



MISSION ENRICHMENT

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The Spirit of the Gospel in Service of the Mission

“Never be afraid to raise your voice for honesty and truth and compassion against injustice and lying and greed. If people all over the world...would do this, it would change the earth.” ~ William Faulkner

DECK THE HALLS WITH ANTS AND HOLLY

(from *A Pilgrim's Almanac* by Edward Hays)



The holiday season is a time to rejoice at the presence of guests in our homes. It gives us an opportunity to practice hospitality.

According to the holy tradition of the Hopi Indians of the Southwest, God became displeased when the children of earth forgot to sing songs of praise and thanksgiving to their creator. God thus destroyed the world, not once, as in our scriptures, but several times. Those who still praised God, however, were spared each time.

Now on the occasion when the earth was destroyed by fire, the faithful were taken underground to live with the ants. After the rain of fire ended, the time for the earth to cool took longer than anyone had imagined. Therefore, the food supplies of the ant hosts began to run out, and so the ants gave their share

of the food to the Indians. As a result, the ants had to keep pulling in their belts as they grew skinnier and skinnier! When the earth was cool enough for humans to live on, the Hopi came up out of their temporary ant homes. But to this day the ants have never regained their normal waistlines. As a sign of respect and remembrance of how they were sheltered and fed by the ants, the Hopi, even now, are reluctant to step on or kill an ant. So goes the beautiful story about who comes first in true hospitality.

As we approach our religious observance of Christmas, we should be aware that entertaining others, being hospitable, is an important aspect of our celebration. Generous service to Christ in attending to strangers as well as family and friends may be as central to Christmas as gifts under the tree. It's too bad that ants are usually not around at Christmas time. They would be a great symbol for the season. The sight of ants in our houses could be an occasion not to reach for a can of insect spray but rather to reach out with kindness and love to those who seek warmth and

hospitality under our roof. This season of Christmas has many wonderful traditions that are familiar to each of us. Alongside the holly, mistletoe and candles burning in the window, we might also place the lowly ant with its narrow waistline. The ant would call us to practice true hospitality and to remember that by such kindness we continue to sing the song of praise and gratitude to God. †

The Healing Place of Silence

(by Fr. Ron Rolheiser, OMI,
July 19, 2015)

A recent book, by Robyn Cadwallander, *The anchoress*, tells the story of young woman, Sarah, who chooses to shut herself off from the world and lives as an anchoress (like Julian of Norwich). It's not an easy life and she soon finds herself struggling with her choice. Her confessor is a young, inexperienced, monk named Father Ranulf. Their relationship isn't easy. Ranulf is a shy man, of few words, and so Sarah is often frustrated with him, wanting him to say more, to be more

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Ideas or comments are welcome.

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empathic, and simply to be more present to her. They often argue, or, at least, Sarah tries to coax more words and sympathy out of Ranaulf. But whenever she does this he cuts short the visit and leaves.

One day, after a particularly frustrating meeting that leaves Ranaulf tongue-tied and Sarah in hot anger, Ranaulf is just about to close the shutter-window between them and leave, his normal response to tension, when something inside him stops him from leaving. He knows that he must offer Sarah something, but he has no words. And so, having nothing to say but feeling obliged to not leave, he simply sits there in silence. Paradoxically his mute helplessness achieves something that his words don't, a breakthrough. Sarah, for the first time, feels his concern and sympathy and he, for his part, finally feels present to her.

Here's how Cadwallander describes the scene: "He took a deep breath and let it out slowly. There was no more he could say, but he would not leave her alone with such bitterness. And so he remained on his stool, feeling the emptiness of the room around him, the failure of his learning, the words he had stacked up in his mind, page upon page, shelf upon shelf. He could not speak, but he could stay; he would do that. He began to silently pray, but did not know how to go on, what to ask for. He gave up, his breath slowed.

The silence began as a small and frightened thing, perched on the ledge of his window, but as Ranaulf sat in stillness, it grew, very slowly, and filled up the parlor, wrapped itself around his neck and warmed his back, curled under his knees and around his feet, floated along the walls, tucked into the corners, nestled in the crevices of stone. ... The silence slipped through the gaps under the curtain and into the cell beyond. A velvet thing, it seemed. It swelled and settled, gathering every space into itself. He did not stir; he lost all sense of time. All he knew was the woman but an arm's length away in the dark, breathing. That was enough.

When the candle in the parlor guttered, he stirred, looked into the darkness. 'God be with you, Sarah.'

'And with you, Father.' Her voice was lighter, more familiar."

There's a language beyond words. Silence creates the space for it. Sometimes when we feel powerless to speak words that are meaningful, when we have to back off into unknowing and helplessness, but remain in the situation, silence creates the space that's needed for a deeper happening to occur. But often, initially, that silence is uneasy. It begins "as a small frightened thing" and only slowly grows into the kind of warmth that dissolves tension.

There are many times when we have no helpful words to speak. We've all had the experience of standing by the bedside of someone who is dying, of being at a funeral or wake, of sitting across from someone who is dealing with a broken heart, or of reaching a stalemate in trying to talk through a tension in a relationship, and finding ourselves tongue-tied, with no words to offer, finally reduced to silence, knowing

that anything we say might aggravate the pain. In that helplessness, muted by circumstance, we learn something: We don't need to say anything; we only need to be there. Our silent, helpless presence is what's needed.

And I must admit that this is not something I've learned easily, have a natural aptitude for, or in fact do most times when I should. No matter the situation, I invariably feel the need to try to say something useful, something helpful that will resolve the tension. But I'm learning, both to let helplessness speak and how powerfully it can speak.

I remember once, as a young priest, full of seminary learning and anxious to share that learning, sitting across from someone whose heart had just been broken, searching through answers and insights in my head, coming up empty, and finally confessing, by way of apology, my helplessness to the person across from me. Her response surprised me and taught me something I didn't know before. She said simply: Your helplessness is the most precious gift you could share with me right now. Thanks for that. Nobody expects you to have a magic wand to cure their troubles.

Sometimes silence does become a velvet thing that swells and settles, gathering every space into itself. †

NOBODY EXPECTS YOU TO
HAVE A MAGIC WAND TO
CURE THEIR TROUBLES.



From the Writings of the Founder--

1858 Letter to Fr. Bermond
Visitor to Oregon--



My dear friend,
... December 21,
47th anniversary of
my priesthood. I
have come back
from the house
of the Capuchins
to celebrate the

anniversary of my priestly ordination as is my custom, and so I will bring this letter to an end. ... I have always thought that Fr. Ricard allowed things to develop too much of their own accord and that he had no economic sense in the management of temporal affairs, and, it seems, very little nerve in spiritual ones. Use your faculties as a superior to put matters in order everywhere, establish a regular system of accounting, and teach them what you rightly say they know nothing about, to conduct their missions more economically. It is much to be desired also that certain of our Fathers conduct them in a manner more in conformity with the spirit that ought to animate a religious, keeping clear of everything that might have an air of commerce or industrial speculation. It is for you who are on the spot and have all authority to correct abuses and to establish rules of conduct to set everything in order both in person and by writing.

... My dear son, be sure to say a thousand affectionate things to all our Fathers in Oregon. I embrace them and bless both them and you with all my heart. †

+ C.J. Eugene,
Bishop of Marseilles
Superior General

7 Eating Habits You Should Drop NOW

By Cynthia Sass, MPH, RD

In my one-on-one work with clients there is a dual focus: I help them adopt a healthy new eating regimen, but in order for new patterns to stick, we also have to zero in on unhealthy habits that tend to keep them stuck. If you've ever uttered the phrase, "I know what I need to do, but I just can't seem to do it!" my bet is lingering detrimental habits are the culprit.

Here are seven that come up often, and why breaking them may just be the final solution to achieving weight-loss results that last!

Drinking Too Often: For most of my clients, drinking alcohol has a domino effect. After one drink, their inhibitions are lowered and their appetite spikes. That combo -- in addition to the extra calories in the cocktails themselves -- results in consuming hundreds of surplus calories. And it happens more often than they realize,

because most people underestimate how much they drink until they begin keeping a food diary. The good news is when they consciously cut back, they drop weight like a hot potato. If you think you may be in the same boat, become a teetotaler for 30 days, or commit to limiting alcohol in specific ways, such as only drinking one night per week, and setting a max of two drinks. The results can be dramatic.

Eating "Diet" Foods: I loathe "diet" foods. First, they're usually packed with lots of unwanted additives and impossible-to-pronounce ingredients. And let's face it, they're just not filling or satisfying. Dozens and dozens of clients have told me that after eating a frozen diet entrée, bar or dessert, they were left with lingering hunger and thoughts of food, which led to nibbling on other foods -- grabbing a jar of almond butter and a spoon, a handful of cereal or a second (or third) "diet" product. As a result, they wind up taking in far more calories than they would have if they had prepared a healthy, satisfying meal. And here's the kicker: A 2010 study found that we burn about 50 percent more calories metabolizing whole foods versus processed foods. This is likely why I've seen clients break a weight-

loss plateau when they ditch diet foods and start eating more calories from fresh, whole foods. Are you in? Dump those diet products and make a fresh start for 2016.

Overeating Healthy Foods: I'm over the moon when clients fall in love with healthy fare like veggies, lentils, avocado and whole grains. The only sticking point is they sometimes eat too much. I recall one client who swapped fast food breakfast sandwiches for oatmeal, which was fantastic. But his oatmeal portion was too large given that he sat at a desk all day, and in addition to topping it with fruit, he combined it with a smoothie, which was really a meal in and of itself. The truth is, while whole foods are nutrient rich and they enhance metabolism, you can overdo it. To prevent that, listen to your body's hunger and fullness cues, and use visuals to guide your portions. For example, a serving of fruit should be about the size of a tennis ball, a portion of cooked oatmeal should be half that amount, and if you add nuts or seeds, stick with a golf ball-sized addition.

Skipping Meals: I'm sure you've heard this one before, but it's a biggie. Going long stretches without eating can create two unwanted side effects that undermine weight loss. First, you'll likely burn fewer calories as a way to compensate for not having fuel

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Treasure at Your Fingertips

A century ago, Russell Conwell traveled the United States with a speech he called, "Acres of Diamonds." Of the many stories he told, one was of a young man who studied at Yale to become a mining engineer. Upon graduation, "gold fever" struck him and he set off to California to seek his fortune.

Yale had offered him a position as an instructor, which he turned down. He persuaded his mother to sell their Massachusetts farm and accompany him. But the trip was futile as he found no gold and eventually accepted a job in Minnesota working for a mining company -- at a lower salary than he would have received at Yale.

More interesting is that the man who bought the family farm from the

widowed mother was harvesting potatoes one day. As he slid a heavy bushel through an opening in the stone wall, he noticed a shiny stone. He had it assayed and learned it was native silver. The farm was sitting on a fortune in silver!

Why had the mining engineer, who had undoubtedly passed by that same rock and others like it hundreds of times, not discovered the ore? Could it be that he never dreamed a treasure could be found so easily? Was it because he believed that one must go elsewhere to fulfill a dream?

A profound life truth is this: what we are seeking may be found right where we are. Think about it. Do you need to go somewhere else to find happiness? Chances are, if you were truly aware of what you have in your life now you could be happy. Or do you think you'll find love if you only search



for somebody else? Look more carefully, through appreciative eyes, at who is in your life today.

It's easy to miss what you have when you are busy searching someplace else. Sometimes it's just about changing our thinking. What you seek (happiness, security, fulfillment, challenge, love, meaning, purpose -- the list is practically endless) may be right in front of you. You likely just don't see it. It may be hidden in plain sight.

Before you search someplace else, look carefully! You just might be amazed at what you see. †

Learning to Walk in the Dark

by Barbara Taylor (excerpt pp. 1-4)

“Come inside now, it’s getting dark.” That is my mother speaking, saying the same thing she said every night when she looked out the kitchen window and saw that the sun was going down.... She loved us enough to let us play outside until the cicadas cranked up and bats started swooping through the sky; then she loved us enough to call us inside so that nothing bad would happen to us in the dark.

The dangerousness of the dark was like the law of gravity. No one could say exactly how it worked, but everyone agreed on it. When night fell, children were gathered inside, front porch lights were switched on, curtains were drawn, and doors were locked....

After one or the other of my parents had kissed me goodnight and turned off the light by my bed, there was always a moment of bliss under the tent of my sheets while my eyes adjusted to the low light coming through the window.... Once the smell of my parents had faded away along with their

footsteps; once I could feel their protection dissipate as they moved away from me; once it became apparent to me that they had checked me off their list for the night and had turned their attention to other things, then all the loose darkness in that room started to collect in the closet and under the bed, pulling itself together with such magnetic malevolence that I could not keep my mind away from it.

Without benefit of maturity or therapy, I had no way of knowing that the darkness was as much inside me as it was outside me, or that I had any power to affect its hold on me. No one had ever taught me to talk back to the dark or even to breathe into it. The idea that it might be friendly was absurd. The only strategy I had ever been taught for dealing with my fear of the dark was to turn on the lights and yell for help. Even then, when my parents came back to ask what I was afraid of, they took my answers at face value. “There are no monsters under your bed,” ... as if scientific proof would make a bit of difference once they had turned out the lights and left the room again.

Since I am only five years old in this memory, there is no telling what I might have said if they had asked me what color

the monsters’ eyes were. If they had, I might have learned to become more curious about what the darkness inside me was dishing up. I might have learned to look more deeply instead of looking away, but one thing my parents and I shared was the wish for a quick fix. They wanted to get back to whatever they were doing in the living room and I wanted to stop being afraid, so we settled on a solution that worked for both of us: eliminate the darkness. Leave a light on in my room at night so that it was never dark.

... when I look around the world today, it seems clear that eliminating darkness is pretty high on the human agenda— not just physical darkness but also metaphysical darkness, which includes psychological, emotional, relational, and spiritual darkness. What do I mean by “darkness”? I guess that depends on what color your monsters’ eyes are. Most people do not know what they mean by “darkness” except that they want to stay out of it.... Fear is the main thing. Almost everyone is afraid of being afraid. Beyond that, no one’s list is exactly like anyone else’s.... †

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when you need it. Second, you’ll up your chances of overeating at night, when your activity level is low. Several studies have found that it’s not just your overall daily calories, but also when you eat them that matters. A good rule of thumb is to eat larger meals before your more active hours, smaller meals before less active hours and never let more than four to five hours go by without eating.

Counting Calories: Aside from the fact that the quality and timing of the calories you consume is critical for weight loss success, the practice of counting calories can backfire. One study found that even without limitations, calorie counting made women more stressed. Nobody wants that. Plus, an increase in stress can cause a spike in cortisol, a hormone known to rev up appetite, increase cravings for fatty and sugary foods and up belly fat storage. Also, the calorie info available on packaged foods or on restaurant menus isn’t a perfect system. I’m not saying that calorie info is meaningless, but I do think there are more effective and less cumbersome ways to shed pounds.

Shunning Good Fat: Despite the best attempts of nutrition experts to dispel the notion that eating fat makes you fat, Americans have remained fat-phobic. Just yesterday someone told me they avoid avocado because it’s high in fat, and last week a client was shocked when I recommended using olive oil and vinegar in place of fat-free salad dressing. But eating the right fats is a smart weight loss strategy. In addition to quelling inflammation -- a known trigger of premature aging and diseases including obesity -- healthy fats are incredibly satisfying. They delay stomach emptying to keep you fuller longer, and research shows that plant-based fats like olive oil, avocado and nuts up appetite-suppressing hormones. Plant fats have also been shown to boost metabolism, and they can be rich sources of antioxidants, which have been tied to leanness, even without consuming fewer calories. Aim to include a portion in every meal. Add avocado to an omelet, whip coconut oil into a smoothie, add nuts to your oatmeal, drizzle garden salads with olive oil and enjoy dark chocolate as a daily treat.

Emotional Eating: The habit of reaching for food due to boredom, anxiety, anger or even happiness is by far the number one

obstacle my clients face when trying to lose weight. We’re practically taught from birth to connect food and feelings. Many of my clients share stories about being rewarded with treats after a good report card or a winning game, or being consoled with food after being teased at school or going to the dentist. We bond over food, bring it to grieving loved ones, use it to celebrate or turn to it as a way to stuff down uncomfortable feelings. It’s a pattern that’s socially accepted (even encouraged) and it’s challenging to overcome. But it’s not impossible. And even if you found non-food alternatives to addressing your emotional needs 50 percent of the time, I guarantee you’ll lose weight. Instead of a fad diet, consider making this your New Year’s resolution -- while you can’t break the pattern overnight, this change may be the most important and impactful for weight loss success. †

