



MISSION ENRICHMENT

Volume 14, No. 3 | May - June 2014

The Spirit of the Gospel in Service of the Mission

Catholicism does not call us to abandon the world, but to help shape it. This does not mean leaving worldly tasks and responsibilities, but transforming them. Social justice and the common good are built up or torn down day by day in the countless decisions and choices we make. The vocation to pursue justice is not simply an individual task—it is a call to work with others to humanize and shape the institutions that touch so many people.

(Everyday Christianity: To Hunger and Thirst for Justice, U.S. Bishops' Pastoral Letter, 1998)

TOO MUCH OF A GOOD THING CAN BE TOO MUCH

(from Life is Short—Wear Your Party Pants by Loretta LaRoche)

Going out to dinner used to be a rather simple experience. But these days, many restaurants are presenting what amounts to a theatrical event. The server makes his grand entrance from stage right, announcing, “Good evening. My name is Rasputin, and I’ll be your server.”

Rasputin then begins his dialogue: “in addition to what’s on the menu, we have some specials I’d like to tell you about. Tonight we have hand-washed lettuce from the banks of the Yangtze River, gathered by 100 crones from the Forbidden City and flown in on Bill Gates’ private jet. It’s topped with bits of wild yak, which was hand-fed by a cult of monks who worship the yak and believe it was responsible for the Big Bang. Topping the dish is a sprinkling

of special rice, every kernel of which has been individually polished by a roving troupe of desert nomads. Dessert is a mound of figs found in King Tut’s tomb—and each fig contains a special secret of the universe just for you. Are there any questions about the specials?”

I’m dying inside at that moment to shout, “Yes, yes! Where are the franks and beans?”

Have we completely lost our minds? How can we possibly live a life of joy and celebration when everything around us is so out of balance? How can we find peace and serenity in our lives when we’re being assaulted with data overload and excessiveness at every moment?

So many people I see have lost sight of the things they hold near and dear because they’ve become somewhat anonymous. They feel lost amid all the clutter of their lives. Their days are spent running around, depositing and picking up children from their extensive activities. Meals are eaten quickly, and family time is often spent apart as each member does his/her own thing.

We shop ‘til we drop, gathering more things to surround ourselves with until they consume us instead of the other way around. My friend Myra said that we should outlive our stuff, not have our

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Celebrating Nurses and Healthcare Professionals

Thank you, Nurses and Healthcare Professionals!

The important role nurses (and healthcare professionals, including Chaplains) play in the healing professions cannot be overestimated. **Our Oblate ministries rely on their training, experience and caring nature every day.** The month of May provides a wonderful opportunity to celebrate this spirit of compassion, and acknowledge the tireless efforts of all those who give expert and caring healthcare.

PRAYER:

Dear Lord, please give me the strength to face the day ahead.

I ask for courage as I approach each hurting individual.

Please give me wisdom with every word I speak, and patience as I comfort the sick.

Dear Lord, please give me assurance as the day slips into night,

That I have done the best I can and that I have done right! †



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.

Geri Furmanek, Editor
Mission Enrichment Office
Paul Schulte Center
224 S.De Mazonod Dr.,
Belleville IL 62223-1035
Tel:618-394-6990 Fax:618-394-6987
e-mail: Gfurm224@aol.com

TEN THOUGHTS ON WHY EVERYTHING COUNTS

by Gary Ryan Blair

1. Every Choice Counts! Every choice must have a purpose. Every choice counts. There are no insignificant choices, no neutral actions. Even the smallest gesture has a consequence, leading you toward or away from your goals.

2. Reality Counts! Reality is the foundation of success because reality is truth. Reality is the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. Get this and you've got it: Reality moves you towards your goals; denial leads you away. There is only one reality!

3. Character Counts! From the minute you open your eyes in the morning until they close again for sleep each night, everything in between complements or compromises your character. Every day "for better or worse, for richer or poorer, in sickness and in health" character counts. It is more important to have character than to be a character.

4. Self-Discipline Counts! Self-discipline is a habit. It is not situational, but it is applied situation by situation. Anyone can be self-disciplined on occasion, but to get consistently positive results

takes consistency. It is the day-in, day-out practice of self-discipline that determines where you'll end up. Every act of self-discipline moves you toward your goals and every exception takes you off course.

5. Personal Development Counts! Self-discipline is a habit. It is not situational, but it is applied situation by situation. Anyone can be self-disciplined on occasion, but to get consistently positive results takes consistency. It is the day-in, day-out practice of self-discipline that determines where you'll end up. Every act of self-discipline moves you toward your goals and every exception takes you off course.

6. Excellence Counts! The pursuit of excellence is not only politically correct, it is also highly profitable. A commitment to excellence can help you to capture true wealth and realize the inherent value of your potential. You will never outlive its importance, usefulness, and necessity. Its absence devalues potential, credibility, and reputation.

7. Failure Counts! Failure serves an indispensable function in the production of your success. It

provides information and motivation for you to learn from and apply. Failure is not only the output of an unsuccessful activity; it is also the input for a successful one. The bright side of failure is that it inspires improvement, creativity, change, and most importantly, purposeful activity.

8. Health and Energy Counts! Widen your moral purpose — vow not just to live longer, but to live better, to have more energy, self-worth, and clarity. The preservation of health is a duty. Few seem conscious that there is such a thing as physical morality. You must take care of your body because the day will come when it will no longer tolerate your indifference.

9. Fun Counts! An essential part of your journey is the pursuit of happiness. Yet, the only way to maintain a sense of fun and play is to consciously choose to make it a priority. Unfortunately, fun seems to wind up on the bottom of the "To Do" list. You are the conductor of mirth in your life.

10. Your Legacy Counts! It's non-negotiable: You will leave a legacy. The question is not whether you'll leave a legacy but what legacy you will leave! To arrive at the point that you think seriously about your legacy, you must reach a level of reality and commitment that represents an eternity to follow. When you take the final bow, who will you be? How will you enter eternity? Will you just be a footnote in history? †

Rule 51: Accept the Differences; Embrace What You Have in Common

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

“Sugar and spice and all things nice... slugs and snails and puppy dogs' tails” —isn't that how the rhyme goes? So which are you? The slugs and snails, or the sugar and spice? Chances are you're a bit of both. Look, it's true that men and women have differences. We would be fools if we didn't accept and recognize that. But we're not so different than we are separate species—or from separate planets, as some would have us believe. We actually have more in common than we have different. If we embrace those things we have in common and accept what is different, we might get along a whole lot better instead of treating each other as if we were separate species.

A relationship is, if you like, a team made up of initially two people who both bring talents and skills and resources to the relationship. Every team needs different people with different qualities to achieve things and to make the project work. If both of you are strong leaders, quick decision makers, and impulsive hotheads, then who is going to see to the detail and finish off projects? Who is going to

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do the work instead of just generating the ideas? Never mind just accepting the differences—see the benefits! Try to view differences in the light of them being special talents—differences that could be used effectively to make your team function better.

And what of the things you have in common? It can be great (shared views, shared tastes) but it doesn't always make life simple (shared love of being right,

shared need to be in control). If you are both genuine leaders, you might both be wrestling for the driver's seat. Instead, agree to take it in turn to lead. The things in common should be celebrated and used—in combination or alternately—to really fire you both up and make the relationship special and successful.

Look, you're in this together—whatever “this” is—and you need to work together to make it successful. If you combine the talents you have in common, you will get a lot further and have an easier time of it than if you both pull in different directions. Strip away the layers and we are all human, all frightened, all vulnerable, all trying to make some sort of sense out of our lives. If we focus on the differences and make a big deal out of them we risk losing the input and contribution of somebody who can help to lighten our load and make the journey more fun. All those crass Internet jokes—if a woman was a computer she would be this, and if a man was a car he's be that—really don't help. Real life isn't like that. †

TAKE ME “AS IS” by Steve Goodier

On her 50th wedding anniversary, a woman revealed the secret of her long and happy marriage. She said, “On my wedding day, I decided to make a list of ten of my husband’s faults which, for the sake of the marriage, I would overlook.”

One of her guests asked her what some of the faults she chose to overlook were. “To tell you the truth,” she replied, “I never did get around to making that list. But whenever my husband did something that made me hopping mad, I would say to myself, ‘Lucky for him that’s one of the ten!’”

It’s nice to decide what to overlook. In relationships, I get plenty of practice overlooking the foibles of other people. And I suspect they get plenty of practice with me, too.

As they hung wallpaper together, one husband became frustrated with his wife. She seemed, to him, to be indifferent about the quality of her work. He felt she was doing a poor job. He finally put it into words this way: “The problem is that I’m a perfectionist and you’re not.”

“Exactly!” she replied. “That’s why you married me and I married you!”

Miss Perfect certainly did one thing well. She knew how to overlook annoying observations from her perfectionist husband.

We human beings are nothing if not flawed and imperfect. But, the point is, people are not meant to be without blemish. We’re scraped and scarred, flawed on the inside and marred on the outside. It’s just the way we are. (Sometimes I think it’s one of our more endearing qualities.) I never want to forget that “perfect” is only found in the dictionary.

Even pottery may be closer to perfection than we humans, if Belleek Pottery in Ireland is any example. I hear that every finished piece there undergoes a final inspection. It is held up to a fierce, bright light and examined for imperfections. If even the slightest flaw is detected, the cup or plate or vase or sugar bowl is smashed to pieces. That’s right. The blemished piece is never sold as a “second.” If Belleek pottery is not flawless, it is reckoned to be no good at all. No doubt other makers of fine china and crystal operate the same way.

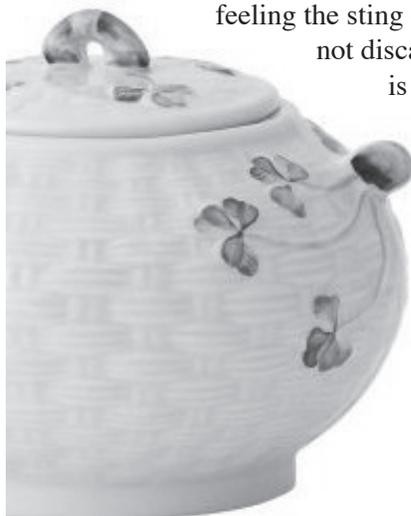
I surely cannot stand up to that kind of scrutiny. I have flaws I haven’t even begun to explore yet.

How much pain prompted the words of that sensitive artist Vincent van Gogh when he lamented, “I wish they would only take me as I am.” How many times a day are those words repeated by countless people

feeling the sting of rejection? To be accepted as one is and not discarded as useless is more than just a wish; it is a deep, human need.

All of us sport an invisible sign around our necks -- “AS IS.” It means, take me as I am. I may not become what you want me to be. And I’m far, far from perfect. But I have some great qualities, too, as well as my share of faults. You will have to take me “AS IS” and I’ll take you that way, too.

AS IS will be the best guarantee any of us can offer. But quite frankly, most of the time we’re getting a pretty good deal. †



Pearls of Wisdom

(from *My Grandfather’s Blessings*)

by Rachel Naomi Remen, M.D.)



Some of the oldest and most delightful written words in the English language are the collective

nouns dating from medieval times used to describe groups of birds and beasts. Many of these go back five hundred years or more, and lists of them appeared as early as 1440 in some of the first books printed in English. These words frequently offer an insight into the nature of the animals or birds they describe. Sometimes this is factual and sometimes poetic. Occasionally it is profound: a pride of lions, a party of jays, an ostentation of peacocks, an exultation of larks, a gaggle of geese, a charm of finches, a bed of clams, a school of fish, a cloud of gnats, and a parliament of owls are some examples. Over time, these sorts of words have been extended to other things as well. One of my favorites is pearls of wisdom.

An oyster is soft, tender, and vulnerable. Without the sanctuary of its shell it could not survive. But oysters must open their shells in order to “breathe” water. Sometimes while an oyster is breathing, a grain of sand will enter its shell and become a part of its life from then on.

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From St. Eugene’s Writings --

Prayer: I believe, my God, strengthen my faith; I hope, affirm my hope, I love you, redouble my love; I detest my sins, increase my repentance. Guide me in my actions by your wisdom; effect the conversion of my heart by your goodness, sustain me in the hour of temptations by the power of your grace. Make me, my God, attentive in my prayers, sober in my meals, exact in my duties. Amen.

Time for Knowing Oneself

(from *Friendship: The Key to Spiritual Growth*

by John W. Crossin, pp 35-6, 38)

If we are to attain the balance and humor of true self-love, we need to take some time for self-examination. Finding this time outside retirement can be quite difficult in contemporary America. We are busy and tend to ignore our need for solitude to reflect, to pray and to examine our lives.

Sometimes we must ask ourselves whether all our busyness makes a difference. Or is it destructive of self and others? We love the sense of energy and excitement our lifestyle brings. All the while we have the illusion of being firmly in control of our lives. Yet in the rush, we often fail to notice the things and people around us. We walk right by them. And in our more reflective moments we wonder if we may be failing at the most important things while managing our time to make the less important things turn out all right. Are we dodging the personal questions and the relationships that give life meaning by immersing ourselves in lists of things to do?

The alternative I would propose would be more attentive seeing and listening. We could take time to listen to our interior feelings and needs. We could pay more attention to the world that surrounds us and startles us with its beauty. We could stop to really listen to others rather than giving a perfunctory nod while all the while thinking of our next event or project. We could reach out more to others in kind words and gentle deeds.

... Might having more information or more accessibility through technology not be the way to go? **Sometimes we might do well to put down the phone. And maybe we should occasionally skip the next meeting and turn the computer off....**

What is necessary is balance. There is a proper rhythm to work and rest. Excessive rest may imply self-centeredness and self-indulgence. Excessive work may imply that our trust is in self and not in God. As we grow to adulthood, we are called more and more to put our trust in God—no easy task. Learning to trust in God's love is ongoing. I'm continually forgetting God's presence and love and lapsing into the activism of doing it all myself. †

Too Much of a Good Thing

continued

stuff outlive us. How many of us have ever sat with a pen in hand and made a list of all of our stuff? Most of us wait until we make out our wills, but I believe that thinking about it periodically might give us some insight as to just how excessive we are.

Every one of us aspires to a good life. No one wakes up and says, "Please, God, I'm dying to live in a hovel with no electricity or running water." We all want to have a nice home in a decent neighborhood, a reliable car, and the best education for our children. I truly do not believe that we *want* to be mindless consumers, yet it's becoming increasingly difficult to resist the seduction that's all around us.

Kids are told over and over to get the latest and the greatest, and it becomes a relentless testing of parents' willpower. It's hard to say no when all the other kids have something. But that's where moderation comes in. If you don't say no to them (and to your own impulses), when will you? Giving in just because other kids were able to torture their parents into saying yes isn't good enough. Perhaps it's time to gather your family and spend a few hours discussing your values—and moderation needs to be one of them. †

Pearls of Wisdom *continued*

Such grains of sand cause pain, but an oyster does not alter its soft nature because of this. It does not become hard and leathery in order not to feel. It continues to entrust itself to the ocean, to open and breathe in order to live. But it does respond. Slowly and patiently, the oyster wraps the grain of sand in thin translucent layers until, over time, it has created something of great value in the place where it was most vulnerable to its pain. A pearl might be thought of as an oyster's response to its suffering. Not every oyster can do this. Oysters

that do are far more valuable to people than oysters that do not.

Sand is a way of life for an oyster. If you are soft and tender and must live on the sandy floor of the ocean, making pearls becomes a necessity if you are to live well.

Disappointment and loss are a part of every life. Many times we can put such things behind us and get on with the rest of our lives. But not everything is amenable to this approach. Some things are too big or too deep to do this, and we will have to leave important parts of ourselves behind if we treat them in this way.

These are the places where wisdom begins to grow in us. It begins with suffering that we do not avoid

or rationalize or put behind us. It starts with the realization that our loss, whatever it is, has become a part of us and has altered our lives so profoundly that we cannot go back to the way it was before.

Something in us can transform such suffering into wisdom. The process of turning pain into wisdom often looks like a sorting process. First we experience everything. Then one-by-one we let things go, the anger, the blame, the sense of injustice, and finally even the pain itself, until all we have left is a deeper sense of the value of life and a greater capacity to live it. †