

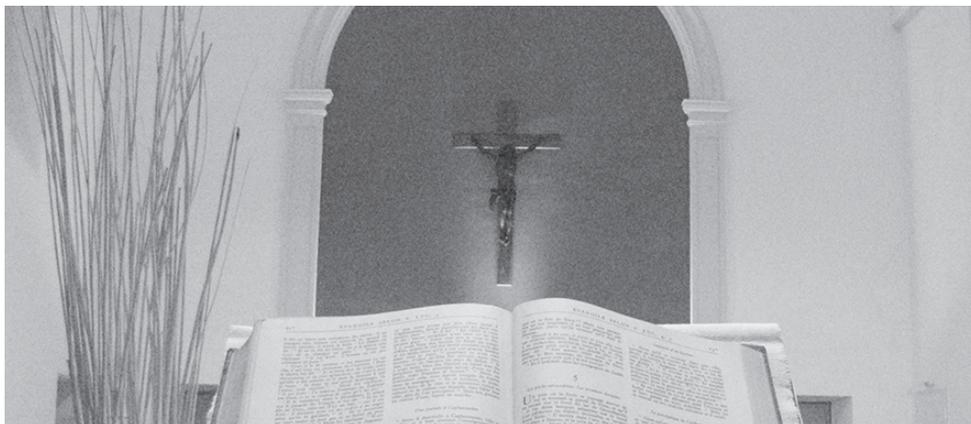


# MISSION ENRICHMENT

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*The Spirit of the Gospel in Service of the Mission*

A relationship with God is not about worthiness. Instead, it's about God's radical grace and unconditional love for us all. God doesn't love you because you're good. God loves you because God is good. ~ Fr. Richard Rohr, OFM



*From the May 1837 Retreat Notes of St. Eugene:*

I give you thanks, O Lord, for having made shine forth this light from the sacred deposit of your Holy Scriptures. As you show me the way I should follow, and give me the desire to follow it, you will also give me the powerful help of your grace so I may tread it with a firm step, and with perseverance.

**THANKS TO ALL OUR  
OBLATE CO-WORKERS  
IN THE HEALTHCARE  
PROFESSION!!**



National Nurses Week begins each year on May 6th and ends on May 12<sup>th</sup>, Florence Nightingale's birthday. These permanent dates enhance planning and position National Nurses Week as an established recognition event. *International Nurses Day* is celebrated around the world on May 12th of each year. The theme for National Nurses Week in 2015 is "Ethical Practice Quality Care." †

## Needing to Confess by Steve Goodier

A hot, new business capitalizes on people's need to 'fess up, as well as their interest in eavesdropping on the confessions of others.

Ideas or comments are welcome.

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Fee-based phone services and Web sites allow customers to confess anonymously - anything from admissions of petty theft to adultery and even murder. Or, those who are inclined can listen to or read the sordid tales of others. (This is where most of the traffic is headed, by the way). After the first year of business, one such telephone service, The Confession Line, reportedly made 17 million dollars. Plans were implemented to expand from 25 telephone lines to 100.

I question how beneficial the online confessions sites are for those who actually need to get something off their chest. There is a noticeable lack of

contrition and a great deal of self-justification. One gets the sense that these so-called true confessions are little more than verbal exhibitionism for contributors and voyeurism for readers. Yet the need to confess, or more importantly, to own up to past mistakes and misdeeds, is vital if one is to be truly free.

Confession is, as they say, good for the soul. And it is also good for the body. Researcher James Pennebaker, author of *Opening Up: The Healing Power of Expressing Emotions*, studied health benefits of confession. Some people's

*continued on back page*

# Fulfilling Your Easter Duty

(from *Chasing Joy* by Edward Hays)

Since 1215, Church law has prescribed that Catholics must, under pain of serious sin, perform their Easter duty. This consists of receiving Holy Communion during the Easter Season, the minimum of once a year. The Easter period for fulfilling this obligation was those weeks from the First Sunday of Lent to Trinity Sunday, eight weeks after Easter Sunday. To go to confession during this period, while not an absolute requirement, was also considered part of your Easter duty.

Is not the authentic Easter duty of all Christians, Protestant, Catholic, or Orthodox, to celebrate the resurrection by living joyously?...

Two thousand years have now passed since the human family learned that the Divine Beloved's desire was for all to live in joy! Practically speaking, no one expects the harshly competitive world of business and industry to be a joyful place. **But sprinkled across the weary, workaday world are those exclusively set-aside zones of the sacred**—places called church. Wouldn't it be a logical expectation based on scripture that these houses of God would also be houses of joy and shrines of happiness? They are indeed holy places of prayer and worship, yet how many of them resound with that jubilation contagious with happiness and hopeful optimism? Also, a spirit of cheerfulness regardless of the circumstance doesn't seem to be a defining mark of individual Christians. This lack of happiness may not be a religious but a sociological problem.

Gregg Easterbrook, in his *The Progress Paradox*, states an amazing fact: "The percentage of Americans who describe themselves as happy has not budged since the 1950s, though the typical person's real income has more than doubled!" He says many not only do not report being happier, they actually feel worse. Research



conducted at Princeton University reveals that most people determine their happiness and wealth not by their present condition, but rather on whether they think their circumstances and income will improve in the coming years. Fifty years ago, the

*When praying, don't give God instructions – just report for duty.*

typical family had only one car, lived in a modest home, and few, if any, of their children attended college. Yet many people were cheerful, since they expected their standard of living to get better and better. The mood of this nation was high. Now since many, if not most, Americans no longer expect a better, more prosperous tomorrow, a pestering discontent festers in the nation. No longer do families believe that each year their lifestyle will improve....

Many, unable to find happiness in the prospect of a better life and a higher salary, now seek to find it in an epidemic of shopping. This short-term happiness of consumerism is a national addiction after being bombarded by endless advertisements. This is also the reason Americans have the highest rate of debt in the world....

Antiquated is that future-sighted telescope that held the promise of

a higher standard of living, a larger home, and a better life in the coming years. What is needed today is not a telescope but a *herescope*: a viewing device to clearly see the present moment. By daily use of such an apparatus, they could see that they presently have all that is needed to be happy. A *herescope* produces contentment, and whenever you're satisfied, you are joyful.

... So deeply ingrained in us is our red, white, and blue consumerism that most people even using a herescope daily would become sneaking, closet buyers. They would find clever ways to secretly feed their addiction, just as drinkers did during the old days of Prohibition. This ideal of contentment may not be possible for the multitude, but it is a possibility for those who wish to be happy and so choose to be satisfied with what they have. There are those who are content, have no need to buy anything to make them happier, and so are able to live in joy.... And the Easter duty of every

Christian isn't simply to be happy on Easter Sunday or even the fifty days after Easter, but all days. Belief in the resurrection of Jesus from the tomb, or in your own personal resurrection, is not enough to achieve the continuous living of a joyous life unless you practice contentment... here and now. †



# How Feelings of Awe Lower Inflammation

by: Traci Pedersen (*Spirituality & Health*, Feb. 2015)

**D**o you know a person who still seems to retain a childlike sense of wonder well into adulthood? Someone who still dances in the rain, has a strong imagination, and is awe-stricken by the beauty of the world? New research shows that people who experience frequent feelings of awe and who immerse themselves in the beauty of nature, art and spirituality tend to have lower levels of pro-inflammatory cytokines.

Cytokines are proteins that signal the immune system to work harder. They are vital in that they help us fight off infections, trauma, and viruses; however, an overproduction of them leads to chronic inflammation, which in turn contributes to a variety of negative health outcomes, such as heart disease, type 2 diabetes and many mental health disorders.

The good news is that we have more control over our health than previously thought. Research is mounting that good health stems not only from our diet and exercise habits, but also from our emotions and state of mind. In fact, researchers from the University of California, Berkeley, just found that feelings of awe are linked to a powerful anti-inflammatory action in the body. Good feelings, in other words, are like the emotional version of fish oil supplements.

“That awe, wonder and beauty promote healthier levels of cytokines suggests that the things we do to experience these emotions – a walk in nature, losing oneself in music, beholding art – has a direct influence upon health and life expectancy,” said co-author Dacher Keltner, a psychologist at the UC, Berkeley, in a press release. (The UC, Berkeley study is published in the journal *Emotion*.)

For the study, more than 200 young adults reported the extent to which they had experienced positive emotions on a particular day, such as amusement, awe, compassion, contentment, joy, love and

pride. On the same day, researchers took samples of the participants’ gum and cheek tissue, known as oral mucosal transudate. Those who experienced more positive emotions, particularly awe, wonder and amazement, had the lowest levels of the cytokine Interleukin 6, a marker of inflammation.

The researchers can’t say for sure which comes first – the low cytokines or the positive feelings: “It is possible that having lower cytokines makes people feel more positive emotions, or that the relationship is bidirectional,” said lead author Jennifer Stellar, a postdoctoral researcher at the University of Toronto.

But whichever direction it flows, the link between the two is significant.

Make awe a daily habit in your life by taking the time to really look at the awesome beauty of the world in which we live. For starters, pick a song, a work of art, or even an old tree that you have seen many times, and experience it with new eyes, as if you are seeing (or hearing) it for the first time. As you make this practice a part of your daily life, witness your sense of wonder increase and your levels of inflammation go down. †



## THE RADICAL PRAYER

*Holy Spirit, if this is right for me,  
let it become more firmly rooted and established in my life.  
If this is wrong for me, let it become less important to me,  
and let it be increasingly removed from my life.*

We should not pray this prayer unless we mean it. It is always heard and answered in definite and surprising ways. Habits begin to lose their grip. Relationships change. Neglected parts of ourselves begin to grow. New attractions and likings surface. Surprising abilities appear. Some familiar old tendencies become unattractive to us. Something always happens when we pray this prayer in honesty.

“The more you lose yourself in something bigger than yourself, the more energy you will have.”

—Norman Vincent Peale

### To those of us who have children in our lives,

whether they are our own, grandchildren, nieces, nephews, or students...here is something to make you chuckle:

Whenever your children are out of control, you can take comfort from the thought that even God’s omnipotence did not extend to His own children. After creating heaven and earth, God created Adam and Eve. And one of the first things he said was “DON’T!”

“Don’t what?” Adam replied.

“Don’t eat the forbidden fruit!” God said.

“Forbidden fruit? We have forbidden fruit? Hey Eve...we have forbidden fruit!”

“No Way!”

“Yes way!”

“Do NOT eat the fruit!” said God.

“Why?”

“Because I am your Father and I! said so!” God replied, wondering why He hadn’t stopped creation after making the elephants. A few minutes later, God saw His children having an apple break and He was ticked!

“Didn’t I tell you not to eat the fruit?” God asked.

“Uh huh,” Adam replied.

“Then why did you?” said the Father.

“I don’t know,” said Eve.

“She started it!” Adam said.

“Did not!”

“Did too!”

“DID NOT!”

Having had it with the two of them, God’s punishment was that Adam and Eve should have children of their own. Thus the pattern was set and it has never changed.

### BUT THERE IS REASSURANCE IN THE STORY!

If you have persistently and lovingly tried to give children wisdom and they haven’t taken it, don’t be hard on yourself.

If God had trouble raising children, what makes you think it would be a piece of cake for you? †

--from AC



secrets literally make them sick. He discovered that criminals who confessed to lie detector technicians were often so grateful for the physical relief they felt after “getting it all out,” that they actually sent birthday, holiday and thank you cards to the polygraph personnel who heard their stories.

It seems that what we bury deep does not quietly go away. Like a nasty parasite, it eats us up from the inside. Our secrets become our sickness and we won’t recover until what we concealed is finally revealed.

So how do we ultimately find freedom from haunting memories and harmful guilt? The best advice goes like this:

1. Bring it up and bring it out into the light. Talk to someone safe. And if it makes sense, talk to the person you wronged.

**Remember, an apology must never include the word “but.”** No excuses. No rationalization. Just lay it out there and take responsibility. You may be surprised that others are quicker to understand your misdeed than you are even to admit it. But if not, you still did the right thing.

2. Make amends if possible. This is the step most often omitted, but may be the most therapeutic for you and essential for anyone you may have wronged.

3. Forgive yourself. Regardless of whether or not the other forgives you, forgive yourself. Once you’ve done everything else you can, self-flagellation will get you nowhere.

Bring it up, make amends, forgive yourself. It sounds simple, but don’t think for a second that it is easy. Getting free from the tyranny of past mistakes can be hard work, but definitely worth the effort.

And the payoff is health, wholeness and inner peace. In other words, you get your life back. †