



MISSION ENRICHMENT

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The Spirit of the Gospel in Service of the Mission

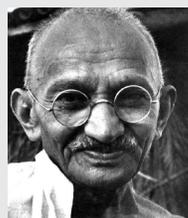
Strengthen us, O God, to relieve the oppressed, to hear the groans of poor prisoners, to reform the abuses of all professions; that many be made not poor to make a few rich; for Jesus Christ's sake. – Oliver Cromwell

PRAYER FOR PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE

(Compiled by Geoffrey Duncan,
from *600 Blessings and Prayers*.)

Gracious God, teach us to thank you for the past, to trust you for the future, to serve you in the present, celebrating every day you give us with glad and joyful praise. –Nick Fawcett, England

The Seven Deadly Social Sins:



Politics without Principle;
Wealth without Work;
Commerce without Morality;
Pleasure without Conscience;
Education without Character;
Science without Humanity;
Worship without Sacrifice.

-- Gandhi

Ideas or comments are welcome.

The Mission Enrichment Newsletter for those working with the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate is published six times a year.

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SEEKING HOPE

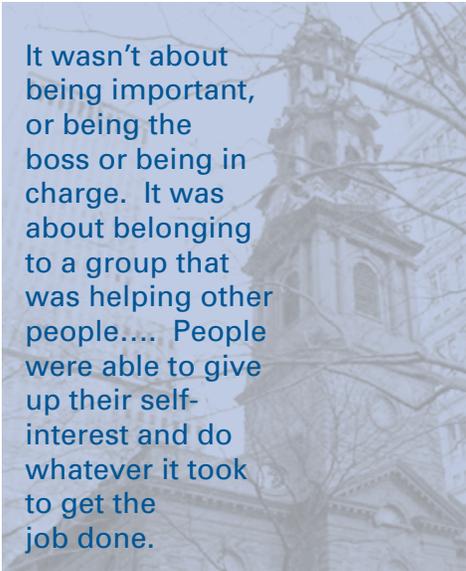
by Jim Toedtman, Editor, *AARP Bulletin*,
September 2011

Of the thousands of heartfelt messages and placards on the fence surrounding Ground Zero, one posted by the New York Fire Department's Ladder Co. 20 raised a defiant cry: "You have destroyed our buildings, but not our foundation." The buildings are being rebuilt... But how about the foundation? With a fragile economy, a dysfunctional government, devalued institutions and angry, dispirited citizens, our nation's foundation needs some work, too....

Looking for optimism? Visit St. Paul's Chapel, the tiny 245-year-old stone chapel across the street from Ground Zero. Miraculously, as the twin towers collapsed, this tiny chapel survived and overnight became an oasis of hope and rest for thousands of rescue and recovery workers. After arranging the first supper of hotdogs on Sept. 12, the chapel coordinated an effort that grew day by day and organized, cooked and served up to 3,000 meals daily. Eventually, the chapel, with an army of 14,000 volunteers, offered health care, rest and relief—even music. It was a heroic effort. The lessons learned are worth recalling as we seek to fulfill the promise of Ladder Co. 20 and restore our foundation.

Martin Cowart remembers his cousin's phone call for assistance. He's a New York mortgage banker, but he was called because church leaders saw the need to feed recovery workers, and Cowart had worked in a restaurant. Amid the chaos and despair at Ground Zero, during the desperate search for victims and the effort to restore a degree of order and structure, Cowart and fellow workers mobilized and focused completely on helping the workers. "No matter what changed, what the rules were, the common goal was to get these people some food, to get these people to a safe place," Cowart recalled. "It wasn't about being important, or being the boss or being in charge. It was about belonging to a group that was helping other people. It was totally human. It was around the energy. People were able to give up their self-interest and do whatever it took to get the job done."

Today... we have the unique opportunity of developing a society that respects its elders while protecting the needs of our children and their children... Let's get the job done. †



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MAKE SERVICE AN INTEGRAL PART OF YOUR LIFE

(from *Don't Sweat the Small Stuff... and it's all small stuff*, by Richard Carlson, Ph.D., pp. 177-178)

To become a kinder, more loving individual requires action.

Yet, ironically, there is nothing specific you have to do, no prescription to follow. Rather, most genuine acts of kindness and generosity seem natural; they stem from a type of thinking where service and giving has been integrated into the person's thought process.

Several teachers and philosophers that I have learned from have suggested that I begin my day by asking myself the question, "**How can I be of service?**" I have found this to be useful in reminding me of the multitude of ways that I can be helpful to others. When I take the time to ask this question, I find answers popping up all day long.

If one of your goals is to be of help to others, you will find the most appropriate ways. Your chances to

be of service are endless. Sometimes the best way that I can be of service is to offer my home to a friend (or even a stranger) in need. Other times, it's to give my seat to an elderly person on the train, help a youngster across the monkey bars, speak to a group, write a book, help out in my daughter's school, write a check to a charity, or pick up litter on the road. The key, I believe, is to remember that being of service isn't a one-time effort. It's not doing something nice for someone and then wondering why others aren't being nice too, or doing things for us. Instead, a life of service is a lifelong process, a way of thinking about life. Does the trash need to be taken out? If so, go ahead and take it out even if it's not your turn. Is someone you know being difficult? Maybe they need a hug or someone to listen to them. Are you aware of a charity that is in trouble? Could you possibly give a little extra this month?

I have learned that the best way to be of service is often very simple—it's those little, quiet, often unnoticed acts of kindness that I can choose on a daily basis—being supportive of a new endeavor by my spouse, or simply taking the time and energy to listen. I know that I have a long way to go toward my goal of becoming a more selfless person. However, I also know that as I have attempted to integrate service into my life, I have felt better and better about the way I choose to live. There is an ancient saying, "Giving is its own reward." It's really true. When you give, you also receive. In fact, what you receive is directly proportional to what you give. As you give more freely of yourself in your own unique ways, you will experience more feelings of peace than you ever thought possible. Everyone wins, especially you. †

Rule 9:

Be on the Side of the Angels, Not the Beasts

(taken from *Rules for Life* by Richard Templar)

Every single day of our lives, we are faced with an immense number of choices. And each and every one of them usually boils down to a simple choice between being on the side of the angels or the beasts. Which are you going to pick? Or did you not even realize what was going on? Let me explain. Every action we make has an effect on our family, people around us, society, the world in general. And that effect can be positive or detrimental—it's usually our choice. And sometimes it is a difficult choice. We get torn

between what we want and what is good for others; personal satisfaction or magnanimity.

Look, no one said this was going to be easy. And making the decision to be on the side of the angels is often a tough call. But if we want to succeed in this life and I measure success by how close we get to

WE GET TORN BETWEEN WHAT WE WANT AND WHAT IS GOOD FOR OTHERS.

generating that self-satisfaction/happiness/contentment—then we have to consciously do this. This can be what we dedicate our lives to—angels and not beasts.

If you want to know if you have already made the choice, just do a quick check of how you feel and how you react if someone cuts in

front of you in traffic during rush hour. Or when you're in a big hurry and someone stops to ask you for directions. Or if you have teenage children and one of them gets into trouble with the police. Or when you lend a friend money and they fail to pay it back. Or if your boss points out your mistake in front of the rest of your colleagues. Or your neighbor's trees start to encroach on your property. Or you hit your thumb with a hammer. Or, or, or. As I said, it is a choice we have to make every day, lots of times. And it has to become a conscious choice to be effective.

Now, the problem is that no one is going to tell you exactly what constitutes an angel or a beast. Here you are going to have to set your own parameters. But come on, it can't be that difficult. I think an

continued on next page

When despair for the world grows in me, and I wake in the night at the least sound in fear of what my life and my children's lives may be—I go and lie down where the wood drake rests in his beauty on the water, and the great heron feeds. I come into the peace of wild things who do not tax their lives with forethought of grief. I come into the presence of still water. And I feel above me the day-blind stars waiting with their light. For a time I rest in the grace of the world, and am free.

—Wendell Berry, American poet and farmer, present day.

Rule 9 continued

awful lot of it is self-evident. Does it hurt or hinder? Are you part of the problem or the solution? Will things get better or worse if you do certain things? You have to make this choice for yourself alone...

There is no point in telling anyone else that they are on the side of the beasts... What other people do is their choice and they won't thank you for telling them otherwise. You can, of course, watch as an impassive, objective observer and think to yourself: "I wouldn't have done it like that." Or "I think they just chose to be an angel." Or even, "Gosh, how beastly." But you don't have to say anything. †



YOUR INVISIBLE COMPASS

Two friends went out to play golf and were about to tee off, when one noticed that his partner had only one golf ball. "Don't you have at least one other ball in case yours gets lost?" he asked.

The man replied, "This is a very special golf ball. I won't lose it so I don't need another one."

His friend looked skeptical. "Really? Well, what happens if you miss your shot and the ball goes in the lake?"

"That's okay," he replied, "this special golf ball floats. I'll get it back."

"Then what happens if you hit it into the trees and it gets lost among the bushes and shrubs?"

The other replied, "That's okay too. You see, this special golf ball has a homing beacon. I'll find it – no problem."

"Okay. Let's say our game goes late, the sun goes down, and you slice it off the fairway. What are you going to do then?"

"No problem, this ball is florescent. I'll be able to see it in the dark." His friend seemed convinced. "Wow, where did you get a golf ball like that anyway?"

"I found it."

Have you ever wished you had a guidance system like that golf ball? Who among us doesn't know how it feels to be lost? And

there are many different ways we can get lost. One of my sons, now a young man, spoke with some sadness about his teen-age years. He made some poor choices for a while. That day, while looking back at those difficult years, he commented, "I lost my way." At one time or another we've all lost our way.

Have you ever wished you had a guidance system so that, when you lose your way, you know you won't be lost for long? And the truth is – we do. We each have an inner guidance system, an invisible compass, hidden deep inside. We each have the ability to find the answers we need, to find our way in life when we're lost – to find our way back home.

Life coaches remind us that we are naturally creative, resourceful and whole. Therefore, the best coaches don't give answers. They stimulate our creativity and remind us that we are already resourceful and whole and can come up with solutions ourselves.

Similarly, we may pay a lot of money for psychological counseling, but, as any good counselor knows, it's not advice most of us require. So a skilled therapist will help us to find the way...by ourselves...back to ourselves. They help us look inside where we will find what guidance we need.

Call it an inner voice. Call it spiritual guidance. Call it a gift.

When I've lost my way or when I am confused about a path to take, I remember that most answers I need I already possess – deep inside. I am naturally creative, resourceful and whole. If I consult my invisible compass, I'll know what to do. I think that is what author Vernon Howard meant when he said, "Inner guidance is heard like soft music in the night by those who have learned to listen."

Can you hear the music? Are you learning to listen?

If I consult my invisible compass, I'll know what to do.

Oblate Family Note--

Men and women religious (Brothers, Priests and Nuns/Sisters) profess three vows: poverty, chastity and obedience. In addition, Missionary Oblate Brothers and Priests take a fourth vow: "We add a vow of perseverance, thereby publicly attesting our attachment to our religious family and our definitive commitment to its mission." (CCRR, 30)

In your life, what or whom are you committed? Have you invited God to guide you?....

In *Five Stages of the Soul* (by Harry Moody and David Carroll) the following Sufi story is told:

Three men seeking guidance lived on a caravan route in the middle of the desert. These men had no knowledge of gardening, so they eked out a living trading whatever trinkets they happened to find in the

sand. Deep in their hearts, each of them had a secret dream: to become a gardener and grow their own trees, flowers, and plants.

One day it was announced that a Master Gardener would be passing through on the next caravan.

The first seeker greeted the news with indifference. All the guidance he needed could be found in books, he told himself, or through his own efforts.

The other two men were excited by the prospect of the Master Gardener's visit and they eagerly awaited his arrival.

When the caravan reached the town, the Master Gardener visited the house of the first man and soon discovered that this man was content to follow his own counsel.

So the Master Gardener went to the house of the second seeker, who begged to be initiated into the secrets of growing a garden. The Master Gardener was a kindly man, and he agreed, but only on one condition: that the second seeker follows his directions exactly.

The Master Gardener then asked to be left alone for several days on the site of the second man's future garden. When he finished his mysterious work he gave the seeker strange and unexpected instructions. Instead of delivering a dissertation on the principles of gardening, he showed the seeker a lever near the wall of the garden, and told him to turn this lever faithfully and without fail every day for a few minutes. Then he left without further explanation.

Now, as it turned out, this second seeker was a man of modest faith, and he was disappointed by these odd directions. He had expected to be told cosmic secrets of growth and fertility. Instead he was asked to perform an act that seemed irrelevant, even nonsensical. Though he did what he was told in the

beginning, after a while he stopped turning the lever, and eventually forgot about it entirely. Nothing ever grew on his dry plot of land. When people asked him about his gardening lessons he replied that he had been duped by a charlatan.

Meanwhile, the Master Gardener continued on to the house of the third seeker. This man too was disappointed by the Master's instructions. But he turned the lever faithfully, as instructed. What the third seeker did not know was that this lever was connected to a skillfully hidden irrigation system that the Master had buried under his plot of land.

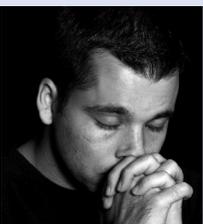
One day while the third seeker was inspecting his garden site he noticed that a few tiny shoots had broken through the soil, brought to life by the hidden irrigation system. The man's joy was mixed with dismay, however, for he did not know what to do next. Thinking on the matter for a while, he decided to simply keep following the instructions and turn the lever as told.

Then one morning he made a discovery that changed his life. Looking down at the growing shoots, he saw tiny words written on the leaves of each new plant. Rubbing his eyes in astonishment, he looked again and read. To his joy and astonishment, these words presented detailed instructions on what to do next and how to tend and care for every aspect of his garden.

The third seeker continued to work and study, and gradually he learned all the secrets of the lever, the plants, and of agriculture in general. Eventually his home was surrounded by a paradise of refreshing greenery and abundant fertility. "It all happened so naturally," said the third seeker when people came to see. "I tried to have no expectations; I simply persevered." †

(taken from Celtic Daily Prayers from the Northumbria Community, pp. 530-531)

WE PRAY: Help us to know judgment and justice, Lord. When Your judgments come, then stand by me, and teach me Your statutes so I can understand what justice really is.



Lord, You know I am Your servant, so give me understanding. Protect me from

deception. Give me wisdom. When people try to trick me or confuse me with their questions and clever arguments, help me to see their heart. Help me to know when to say nothing. Help me to know when to answer what they are saying.

Teach me to recognize the moments when You wait to intervene, so I can say, 'It is time – You work now, Lord!' †