



MISSION ENRICHMENT

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The Spirit of the Gospel in Service of the Mission

We are all missionaries. Wherever we go, we either bring people nearer to Christ,
or we repel them from Christ. – Eric Liddell

New Year's Resolutions

by Leigh Anne Jascheway

Often we break our New Year's resolutions because they're not realistic and they require too much work—not to mention they're not any fun. Try adding a few of these resolutions to your list—

- ~ Do something daily that makes you laugh out loud.
- ~ Learn to say "no" without feeling guilty.
- ~ Take a walk whenever you feel stressed.
- ~ Focus on what went right every day instead of what went wrong.
- ~ Make a list of all the things you like about yourself.
- ~ Watch a whole sunset, uninterrupted, at least once every season.
- ~ Spend one night a week without the television on.
- ~ Find at least five nutritious foods you actually like – and eat them at least a couple of times a week. †

FORGIVING OURSELVES

(Adapted from *The Art of Letting Go: Living the Wisdom of Saint Francis* by Fr. Richard Rohr, OFM)

Perhaps the most difficult forgiveness, the greatest letting go, is to forgive ourselves for doing it wrong. We need to realize that we are not perfect, and we are not innocent. "One learns one's mystery at the price of one's innocence" says Robertson Davies. If I want to maintain an image of myself as innocent, superior, or righteous, I can only do so at the cost of truth. I would have to reject the mysterious side, the shadow side, the broken side, the unconscious side of almost everything. **We have for too long confused holiness with innocence, whereas holiness is actually mistakes overcome and transformed, not necessary mistakes avoided.**

Letting go is different than denying or repressing. To let go of it, you have to admit it. You have to own it. Letting go is different than turning it against yourself. Letting go is different than projecting it onto others. **Letting go means that the denied, repressed, rejected parts of myself are seen for what they are. You see it and you hand it over to God. You hand it over to history.** You refuse to let the negative story line that you've wrapped yourself around define your life.

This is a very different way of living. It implies that you see your mistake, your dark side, and you don't split from it. You don't pretend it's not true. You go to the place that has been called "the gift of tears." Weeping is a word to describe that inner attitude where I can't fix it, I can't explain it, I can't control it, I can't even understand it. I can only forgive it—weep over it and let go of it. Grieving reality is different than hating it.

Letting go of our cherished images of ourselves is really the way to heaven, because when you fall down to the bottom, you fall on solid ground, the Great Foundation, the bedrock of God. It looks like an abyss, but it's actually a foundation. On that foundation, you have nothing to prove, nothing to protect: "I am who I am who I am," and for some unbelievable reason, that's what God has chosen to love. At that point, the one you're in love with is both God and yourself too, and you find yourself henceforth inside of God (John 14:20)! †



Ideas or comments are welcome.

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ALL IN THE DETAILS

(from *The Executive Speechwriter Newsletter*, Vol. 14, No. 5)

Fred had heard a rumor that his father, grandfather and great-grandfather had all walked on water on their 21st birthdays.

So, on his 21st birthday, he headed out to the lake.

"If they did it, I can too," he told himself.

At the lake, Fred rented a boat and began rowing. When he got to the middle of the lake, he stepped off the side of the boat... and nearly drowned.

Furious and somewhat embarrassed, Fred headed for home. When he arrived back at the family farm, he asked his grandmother for an explanation.

"Grandma, it's my 21st birthday. Why can't I walk on water like my father, his father and his father before him?"

Fred's grandmother took Fred by the hands, looked into his eyes, and explained, "Because your father, grandfather and great-grandfather were all born in January. You were born in July." †

Touching Moments

by Steven Goodier

I read that an insurance company survey revealed that spouses who habitually kiss their mates in the morning are projected to live longer than those who don't. It also indicated that these people may have fewer auto accidents and lose less time at work due to illness. I won't begin to interpret what all this means, except that it seems that people in intimate relationships seem to be happier and healthier.

But what about that "touching moment" – that kiss or a tender hug? If intimacy is vital, is the simple act of touching another person also important?

I once was asked to give some emotional support to a prisoner who was awaiting trial. I found him in the county jail and he and I visited for a while in a prison conference room. He didn't know me and seemed afraid to let down his defenses. So we talked about nothing more important than how long he may be incarcerated and whether or not he was guilty of the crimes with which he was charged. He shared nothing of his fears at this dark time in his life. I felt as if we had not "connected" in any meaningful way and, after an appropriate length of time, I stood to leave.

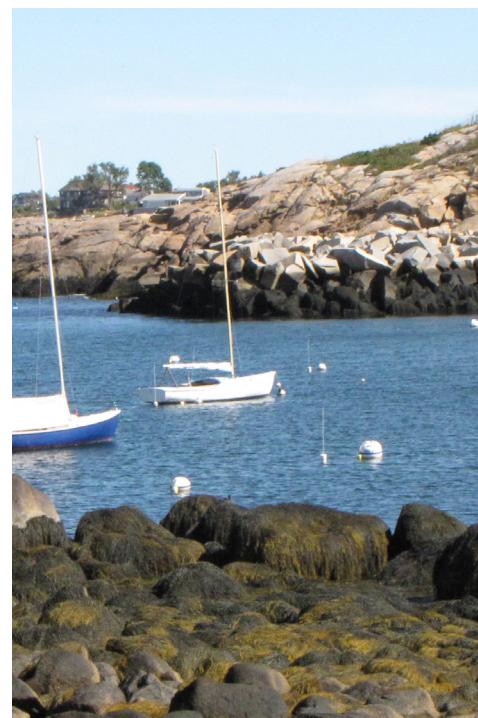
On impulse, before I turned away from him I reached for his hands. He grasped mine tightly and dropped his head. Neither of us spoke – we just stood facing each other clasping hands. After a moment, he began to cry. As he sobbed, he continued to hold tightly to my hands. Somehow the connection, the human touch, melted a dam of ice and allowed his emotions to gush forth.

When his sobbing subsided, he wanted to talk. Only this time he spoke of his fear and loneliness and he told me of his concern for his family while he was imprisoned. All the while, he held onto my hands like a drowning man clinging to a life saver. I believe that because of the touch, an act of basic human contact, he felt safe enough to share deeply.

There is power in a caring touch. I knew a woman who went to a massage therapist once a week, even when she felt fine, just because she needed that dose of physical contact. The lack of touch can be one of our greatest impediments to emotional intimacy and happiness.

When film star Marilyn Monroe was asked if she ever felt loved by any of the foster families with whom she lived, she replied, "Once, when I was about seven or eight. The woman I was living with was putting on makeup, and I was watching her. She was in a happy mood, so she reached over and patted my cheeks with her rouge puff... For that moment, I felt loved by her."

Maybe you are in need of more closeness. And perhaps you know of those who are hungry for some assurance that they are loved by someone and not all alone in this world. Your touch may accomplish what your words can't. And those touching moments can change a life. †



Journal Prompts for a New Year

by Psych Central
(from *Spirituality & Health*)

January feels like a fresh start. It's the perfect time for setting goals and looking forward. Most of us are so eager to cast off the old year and jump into the new one that we miss the opportunity to reflect on the year gone by. The truth is, last year (and the year before and the one before) all come with you into the new year.

Some of last year was probably good and some was probably not so great for you; life is a mixed bag for all of us. **The point isn't to dwell on what went wrong, but to reflect on what you learned from your challenges and disappointments and to think about how your struggles inform your choices and plans for the new year.**

I invite you to spend 30 minutes or so reflecting on last year and preparing for the new year with the following journaling prompts.

Reflecting on last year

A happy memory was
I was surprised by
I learned
I regret
I accomplished
I feel good about
I took care of myself by
I wasted time/energy on
I'm grieving
I'm angry about
I'm grateful for

Looking forward to the new year

I'm excited about
I plan to
I'm worried about
When things don't go as planned I will
I wish for
This year is going to be great because
My intention for this year is
I will take care of myself by
Every day I plan to
I will show myself compassion by
This year I want to add more to my life.
I will accept myself by
I will accept others by
I will focus on



3 Ways to Follow God When the Path Isn't Clear

by Whitney Williams - January 24, 2018

God didn't give Abram (later to be called Abraham) a detailed map or even show him the exact final destination. He basically said, "Abram, leave your comfort zone and go where I will show you." However, God also added that he would bless Abram and his descendants if Abram obeyed him. Abram didn't know where he would end up, but he knew and trusted God's character, so he obeyed anyway. Abram's obedience happened one step at a time. With each step, Abram heard a little more from God.

I feel that this is what God requires of me as well. In November, I lost my job. I don't know exactly where God is taking me

next, but I am trusting that it will be a good place—a place of blessing. Each day since, I have been doing what I know to do within each day. I've been looking, applying, and networking. I've also been taking advantage of the time and learning some new skills. All the while remembering that God is a good God who loves to give good gifts to his children. Each day I feel like I'm a little closer to knowing where he is taking me next and this brings me peace even in the not knowing.

Like Abram, I am learning lessons as I walk through my journey. Three lessons that God is teaching me are:

1. Step Out of My Comfort Zone

God wants me to continually step out of my comfort zone and trust him with the unknowns. **I have to leave room for God to guide me.** If God were to come show me step-by-step his exact will for my

life, it wouldn't require faith for me to follow him. Moreover, if I know exactly where I'm going beforehand, the idea probably isn't from God. It probably came out of my own head and ideals. God likes me to follow him in faith and trust—not in knowing. This frees me from getting stuck in my own ideas, which often can take me away from God's will, because let's face it, my own ideas can be very flawed as well as limited. God sees everything—past, present and future. God is not limited.

When I think back to times when I actually did step out of my comfort zone, it can give me confidence to do it again. A few years ago, I got married and moved many, many miles away from the state that I'd lived in my entire life. I knew it was for a good reason, but I didn't know a lot of the details

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that I would encounter after the move. But I did it anyway.

2. Take One Step at a Time

There's also another reason God doesn't want me to know too much too soon. If I know too quickly, I might get overwhelmed and give up because it seems too hard. I might know where I'll end up, but I won't necessarily know how. And, this not knowing how would cause me to have all kinds of anxious and worried thoughts. Nobody can do their best work under stress. **God doesn't ask me to take a step that is five miles up the road.** Each step of this step-by-step approach is made under the daylight of the present moment. Everyone can take one step at a time.

I once tried a ropes course that was over twenty feet above the ground. My initial thought was that there was no way I could balance myself and walk across those ropes. I wore a safety harness, but my jitters didn't seem to understand that I was completely safe. It was still scary. But...as I took one step at a time, I reached my destination.

3. Action Lessens Worry

I tend to overanalyze everything, and overanalyzing causes me to worry and even become paralyzed. Taking action erases a lot of these worries because the act of doing something takes on a life of its own. I **concentrate on the task at hand, not the results that will come later.** Worry about future results usually happens before I ever take an action to complete something. Taking actions regularly is a way of living in the moment and often deletes some of the fears of the future and regrets of the past.

Also, in that ropes course, I realized that most of my worries came before I started each section. Thinking about the possibility of falling happened before my first step. But...when I took the action necessary and started moving, my action really did erase a few fears because I wasn't thinking about them.

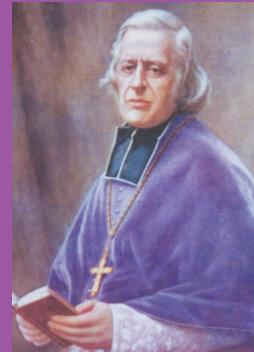
Bonus Lesson:

God is With Me as I Go

Abram was able to trust God in the not knowing because he believed that God was with him. I also have this assurance because

From the Writings of the Founder

Bishop Eugene de Mazenod's Diary Notes, 1859



January 1:

Lapsus est annus; reddit alter annus. "A year has passed; another year begins." We repeat that each year until the day when others will say it in my place. The years will then have ceased for me. That is the thought which occupies my mind each time the year is renewed, just as every Holy Thursday when I bless the holy oils, I wonder if I am not doing so for myself. That thought arouses my desire to serve God better and to make a greater effort to increase the value of my merits. †

Jesus said, "...be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age." **Even to the end of the age means in every moment of my life.**

Is God speaking to you about leaving your comfort zone and going without knowing? If he is, spend some time in the Bible and in reflective thought and wait for God to give you

your first step, not the whole plan, just the first step.

It was by faith that Abraham obeyed when God called him to leave home and go to another land that God would give him as his inheritance. He went without knowing where he was going (Hebrews 11:8). †

PRAYER BY TEILHARD DE CHARDIN

(in *The Little Book of Prayers*, edited by David Schiller)

When the signs of age begin to mark my body
(and still more when they touch my mind);
when the ill that is to diminish me
or carry me off strikes from without
or is born within me;
when the painful moment comes in which I suddenly awaken
to the fact that I am ill or growing old;
and above all at the last moment
when I feel I am losing hold of myself
and am absolutely passive in the hands
of the great unknown forces that have formed me;
in all those dark moments, O God,
grant that I may understand that it is you
(provided only my faith is strong enough)
who are painfully parting the fibers of my being
in order to penetrate to the very marrow of my substance
and bear me away within yourself.