



MISSION ENRICHMENT

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The Spirit of the Gospel in Service of the Mission

PREACH THE TRUTH AS IF WE HAD A MILLION VOICES,
FOR IT IS SILENCE THAT KILLS THE WORLD.

—St. Catherine of Siena

CAN YOU SEE SPRING COME?

(from *A Time for Being Human* by Eugene Kennedy, pp. 78-79)

Some people say that you cannot see the seasons change, that it all happens too slowly, and that we only feel the transformation when it is completed. But such persons may be looking in the wrong direction. Or even worse, they may not be looking at all. The breaking up of winter ice makes me think about what we see in the seasons and what we see in life itself. How sad it would be if we could never see spring make its journey; it is sadder still not to see the seasons of life in the people all around us....

Spring is a time for shaking ourselves loose from the sleep that we may have allowed ourselves during a long winter.... Van Gogh once wrote that despite everything else, “still a great deal of light falls on everything.” The world, especially the world of other persons, reveals itself to us in

that light all the time. Our problem may be that we have not looked, not even at the wondrous light, in a long time. We think we have seen everything so we travel on the crusted impressions of long-past seasons. We are bored with what is so familiar; we make our mark and pass on, cursing the sameness of our days.

Spring never comes the same way twice. And people are doubly filled with constant surprises. People, like spring itself, cry out all the time to be looked at freshly. Indeed, the basic meaning of the word “respect” is just that, the ability to look back at something, to view it again, to see it freshly. God knows we all need spring, not just for its final warmth



and flowers, but for its epic lesson in appreciating the long small miracle of steady growth in which we are all implicated. The simple condition for seeing spring and life itself is that we look up from our own concerns for a while. When we discover this, a great deal of light still falls on everything. †

Blessings

(from *My Grandfather's Blessings*
by Rachel Naomi Remen, M.D.)

On Friday afternoons when I would arrive at my grandfather's house after school, the tea would already be set on the kitchen table... After we had finished our tea my grandfather would set two candles on the table and light them. Then he would have a word with God in Hebrew. Sometimes he would speak out loud, but often he would close his eyes and be quiet. I knew then that he was talking to God in his heart. I would sit and wait patiently because the best part of the week was coming.

When Grandpa finished talking to God, he would turn to me and say, “Come, Neshume-le.” Then I would stand in front of him and he would rest his hands lightly on the top of my head. He would begin by thanking God for me and for making him my grandpa. He would specifically mention my struggles during that week and tell God something about me that was true. Each week I would wait to find out what that was. If I had made mistakes during the week, he would mention my honesty in telling the truth. If I had failed, he would appreciate how hard I had tried. If I had taken even a short nap

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Ideas or comments are welcome.

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SOME RULES OF LIFE

* **Lerman's Law of Technology:** Any technical problem can be overcome given enough time and money. Corollary: You are never given enough time or money.

* **Murphy's First Law for Wives:** If you ask your husband to pick up five items at the store and then you add one more as an afterthought, he will forget two of the first five.

* **Law of the Search:** The first place to look for anything is the last place you would expect to find it. Corollary: It will not be in the last place you expect to find it.

* **Kauffman's Paradox of the Corporation:** The less important you are to the corporation, the more your tardiness or absence is noticed.

* **The Salary Axiom:** The pay raise is just large enough to increase your taxes and just small enough to have no effect on your take-home pay.

* **Miller's Law of Insurance:** Insurance covers everything except what happens.

* **First Law of Living:** As soon as you start doing what you always wanted to be doing, you'll want to be doing something else.

* **Weiner's Law of Libraries:** There are no answers, only cross-references.

* **Isaac's Strange Rule of Staleness:** Any food that starts out hard will soften when stale. Any food that starts out soft will harden when stale.

* **Kenny's Law of Auto Repair:** The part requiring the most consistent repair or replacement will be housed in the most inaccessible location.

* **Second Law of Business Meetings:** If there are two possible ways to spell a person's name, you will pick the wrong one. Corollary - If there is only one way to spell a name, you will spell it wrong anyway.

* **The Grocery Bag Law:** The candy bar you planned to eat on the way home from the market is hidden at the bottom of the grocery bag.

* **Yeager's Law:** Washing machines break down only during the wash cycle. Corollary: All breakdowns occur on the plumber's day off.

* **Lampner's Law of Employment:** When leaving work late, you will go unnoticed. When you leave work early, you will meet the boss in the parking lot.

* **Quile's Consultation Law:** The job that pays the most will be offered when there is no time to deliver the services.

* **Loftus' Law:** Some people manage by the book, even though they don't know who wrote the book or even which book it is.

* **Lovka's Dilemma:** You never get away, you only get someplace else.

Something Only You Can Do by Steve Goodier

Tallulah Bankhead quipped, "Nobody can be exactly like me.

Sometimes even I have

trouble doing it." But the truth

is...we DO have trouble being ourselves, don't we? Especially in a world that wants us to conform. "To be nobody but yourself in a world that is doing it's best day and night into making you like everybody else," said poet E. E. Cummings, "is to fight the hardest battle there is and never stop fighting."

One of the deepest cravings of young people, especially teens, is to be liked by their peers. Like all of us, they want to be accepted and they want to be valued. It's during those critical teen-age years that they begin to play a game that is sometimes called "Follow the Follower." The game is not the same as "Follow the Leader." Following the follower is about conforming ... talking, dressing, acting and even thinking like one another. The goal is to fit in.

In adulthood, we are supposed to discover who we really are and do our best to grow into that person. We find our value, not in acceptance by others, but because we believe in our worth. It doesn't always happen. But it's a wonderful day when we can say in honesty, "I know who I am and I'm glad I am me."

The lovable children's author Dr. Seuss got it right when he wrote, "Be who you are and say what you feel, because those who mind don't matter and those who matter don't mind." It takes strength to swim against the tide. It takes courage to speak your convictions. And it takes trust to act on your own intuition. It's hard and rewarding work to grow up and become who you really are. But in the end, whatever real success you find in life will be a result of your being true to yourself rather than an imitation of somebody else.

I'll never have to give an account for not being more like my favorite celebrity, that shining star in my chosen field or anybody else. And at the end of my life, the question I never want to be asked is, "How come you weren't more like YOU? You had such great potential. You were a wholly unique person -- unrepeatable and irreplaceable. Why you weren't more like YOU?"

It took me far too long to realize that, in a world that wants me to conform; my greatest job is to be myself. It's a challenging and rewarding job and nobody can do it as well as me. †



PRAYER (from *Book of Blessings*, p. 269)

May the all-knowing God, who is Lord, show us his ways;
may Christ, eternal wisdom, teach us the words of truth;
may the Holy Spirit the blessed light, always enlighten our minds,
so that we may learn what is right and good
and in our actions carry out what we have learned. Amen.

Who's Got Time?

(from *Dancin' Toward the Dawn*
by Tim Hansel, pp. 87-91)

Loneliness does not always come from emptiness. Sometimes it is because we are too full... full of ourselves. Full of activity. Full of distractions. Paradoxically, if I want to heal the loneliness in my life, I've got to get away... to be alone with God.

Some years ago during a presentation on "Solitude and Community" to a large Christian organization, I was informed that these people were national directors and very important—and so busy—that we had to cut the presentation down because "they had many calls to make—they were very busy."

I started by sharing that community comes from the same root as the words for "communication" and "communion." The community of Christ is made, as in communion, from broken bread and crushed grapes. "As we communicate to each other in our brokenness, we begin to discover what true community is all about..."

I looked around and noticed that no one was paying any attention to me. These men, very highly esteemed in their profession, but they were now intensely engrossed in their datebooks and calendars.

I paused, tried another angle. "Dietrich Bonhoeffer says that you don't build community, you accept it. In his book *Life Together* he says that countless Christian communities have broken down because they sprang from a wish dream, that people were more committed to their idea of community than to the reality of Christ in the world. Community is a divine reality, not—"

I looked around again. No one was paying attention. They were all very busy, now locked into their cell phones. I paused. Waited. No response. Then I said quietly, "I realize that we have very little time left. I just want to tell you thanks for the impact you have made on my life."

The words "impact on my life" hit a cordial nerve in their corporate self. A few heads popped up.

"Seriously, I continued, "you have made an indelible impact on my life. In fact, I will never be the same."

It was like someone had just opened a window in the room. These men were world-changers. Now they were hearing that they had changed yet another life. Pride in their mission swelled. It filled the room.

"I will never forget what you have taught me..." I continued.



I respect your work, but I never want to become so busy that I don't have time for my friends—and even God Himself.

A few of them were trying to figure out how they had made such a life-changing impact on me in such a short time—but then, they were world-changers. They were used to meaningful exchanges in a short amount of time. In fact, they had to keep getting better and better and faster and faster if they were going to change the whole world for Christ's sake.

I continued to tell them how they had touched my life. By now some were even nodding their heads—acknowledging that yet another lost soul had been touched by their light.... It got very still. All their pens had been laid down....

"I will never forget what you have taught me. You have shown me in indelible fashion precisely who I never want to become as a Christian! Thank you."

There was a not-so-subtle gasping of breaths—not only from them but from some of our staff as well. Mouths dropped open. Eyes went glassy. They sat there in stunned silence. Even I was surprised at what I had said. I plunged ahead.

"I'm quite serious. I respect your

work, but I never want to become so busy that I don't have time for my friends—and even God Himself. You all seem to believe that if you are not in Houston on Wednesday and in New York on Friday that the Kingdom is going to fall apart. I hate to tell you this—but it isn't. In some ways you are serving an impotent God—one who depends on your busyness. I'm sorry, but that's not the God I know."

No one had ever confronted them like this. They were ready to tar and feather me and ship me out on the first train until one man spoke up.

"Hold it. I think he really has something important to say to us—if we can stand to hear it. In fact, I admire his guts. Normally people are too afraid of us or in too much awe of us to challenge us. Perhaps he's right. We are too busy for each other and for taking ample time aside to listen to our God."

What is God saying to you today?... Let God challenge you to the core. "But remember, the Christ you have to deal with is not a weak person outside you, but a tremendous power inside you." (2 Cor 13:3) †

Do not let your fire go out, spark by irreplaceable spark, in the hopeless swamps of the approximate, the not-quite, the not-yet, the not-at-all.

Do not let the hero in your soul perish, in lonely frustration for the life you deserved, but have never been able to reach. Check your road and the nature of your battle.

The world you desired can be won. It exists, it is real, it is possible, it is yours.



--Ayn Rand
Russian-born Author

DO THE RIGHT THING

by Michael Josephson, *CharacterCounts.org*

A father asked his son to return a shopping cart they had just used. The son protested, “C’mon, Dad! There are carts all over. No one returns them. That’s why they hire people to collect them.”

After a brief argument, Mom chimed in, “For heaven’s sake, it’s no big deal. Let’s go.”

The Dad was about to surrender when he noticed an elderly couple walking together to return their cart. After a moment he said, “Son, there are two kinds of people in this world: those who put their carts away and those who

don’t. We are the kind that returns their shopping cart. Now go return the cart!”

Obviously, this story is about more than grocery carts. It’s about doing the right thing in a world that promotes rationalizations and excuses, and demeans or trivializes simple acts of virtue. I suppose another way of putting it is—There are two kinds of people: Those who have the character to do what they ought to and those who find reasons not to.

People of character do the right thing even if no one else does, not because they think it will change the world, but because they refuse to be changed by the world. †

“The people of God want pastors, not clergy acting like bureaucrats or government officials.”
-- Pope Francis I

Everything Jesus is saying to you can be summarized in the words “Know that you are welcome.” Jesus offers you his own most intimate life with the Father. He wants you to know all he knows and to do all he does. He prepares a place for you in his Father’s House.

Keep reminding yourself that your feelings of being unwelcome do not come from God and do not tell the truth. The Prince of Darkness wants you to believe that your life is a mistake and that there is no home for you. But every time you allow these thoughts to affect you, you set out on the road of self-destruction. So you have to keep unmasking the lie and think, speak, and act according to the truth that you are very, very welcome. †

FEELING UNWELCOME

(from the *Dance of Life*, Henri Nouwen,
edited by Michael Andrew Ford)

Not being welcome is your greatest fear. It connects with your birth fear, your fear of not being welcome in this life, and your death fear, your fear of not being welcome in the life after this. It is the deep-seated fear that it would have been better if you had not lived.

Here you are facing the core of the spiritual battle. Are you going to give in to the forces of darkness that say you are not welcome in this life, or can you trust the voice of the One who came not to condemn you but to set you free from fear? You have to choose for life. At every moment you have to decide to trust the voice that says, “I love you. I knit you together in your mother’s womb.” (Psalm 139:13)

Blessings... continued

without my nightlight, he would celebrate my bravery in sleeping in the dark. Then he would give me his blessing and ask the long-ago women I knew from his many stories—Sarah, Rachel, Rebekah, and Leah—to watch over me.

These few moments were the only time in my week when I felt completely safe and at rest. My family of physicians and health professionals were always struggling to learn more and to be more. It seemed there was always more to know. It was never enough. If I brought home a 98 on a test from school, my father would ask, “And what happened to the other

two points?” I pursued those two points relentlessly throughout my childhood. But my grandfather did not care about such things. For him I was already enough. And somehow when I was with him, I knew with absolute certainty that this was so.

My grandfather died when I was seven years old. I had never lived in a world without him in it before, and it was hard for me. He had looked at me as no one else had and called me by a special name, “Neshume-le,” which means “beloved little soul.” There was no one left to call me this anymore. At first I was afraid that without him to see me and tell God

from

St. Eugene’s Letters

[Notes taken during May 1837 Retreat]



...Dear God, when one looks at things with the eyes of faith and with a strong conviction about one’s duties, when one sees the difficulties which conspire against

their fulfillment, there is every reason to be discouraged and deterred. However, one must proceed; it is what must need be that God is imposing on me, let us be brave and count on his grace. ...there are indeed reforms to be achieved and certainly I would be doing a bad job if I allowed myself to be intimidated by considerations of a purely human kind. That would be purchasing peace and quiet too dearly, to procure it at the price of culpable concessions. I will have to do battle with egoism, vested interests, lack of zeal, routine, the inaction of leaders....

It is not that I would want to overturn everything right at the beginning, no; firmness must always be tempered by gentleness, it is all one could ask for. But it must be understood that it is the business of the bishop to govern, and that he is obliged to give encouragement to the good as to curb all that is bad and disordered. If this principle is not acknowledged, anarchy will immediately follow to the great detriment of souls. †

who I was, I might disappear. But slowly over time I came to understand that in some mysterious way, I had learned to see myself through his eyes. And that once blessed, we are blessed forever.

Many years later when, in her extreme old age, my mother surprisingly began to light candles and talk to God herself, I told her about these blessings and what they had meant to me. She had smiled at me sadly, “I have blessed you every day of your life, Rachel,” she told me. “I just never had the wisdom to do it out loud.” †