



# MISSION ENRICHMENT

Volume 14, No. 5 | Sept-Oct 2014

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

*A culture obsessed with technology will come to value personal convenience above almost all else, and ours does.... Religion tends to be strongest when life is hard... a person whose main difficulty is not crop failure but video breakdown has less need of the consolations and promises of religion. ~Robert Bork*

## Tending to Your Inner Life

by Steve Goodier

Taking his seat in his chambers, the judge faced the opposing lawyers. “So,” he said, “I have been presented, by both of you, with a bribe.”

The lawyers squirmed as he continued. To the one on his left he said, “You gave me \$15,000.” To the other, he said, “And you, gave me \$10,000.”

The judge reached into his pocket and pulled out some cash. Handing it to the first one, he said, “Now then, I’m returning \$5,000 and we’re going to decide this case solely on its merits.”

Where is a person of character when you need one?

A whole and healthy life -- a life of character and integrity -- is shaped from the inside. Author Anthony J. D’Angelo says that “the greatest gift you can ever give yourself is a little bit of your own

attention.” Authenticity has little to do with outward appearances, or even reputations. It’s all about giving your life, especially your inner life, the attention it needs so you may grow into a person you can fully respect. You might say it’s an inside job.

But becoming that person doesn’t happen all at once. An authentic and genuine life grows like a sturdy tree. And like a tree, it grows slowly.

Every time you make a different and better decision, it grows a little. Every time you choose to do the right thing, even when nobody would find out otherwise, it grows a little. Every time you act with compassion, relinquish your right to strike back, take a courageous stand, admit fault or accept responsibility, it grows a little.

A life of character is like a well-tended tree. And if your life is a gift given to you, then what you do with it is the gift you return. But be patient.

No work you’ll ever complete;  
no project you’ll ever attempt;  
no skill you’ll ever master;  
no book you’ll ever write;  
no race you’ll ever run;  
no sculpture you’ll ever create;  
no task you’ll ever perform;  
no structure you’ll ever build;  
nothing you will ever do --  
is more important than the life you  
shape one day at a time.

## *Work Wonders*

(taken from *Family Circle*,  
January 2013, p. 63)

When you feel like there are never enough hours in the day, try some idle worshipping. Gaze at the sun as it sinks into the horizon or journal about a past vacation to a scenic locale. Contemplating a breathtaking image can make it seem like you have more time on your hands, says a new Stanford University study. The reason: People who experience emotions like awe feel as if they are living in the moment. When you’re overwhelmed, stop to admire the view—life may seem not just longer but fuller too. †



**Tend to your inner life, give it the attention it needs, and I promise you one thing: you won’t be disappointed with the results. †**

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.

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

# The Anatomy of Giving

(taken from *Toxic Charity: How Churches and Charities Hurt Those They Help (And How to Reverse It)* by Robert D. Lupton, pp. 31-39)

Giving is no simple matter, not if giving is to be ultimately redemptive. And there are no cookie-cutter formulas for getting it right....

Christmas Eve of '81 I had the luxury of relaxing in the living room of a low-income family. Usually I was rushing back and forth from the suburbs with vanloads of presents and food for the poor, organizing toy parties, coordinating adopt-a-family gift deliveries. This year was different. I was a neighbor... having realized that the best chance for these families to build hopeful futures lay in effecting change from within their neighborhoods.

of colored lights. Sipping coffee with my new neighbor, while their children, antsy with anticipation, paced from window to window, waiting for Santa's helpers to arrive.

When the knock finally came on their front door, their mom greeted the visitors—a well-dressed family with young children—and invited them to step inside. A nervous smile concealed her embarrassment as she graciously accepted armfuls of neatly wrapped gifts. In the commotion, no one noticed that the children's father had quietly slipped out of the room—no one but their mom.

Not until the guests were gone and

*The challenge for those of us in service work is to redirect traditional methods of charity into systems of genuine exchange.*

Bare floors were swept clean, and clutter was picked up. Front windows reflected the light from two plastic candles. A small artificial tree on a corner table blinked with a single strand

the children had torn through the wrappings to the treasures inside did one of the little ones ask where their father was. No one questioned the mother's response that he had to go to the store.



ONCE YOU HAVE STARTED SEEING THE BEAUTY OF LIFE, UGLINESS STARTS DISAPPEARING. IF YOU START LOOKING AT LIFE WITH JOY, SADNESS STARTS DISAPPEARING. YOU CANNOT HAVE HEAVEN AND HELL TOGETHER, YOU CAN HAVE ONLY ONE. IT IS YOUR CHOICE.

~OSHO

But after organizing these kind of Christmas charity events for years, I was witnessing a side I had never noticed before: how a father is emasculated in his own home in front of his wife and children for not being able to provide presents for his family, how a wife is forced to shield her children from their father's embarrassment, how children get the message that the "good stuff" comes from rich people out there and it is free.

Only after becoming a neighbor was I able to see what we had done. Christmas Eve in that living room, I became painfully aware that not all charity is good charity.

Even the most kindhearted, rightly motivated giving—as innocent as giving Christmas toys to needy children—can exact an unintended toll on a parent's dignity. Inadvertently I had done just that. Not just this time but many times....

Giving is supposed to be a joyous process, but throughout our various giving activities I had overlooked the darker side. Emotional price tags were attached to each of these charitable events. I thought, too, about our church clothes closet and food pantry—did those have the same issues at play?...

I began studying the facial expressions of those I ushered into our church clothes closet. I noticed how seldom recipients gave me direct eye contact. I watched body language as I handed out boxes of groceries from our food pantry—head and shoulders bent slightly forward, self-effacing

smiles, meek “thank-yous.” I observed, too, how quickly recipients’ response to charity devolved from gratitude to expectation to entitlement.

In moments of silent introspection, I observed my part in the anatomy of giving: I expected gratitude in exchange for my free gifts. I actually enjoyed occupying the superior position of giver (though I covered it carefully with a façade of humility).

... Everywhere I looked, I observed the same patterns, from overseas church mission trips to the inner-city service projects of campus organizations. Wherever there was sustained one-way giving, unwholesome dynamics and pathologies festered under the cover of kindheartedness....

Doing *for* rather than doing *with* those in need is the norm. Add to it the combination of patronizing pity and unintended superiority, and charity becomes toxic....

Decades of free aid from well-meaning benefactors has produced an entitlement mentality and eroded a spirit of entrepreneurship and self-sufficiency. The outpouring of more aid, though necessary to preserve life in a time of disaster, is ultimately worsening the underlying problem....

The challenge for those of us in service work is to redirect traditional methods of charity into systems of genuine exchange. In our community there was no small amount of grumbling over our decision to close down the church clothes closet and open the

---

FALSE HUMILITY is to believe that one is unworthy of God’s goodness and does not dare to seek it humbly. True humility lies in seeing one’s own unworthiness, giving up oneself to God, not doubting for a moment that God can perform the greatest results for us and in us.

~ F. Fénelon

---

nonprofit Family Store... Seeing former clothes-closet recipients working as paid employees behind the counter was a hopeful sign. Discovering bargains generates excitement—universally. And being greeted as valued customers, not charity cases, affirmed self-esteem. Within a year most forgot that we once even had a church clothes closet.

*continued on back page*

# The Art of Presence

by David Brooks

(Excerpts from the New York Times article, Jan. 21, 2014)

**T**ragedy has twice visited the Woodiwiss family. In 2008, Anna Woodiwiss, then 27, was working for a service organization in Afghanistan. On April 1, she went horseback riding and was thrown, dying from her injuries. In 2013, her younger sister Catherine, then 26, was biking to work from her home in Washington. She was hit by a car and her face was severely smashed up. She has endured and will continue to endure a series of operations....

The victims of trauma, she writes, experience days “when you feel like a quivering, cowardly shell of yourself, when fear paralyzes any chance for pleasure. This is just a fight that has to be won, over and over and over again.”

Her mother, Mary, talks about the deep grief that a parent feels when they have lost one child and seen another badly injured, a pain felt in bones and fiber.

But suffering is a teacher. The Woodiwisses drew a few lessons, which at least apply to their own experience, about how those of us outside the zone of trauma might better communicate with those inside the zone.

**Do be there.** Some people think that those who experience trauma need space to sort things through. Assume the opposite. Most people need presence. The Woodiwisses say they were awed after each tragedy by the number of people, many of whom had been mere acquaintances, who showed up and offered love, from across the nation and the continents. They were also disoriented by a number of close friends who simply weren’t there, who were afraid or too busy.

**Don’t compare, ever.** Don’t say, “I understand what it’s like to lose a child. My dog died, and that was hard, too.” Even if the comparison seems more germane, don’t make it. Each trauma should be respected in its uniqueness. “From the inside,” Catherine writes, comparisons “sting as clueless, careless, or just plain false.”

**Do not say “you’ll get over it.”** “There is no such thing as ‘getting over it,’” Catherine writes, “A major disruption leaves a new normal in its wake. There is no ‘back to the old me.’”

**Do be a builder.** The Woodiwisses distinguish between firefighters and builders. Firefighters drop everything and arrive at the moment of crisis. Builders are there for years and years, walking alongside as the victims live out in the world. Very few people are capable of performing both roles.

**Don’t say it’s all for the best or try to make sense out of what has happened.** Catherine and her parents speak with astonishing gentleness and quiet thoughtfulness, but it’s pretty obvious that these tragedies have stripped away their tolerance for pretense and uprooted optimism.

They warned against those who would over-interpret, and try to make sense of the inexplicable. Even devout Christians, as the Woodiwisses are, should worry about taking theology beyond its limits. Theology is a grounding in ultimate hope, not a formula book to explain away each individual event.

... We have a tendency, especially in an achievement-oriented culture, to want to solve problems and repair brokenness—to propose, plan, fix, interpret, explain and solve. But what seems to be needed here is the art of presence—to perform tasks without trying to control or alter the elemental situation. Allow nature to take its

*continued on back page*

*A major disruption leaves a new normal in its wake. There is no ‘back to the old me.’*

# Writings of St. Eugene —



Where would we be, my dear Father Bellon, if we allowed ourselves to be disheartened by the difficulties that our ministry brings us? This weakness is only too natural and certainly does not

come from God; if we probe deeper into this feeling, we may perhaps discover something even more imperfect. And so I do not approve your worrying about it as you do. Why are you surprised to find the miseries of humanity in people? You must conquer evil with good, pray very much, always distrust yourself, but hope in God, who, precisely on this occasion, has shown you a great proof of his protection. But far from being discouraged, you ought to be full of gratitude to God, that he has enlightened us in time and put us on the track of a devilish scheme which I could

luckily thwart.\* You are discouraged by what happened at Lumières. That was nothing in comparison to what I have found elsewhere. Prompt justice had to be meted out to a priest.\*\* That is more than child's play. Oh, well! Should we also despair with regard to what happened at Lumières? Certainly not! We repair the evil, thank God for having discovered it, and continue to work with fresh zeal for the sanctification of souls, precisely because they are being attacked more violently by the enemy of every good. If we acted otherwise, we would be, I say, not only foolish but quite culpable as well.

You understand by what I have just said to you that the proposal you make

cannot be accepted. When we truly need a period of rest, we ought to take it at home. These absences from our houses are against the general rules of all those well-ordered Congregations, and especially contrary to the spirit of our own. Let us speak no more of trips and journeys. †

\* Father Bellon was at Lumières with the scholastics. There is nothing in the archives about this "devilish scheme" which we succeeded in avoiding. It probably refers to some bad stroke or to the defection of a few juniors since the Founder speaks "of children." In 1845, there was only one scholastic in perpetual vows who quit; namely, Brother Lecque.

\*\* An allusion to Abbé Prayet who was preparing to publish at Marseilles a document against the Archbishop of Avignon, cf.: letter of Jeancard to Mr. Barrère, vicar-general of Avignon, September 20, 1845. Marseilles, Register of Administrative Letters.

---

*Rash words are like sword thrusts, but the tongue of the wise brings healing.* (Proverbs 12:18)

---

## The Art of Presence *continued*

course. Grant the sufferers the dignity of their own process. Let them define meaning. Sit simply through moments of pain and uncomfortable darkness. Be practical, mundane, simple and direct.

Mary and her other daughter, Ashley, went to Afghanistan a few months after Anna's death. They wept together with

Afghan villagers and felt touched by grace. "That period changed me and opened my imagination," Ashley recalls. "This thing called presence and love is more available than I had thought. It is more ready to be let loose than I every imagined." †

## ADVICE PRAYER

(from the book *Prayers for Sleepless Nights*  
by Helen Reichert Lambin)

I know people mean well, God, but sometimes I don't need to add unsolicited advice to the burden I'm already carrying. Help me to consider their advice honestly, discern what is right for me, and tactfully ignore what is not. And then, help me move ahead and do it your way and my way.

And when I'm inclined to offer advice, let me remember how this feels, so that I don't make matters worse. Discerning God, help me to help others wisely, to offer words when words should be offered, to withhold them when they should not, and above all, to listen with an understanding heart. †

## The Anatomy of Giving *continued*

The following Christmas we terminated our adopt-a-family gift-giving program. When well-resourced families called to contribute to a family, we asked if they would be willing to give an extra gift that year—the gift of dignity to the dads. Instead of delivering toys directly to the homes of the poor, donors were directed to bring unwrapped gifts to the Family Store where a large section was decorated as The Old Toy Shop. A bargain price was placed on each toy, and parents from the neighborhood were invited to come shopping for the special gifts sure to delight their children. Those who had no money were able to work at the store, earning what they needed for their purchases. In this way parents in the city experienced the same joy on Christmas morning as most other parents across the nation—seeing their children opening gifts they had purchased through the efforts of their own hands. †

That second Christmas our predictions proved spot-on: our low-income neighbors would much rather work to purchase gifts for their children than stand in free-toy lines with their "proof of poverty" identification. †

