



# MISSION ENRICHMENT

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

For the kingdom to come in this world, disciples must have the competence to see and the courage to act, which is a call to do as Jesus did, working for justice through loving service to the poor.

– Constitution of the Congregation of Holy Cross Brothers

## The Blessing in Adversity

By Michael E. Angier

When I was about five years old, I lived with my family in Enterprise, Alabama for a few months while my father attended an advanced aviation course at nearby Fort Rucker.

What makes Enterprise, Alabama especially memorable is a strange monument they have in the middle of town. You can't miss it. In fact, you have to drive around it because it sits right in the middle of the road. The monument is a statue to the boll weevil.

It's probably the only monument in the world erected in honor of an insect. It certainly wasn't done because of its aesthetic value the boll weevil is a particularly ugly-looking creature. Surprisingly, it was erected because of the devastation the boll weevil caused to the cotton crops of the surrounding area!



Why did they honor this pest? Well, had it not been for the boll weevil, the local economy would have continued its unhealthy dependence on its one-crop, one-product economy. Until then, everything

depended entirely on cotton. When the boll weevil came, the farmers and all the other businesses that were reliant on the cotton farmers were forced to recognize the need to diversify.

In the long run, they saw that the boll weevil had, in fact, done them a favor by destroying their crops. No longer were their eggs all in one cotton basket. They started raising hogs, peanuts and other cash crops, and the entire area was better off for it

I think it is to those southern farmers' great credit that they were able to see this adversity for what it really was a great blessing. Too often, we see difficult times as something to avoid something only to endure. We usually don't see the benefit until much later if at all. If we look back at the things in our lives that were the most trying, the most painful and frustrating, we have

to admit that there was value in it (if you can't see this, you probably aren't seeing it from a distant enough perspective).

Our lives are far more enjoyable (certainly more instructional) if we view each thing that happens to us as just that a happening. Remember, it's not what happens to us, but our response to what happens to us that makes the difference in the quality of our lives. I believe that everything that happens can be a lesson.

Next time things don't seem to be going the way you want, ask yourself what the positive aspect is. What's the benefit in the adversity? You'll have greater enjoyment and learn more in the process. †

## Papa's Potato Problem

An old man lived alone in the country. He wanted to dig his potato garden, but it was very tough work as the ground was hard. His only son, who used to help him with the garden, was in prison for insider trading and stock fraud. The old man wrote a letter to his son and described his predicament.

*"Dear Son, I am feeling pretty bad because it looks like I won't be able to plant*

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Ideas or comments are welcome.

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SINCE YOU CANNOT DO GOOD TO ALL, YOU ARE TO PAY SPECIAL REGARD TO THOSE WHO, BY THE ACCIDENTS OF TIME, OR PLACE, OR CIRCUMSTANCES, ARE BROUGHT INTO CLOSER CONNECTION WITH YOU.

--AUGUSTINE OF HIPPO

## Finding Slow Time by Steven Goodier

An American racing enthusiast entered his horse in a British steeplechase. Just before the race began, he slipped his horse a white pellet. The Duke of Marlborough, who was serving as steward, caught the owner in the act and objected. "I say, old man, really you can't do that sort of thing over here."

"Just a harmless sugar lump," the American assured him. He gulped one down himself. "Here, try one," he said.

The duke took a pill, swallowed it, and seemed satisfied. As his jockey mounted, the American whispered in his ear, "Son, keep that horse on the outside and stay out of trouble, because once he starts running, there ain't nothing that can catch him...except me and the Duke of Marlborough!"

*Slow time is time to be; time to experience life.*

Do you ever feel that way – running so fast that nothing can catch you? We Americans are accused of living in fast time. And I think that much of the rest of the world can relate. How often do we rush here and hurry there? Or inhale our fast food? We have "just a minute" for friends. We even use words like "running an errand." We rely on lightning speed e-mail and speak of the old system as "snail mail."

We live in fast time. Too often, we run so fast we lose our center. Or we lament, "I wish I could, but I don't have the time...."

How can that be? How can we live so fast and not have time?

An attorney, reflecting on his childhood, said that the greatest gift he ever received in his life was a note his father gave him on Christmas. It read, "Son, this year I will give you 365 hours. An hour every day after dinner. We'll talk about whatever you want to talk about. We'll go wherever you want to go, play whatever you want to play. It will be your hour." That dad kept his promise and renewed it every year.

I call that slow time. It's time that is not relentlessly measured by a clock. Slow time is time to be; time to experience life.

I gave my children a similar gift. I gave the gift of a breakfast out once a week. Just me and one of my sons. No agenda. No problem-solving. No scolding. Just listening. Talking about whatever he wanted to talk about. It became a time to learn about him, to laugh with him and to show him that, for the next hour or so, my time was his alone. It was the gift of slow time between a father and his son. And often it was the most important time I spent all day.

It's important to find enough slow time. For in the end, it's not

how fast you and I live our lives that matters, or how much we accomplish in a day. Are you taking time to enjoy? Is there time to listen to a friend or visit a relative in need?

**Are you leaving time each day to nurture your soul?**

Are you finding slow time? After all, if life is a race, the winners are not those who run fastest, but rather those who run well. It takes plenty of slow time to run well. †

### Papa's Potato Problem

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*my potato garden this year. I'm just getting too old to be digging up a garden plot. If you weren't in prison, all my troubles would be over. I know you would dig the plot for me. Love, Papa"*

A few days later the old man received a letter from his son.

*"For heaven's sake, Dad, don't dig up that garden because that's where I buried all the money and stocks.*

*Love, Your son"*

At 4 a.m. the next morning, a team of FBI agents and local police arrived at the old man's house and dug up the entire garden area without finding any money or stocks. They apologized to the old man and left. That same day the old man received another letter from his son.

*"Dear Papa, I'm sure by now the FBI has been there and dug up your garden. Go ahead and plant the potatoes. That's the best I could do under the circumstances.*

*Love, Your son." †*

# 11 Things We Do That Make Us Miserable

By Susie Moore, Huffington Post

Oftentimes we read about what we can do to increase our happiness through valuable tips, tricks and techniques. I love reading this stuff and noticing the impact it has on my day and my life. Sometimes equally important is identifying what habits we have that negate all of the positive mindset gearing we do. Here are 11 things many of us are guilty of that sabotage our peace, joy and calm:

## 1. Hold a grudge

Forgiveness is the key to freedom. As Marianne Williamson says, "Forgiveness is actually out of self-interest." When we hate, feel anger or resentment towards another, the intended impact, to hurt them, backfires on us. We harbor the anger and resentment within our own minds and bodies. And it's poisonous. Under Williamson's advice, try to see a situation differently. How must my enemy have felt to act the way they did? What fear did they feel? What good qualities does this person have that perhaps I have never thought about? I have four sisters, and one of them has not spoken to me in 12 years -- despite lots of effort on my part. It made me confused and angry for a long time. My forgiveness way of thinking opened me up to compassion. When I think of her now I do so with love. It takes practice but this does get easier.

## 2. Give up on our dreams

To me this is the saddest one. As Marie Forleo says, "The world needs that special gift that only you have." So often we bury our gifts, follow a "safe" path or simply do not have the courage to pursue what it is that we want. This results in a lot of regret later in life and even in the present moment. I heard once that the definition of hell is when the person you are meets the person you could have been. Our inner voice knows when we are not living our truth and this voice does not go away although we do our best to tune it out. By ignoring our dreams we are not sharing our unique gifts with the world.

## 3. Not make time for what brings us joy

This is aligned with number two. Do you love to write, draw, sing, teach? When we do not make what brings us

joy a priority we are often completely unaware of the happiness we could be experiencing. It results in a much less rich, less colorful life.

## 4. Settle for superficial relationships

Since moving to New York I really noticed this. When making new friends I realized that a lot of time people do not talk about things that really matter, let alone make themselves vulnerable. Whenever I bring up my early divorce or humble upbringing, people tend to open up with me too, as we all secretly want to make a genuine connection with other people. People often tell me, "It's so nice to talk about this stuff." We don't realize that connecting with others has nothing to do with our exotic vacations or successful career stories -- it is about making a soul connection which often arises from deeper conversations.

## 5. Compare!

Buddha said, "Comparison is the thief of joy." Comparison is selective, exaggerated and unreal. We have no idea what is going on in other people's lives. We may envy their fortune but not know their child is struggling with bullying or that their marriage is falling apart. Instead we should be too busy envying our own good fortune (gratitude, my friends).

## 6. Value possessions over experiences

Marianne Williamson says in *A Return to Love*, "Material things are not good or bad, they are just nothing." We prize possessions so highly when life experiences are so much more meaningful. We often do not make travel, trips to see loved ones, going to our favorite live-event, and dinner with an old friend a priority over shopping and collecting things.

## 7. Tell ourselves life is "good enough"

Truly happy people push themselves. They understand that pushing our boundaries and making progress is rewarding and fun. When was the last time you did something completely new or set the bar higher for yourself?

## 8. Let fear, not creativity, rule

The next time we make a decision, let's tune in to which part of us it is coming from. The best decisions are always made out of creativity and love. Jack Kornfield says, "Fear is the cheapest room in the house. I would like to see you in better living conditions."

## 9. Do not give

At the end of it all, it is not about us! The greatest, most real and rewarding sense of happiness comes from helping others. I know a lawyer who teaches guitar on Sundays to children who cannot afford lessons. He says it is one of his greatest sources of happiness. To me, this is the most beautiful thing about the world -- that giving of ourselves creates the most joy.

## 10. Self-medicate

Brene Brown says in her famous Ted Talk that, "The USA is the most medicated, in debt, addicted and obese nation in the world." All of these things offer temporary satisfaction but in the longer term make us depressed. We are looking for joy outside of ourselves. Joy and peace come from within.

## 11. Fail to live in the moment!

We are so busy worrying about what will be in the future or living in the past. True joy, peace and contentment come from being alive and present in the current moment. It is all we have and it is all there really is. †

# Praying in a Crisis

by Fr. Ron Rolheiser, OMI

(website 3-17-2013)

**H**ow do we lift our darkest, most depressed, most lonely moments up to God? How can we pray when we are most deeply alone, helpless, and our whole world seems to be collapsing?

We can learn from Jesus and how he prayed the night before his death in the Garden of Gethsemane, in his darkest hour: It was late at night; he had just had his last meal with his closest friends, and he had one hour to prepare to face his death. His humanity breaks through and Jesus finds himself prostrate on the ground, begging for escape. Here's how the Gospels describe it:

Jesus withdrew from his disciples, about a stone's throw away, and threw himself to the ground and prayed. "Abba, Father, all things are possible for you, if you are willing, take this cup away from me. Nevertheless, let your will be done, not mine." And he came back and found his disciples sleeping. So he withdrew again and in anguish prayed even more earnestly, and his sweat fell to the ground like great drops of blood. When he

rose from prayer he went to the disciples and found them sleeping for sheer grief. And he said to them, "Why are you asleep? Get up and pray not to be put to the test." And he prayed a third time, and an angel came and strengthened him, and he rose to face with strength what lay before him.

This prayer by Jesus in Gethsemane can serve as a model for how we can pray when we're in crisis. Looking at the prayer, we can highlight seven elements, each of which has something to teach us in terms of how to pray in our darkest times:

**1. The prayer issues forth from his loneliness:** The Gospels highlight this, both in terms of telling us that the prayer takes place in a garden (the archetypal place for love) and in that Jesus is "a stone's throw away" from his loved ones who cannot be present to what he is undergoing. In our deepest crises, we are always painfully alone, a stone's throw away from others. Deep prayer should issue from that place.

**2. The prayer is one of great familiarity:** He begins the prayer by calling his father "Abba", the most familiar term possible, the phrase that a young child would use sitting on his or her father's lap. In our darkest hours,

we must be most familiar with God.

**3. The prayer is one of complete honesty:** Classically prayer is defined as "lifting mind and heart to God". Jesus does this here, radically, in searing honesty. He asks God to take the suffering away, to give him escape. His humanity cringes before duty and he asks for escape. That's honest prayer, true prayer.

**4. The prayer is one of utter helplessness:** He falls to the ground, prostrate, with no illusions about his own strength. His prayer contains the petition that if God is to do this through him, God needs to provide the strength for it.

**5. The prayer is one of openness, despite personal resistance:** Even as he cringes before what he is being asked to undergo and asks for escape, he still gives God the radical permission to enter his freedom. His prayer opens him to God's will, if that is what's ultimately being asked of him.

**6. The prayer is one of repetition:** He repeats the prayer several times, each time more earnestly, sweating blood, not just once, but several times over.

**7. The prayer is one of transformation:** Eventually an angel (divine strength) comes and fortifies him and he gives himself over to what he is being asked to undergo on the basis of a new strength that comes from beyond him. But **that strength can only flow into him after he has, through helplessness, let go of his own strength. It is only after the desert has done its work on us that we are open to let God's strength flow into us.**

In his book, *Stride Towards Freedom*, Martin Luther King recounts how one night, after receiving a death threat, he panicked, gave into fear, and, not unlike Jesus in Gethsemane, literally collapsed to the floor in fear, loneliness, helplessness - and prayer. He confessed that his prayer that night was mostly a plea to God to let him find an honorable means of escape, but God asked something else of him. Here are his final words to God in that prayer:

"But now I am afraid. The people are looking to me for leadership, and if I stand before them without strength and courage, they too will falter. I am at the end of my powers. I have nothing left. I've come to the point where I can't face it alone." Then he adds: "At that moment I experienced the presence of the Divine as I had never experienced Him before." An angel found him.

When we pray honestly, whatever our pain, an angel of God will always find us. †

## from the Diary of Bishop Eugene de Mazenod, Founder of the Missionary Oblates



February 7, 1838:

... Letter of Fr. Courtès informing me of the sudden death of the esteemed Madame de Bausset (a friend of the Oblates and Madame de Mazenod), distinguished benefactress of the Mission. I immediately wrote to all our houses so that every priest say a Mass for the repose of her soul, that every Oblate Novice and Brother make five Communion for the same intention, and that the indulgences, good works, etc., be especially applied to her for eight days, regardless of the rights that she had forever to all the merits of the Congregation.

Second letter of Fr. Courtès informing me that the Will of the excellent Madame de Bausset holds that I will be paid the sum of 20 000 francs during the year. We cannot

ignore that this charitable Christian and good friend provided 600 francs per year, over a period of ten years, for the education and the living expenses of our Fathers. God should already have rewarded this holy soul, but it is the duty of the Congregation to maintain an eternal obligation to her. As for me, I miss her loss with the pain that I cannot prevent myself from feeling when such dear and precious friends are taken away from me; I am not sure that one replaces such treasures easily; instead of true, sincere, virtuous friends, one only comes across the indifferent. The good Madame de Bausset will have a place in my prayer of remembrance of the dead every day of my life, and I would never know how to run dry on the praise of her virtues and her good qualities. †