of *agape*. Nor is a good translation of the Latin word *caritas*. Neither the word *love* nor *charity* fully express the kind of love we are called to in our discipleship. God is love. And so, we might take Paul’s famous description of love in 1 Cor 13 as a description of God’s gracious presence. “God is patient; God is kind. God is not jealous...”

DISCIPLINE, DETACHMENT AND DISCERNMENT

1. A psychology consistent with our Catholic faith would tell us that the first step to mental health is to 1) see the facts; 2) recognize the truth; and 3) desire the good. Prudence requires that we *discern* the true good and *choose* the right means of acting. Discipline and detachment are prerequisites not only for sanity but also for sanctity.
2. Discernment at the secular level is 1) naming things accurately; 2) clarifying what we don't understand; 3) taking responsibility for our choices. Discernment of spirits is about choosing the Christ life ("being good") over the world ("doing good"), the flesh ("feeling good") or the devil ("looking good").
3. Detachment means 1) being alert to the demands of the present moment; 2) seeking God in all that one does; 3) discerning what God asks of us in a given situation.
4. Discipline is that which disposes and liberates us to realize through the working of the Holy Spirit what is deepest and best in us. More than "techniques" or "tools", exercises or disciplines help us to change how we "move and act and have our being".
5. The words "discipline" and "disciple" both come from the Latin word meaning "to learn." To learn the way of discipleship, to walk in Christ's footsteps we must be prepared to practice and to face the disciplines that make learning possible and for living with sanity and sanctity. We can make the choice to practice disciplines such as the "Daily Mood Log" (Appendix A), the "Family Diagram" (from first week's handouts) and a daily Examen Prayer (Appendix B) as ways of being more self-aware and ready to face correction from God and from others.
6. Although forgiveness is not what we do, but what we receive and pass on. There are disciplines that help us receive and share forgiveness.
7. The following process or discipline is also a way of deepening our conversion, of being transfigured into a closer image/icon of Jesus.

The world is redeemed by the patience of God.
It is destroyed by the impatience of man.

PATIENCE or Longsuffering is

... the suffering or enduring (of pain, trouble, or evil) with calmness and composure, without discontent or complaint. (OED)

... a willingness to stick to things. (*The Message*, Eugene Peterson)

... a mark of one who like Jesus, their paradoxical King, is a "warrior of God".

...really the lovely quality of forgiveness and bearing contentedly and joyfully the results of the mistakes & wrongdoing of others. (*Mountain of Spices*, Hannah Hurnard)

GRIEVE! - THE CALL TO COMPASSION

Affective Conversion – deciding to take responsibility for the health of one's emotional and imaginative life.

FEELING: Gut (anger) transformed – *the strength to choose in freedom. (Love)*

REMEMBER Recognize and name the "wrong(s)"/"hurt(s) or losses.

FEEL Recognize and *embrace* the feeling(s).

TALK Share - or learn to share - the feelings.

REPENT! - THE CHALLENGE OF CHANGE

Intellectual Conversion - deciding to take responsibility for one's belief.

THINKING: head (fear) transformed – *"the courage to accept acceptance". (Faith)*

CHOOSE Decide, and ask for healing.

SEE/SEEK See all the wound(s); seek responsibility, not blame.

"KNOW" Know the truth and know acceptance/serenity.

REJOICE! - FORGIVENESS AND RECONCILIATION

RELATING: Heart (shame) transformed – *the humility to receive forgiveness. (Hope)*

RECONCILE *"Act justly"* - choose how to be in the "new" relationships.

Personal Moral Conversion – deciding to be just in interpersonal dealings.

FORGIVE *"Love mercy"* - and grow/go forward.

Social Political Conversion – deciding to act for justice in social institutions.

THANKS Giving thanks and praise, *"walk humbly with your God"*.

Religious Christian Conversion – choosing a humble response to the eschatological and normative revelation of God in Jesus and in the mission of His Spirit

- Eileen M. Raffaniello Barbella, Ph.D., 4/2008

“...happiness lies in our ability to accept everything that happens and then enjoy it gratefully or reconcile it patiently”.

CLOSING PRAYER

This, then, is what I pray, kneeling before the Father, from whom every family, whether spiritual or natural, takes its name:

Out of God's infinite glory, may God give you the power through the Holy Spirit for your hidden self to grow strong, so that Christ may live in your heart through faith, and then, planted in love and built on love, you will with all the saints have strength to grasp the breadth and the length, the height and the depth, until, knowing the love of Christ, which is beyond all knowledge, you are filled with the utter fullness of God.

Glory be to God whose power, working in us can do infinitely more than we can ask or imagine; glory be to God from generation to generation in the Church and in Christ Jesus for ever and ever. Amen. (Eph 3: 14 – 21)

Forgiving as Jesus forgave

*When being nailed to the wood, Jesus prayed,
Father, forgive them; they do not know what they are
doing.*

*He thought of them and of what they were doing.
So, first, when we are hurt, we see clearly the person
and the harm and the hurt.*

*Then He asked the Father to forgive them, showing
that He, Himself, was forgiving them.
So, second we ask God to forgive those who harm and
hurt us.*

*Jesus went on, giving the Father a reason to forgive
them. The Father knew already; Jesus was saying it
so that He would know that He had forgiven.
So, third we give God all the reasons we can think of
to forgive the one who has harmed and hurt us. Then we
know that we have reasons, too.*

*From the beginning, Jesus was praying not for
Himself, but for them.
So, finally, we pray for those who harm and hurt us:
Give them eternal life, Lord, and give them all good
things now. Forgiving as Jesus forgave, we can know
that we are following Him in His way.
WE are joining Him in His sufferings. Amen.*

-Joseph A Tetlow, S.J.

APPENDIX A

A PRUDENT PRAXIS FOR OUR PASSIONS (PRAXIS: is not only reflection nor only action but *reflection and action* combined.)

Preparing

Placing ourselves in God's presence (*gratitude*).

Knowing our place in creation (who & what we are, whose we are).

Waking up

Be aware of and recognize one's passions.

1. The term 'passions' refers to the affections or the feelings" and it is by these that we humans intuit the good and suspect evil (CCC 1771).

2. Bowen Theory re-definition of the concept *emotional*

- extension of Darwin; related to Mc Lean's work on the triune brain
- synonymous with the life force from one-cell to the human that governs automatic behavior and causes living things to grow; beyond superficial feeling states; instincts.

Make distinctions.

1. Not all *emotions* are experienced as *feelings* or *affects*.
2. *Feelings* are more transitory; *affects* are more the habit of one's heart.
3. *Emotions* are more "biological", *feelings* are more "biographical".
4. Feelings are a bridge between one's emotional guidance system and intellectual guidance system.
5. Perceptions, experiences, principles, and judgments are not emotions. But all may be dominated by our emotional guidance system and by our moods.
6. *Moods* come and go like an elevator from the basement to the penthouse. Never try to analyze your feeling low when in a bad mood. Thoughts will be distorted ("toxic" or mindless) and feelings will get *more* disordered.

Naming

Identify the Core Feelings, their distortions and their gift.

<u>Feeling</u>	<u>Reaction to</u>	<u>Distortions</u>	<u>Gifts</u>
<i>Happy</i>	pleasure	negativity/overindulgence	"feeling good"
<i>Sad</i>	loss	nostalgia/quick fix	joy & new life
<i>Angry</i>	being blocked	rage at others or self	define self
<i>Afraid</i>	danger/threat	fearless/fear-filled	wisdom
<i>Guilty</i>	mistake (behavior)	scruples/sociopathy	conscience
<i>Ashamed</i>	mistake (being)	self-hate/grandiosity	spirituality

Examining

Listen for the "self-talk" ("*the story*") that fuels or diminishes the feelings.

(the *Daily Mood Log* & *genogram meet the Examen of Consciousness*)

"TOXIC" - MINDLESS

automatic thoughts and reactions

"stinking thinking"

cognitive distortions

systems

blame/shame & justify

reactive

driven & life-taking

"HEALTHY" - MINDFUL

regulated thoughts and choices

"principled thinking"

integration of guidance

responsible & accountable

responsive

"drawn" & life-giving

Choosing

Decide when, where, with whom you *define* - not "express/suppress" - self.

Eileen M. Raffaniello Barbella, Ph.D./January 2007

APPENDIX 2 – THE EXAMEN PRAYER

The Examen Prayer is based upon a prayer form within the text of *The Spiritual Exercises*. This prayer is usually made at the same time every day, generally at the day's end.

Peter G. Van Breeman's Review for Religious article "**The Examination of Conscience**" was reprinted in *Ignatian Exercises: Contemporary Annotations*. He reminds us that in the Ignatian tradition, the "examination of conscience" plays an important role. Unfortunately it is both widely misunderstood and easily discarded. A key point to remember is that it is "**not intended as a course in self-perfection but as growth in finding God in all things.**"

George Aschenbrenner's "**The Consciousness Examen: Becoming God's Heart for the World**" was also reprinted in *Ignatian Exercises: Contemporary Annotations*. In this article he tries to show how regular examination of conscience facilitates a transforming experience of one's own heart into the beloved of one's heart, the Sacred Heart of God in Jesus.

Joseph W. Koterski, SJ wrote an essay entitled "**The Ignatian Examen**" for the July 2003 volume of *Magnificat*. He closes the article with this summary. This method for the examination of conscience is easy to remember by the letters of the word "**grace**":

- (1) Gratitude,
- (2) Request for God's light,
- (3) Account of Actions and Attitudes,
- (4) Chart your Course, whether by continuing on course or correcting it, and
- (5) Entreat God for energy and enthusiasm.

Not only will one be more ready for confession when the time comes, but one will steadily grow in recollection and a sense of God's constant presence.

Sharing the Examen as a Couple or Family

...sharing the examen is like giving one another the bread of life. Sometimes the whole family can gather around the kitchen table and do the examen together. Other times, one of the parents can do it with each of the children while putting that child to bed. Families have adapted the examen questions as follows: "What did you feel good about today?"

"What was your biggest struggle today, or when did you feel sad, confused, helpless, angry, scared, guilty or ashamed?"

"What was the best part of your day?"

"What was the worst part of your day?"

1. Place your hand on your heart and ask Jesus or God to bring your heart to the moment today for which you are *most grateful*. If you could relive one moment, which one would it be? When were you most able to give and receive love today? Ask yourself what was said and done in that moment that made it so special. Breathe in the gratitude you felt and receive life again from that moment.
2. Ask God to bring to your heart the moment today for which you are *least grateful*. When were you least able to give and receive love? Ask yourself what was done in that moment that made it so difficult. Be with whatever you feel without trying to change or fix it in any way. You may wish to take deep breaths and let God's love fill you just as you are.
3. *Give thanks* for whatever you have experienced. If possible, share as much as you wish of these two moments with a friend or with your family.

- from *Sleeping with Bread - Holding what Gives you Life* by D. Linn, S. Fabricant, and M. Linn, Paulist Press, 1995.