



MISSION ENRICHMENT

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The Spirit of the Gospel in Service of the Mission

Every evening I turn my troubles over to God— he's going to be up anyway

— Donald J. Morgan

Year of Jesus Christ, Savior and Evangelizer

Jesus knew he was loved. **He didn't give to others in order to be loved; he gave because he was in love.** One of the most dramatic steps you can take in becoming a person who is more generous with others is to learn to like yourself and to appreciate that you are a special creation of God entirely independent of the world's view. The reality we should model then is: **Because of Christ's love we are already important.** †

(from *Snow Falling on Snow* by Robert J. Wicks, p. 77)

Conscious Parenting

A School of Love & Contemplation

(Fr. Richard Rohr, June 2019 blog)



Relationships are the primary school for love. For many people, parenting or care-giving serves as a container in which the soul, heart, body, and mind can grow. Each container is as unique as the individual who shapes it. Whether or not you are a parent, I hope to encourage you in the work of generous, generative caring. If you're a parent of young or adult children, if you aren't able to have children or have chosen not to, if you provide for an elderly parent, if you're a teacher, social worker, or nurse, I hope you know that you are not alone, that our divine Father and Mother parents *you* as you nurture others.

True holiness and wholeness come when we allow God's love and grace to unfold in the present moment and we respond to what is before us. Holiness is simply being connected to our

Source. From such a place, our compassionate response to suffering and need is drawn naturally—without being contrived or forced—from who we are in love, not from egoic motivations or fears.

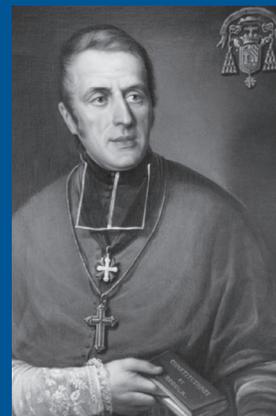
I think that's why so many parents become such good and holy people, because that's exactly what caring for children does for us. Of course, children can be treated as mere extensions of our ego, but we can't control or always predict what they will ask of us. So, they're likely to make us less egocentric, a lot less egocentric!

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From the Writings of the Founder

October 21, 1847 letter from Bishop de Mazenod to M. Marguet, Vicar General of Nancy

I very much want to acquaint you with the spirit of our Society which does not correspond to certain ideas that are usually entertained, and which undoubtedly have their good side, but are not ours. You recommend that I send you excellent



men and remind me that you are spoilt at Nancy by the best preachers who succeed one another in your area. I will not ask you if these excellent preachers have converted many people. That is not the practice of excellent preachers; and that is what has made a former Parish Priest of Toulon, who always used to call on all the famous preachers, say that they never drew anyone to the confessional; and that is why he asked me for some Missionaries, whom I constantly refused to send him precisely because people were too accustomed to hearing excellent preachers. ... our Rules set down the method that our Missionaries are to follow.

I [urge] you to always keep our Missionaries in the humility of their vocation and not expose them to do otherwise than what is recommended to them by their Rules. †

Ideas or comments are welcome.

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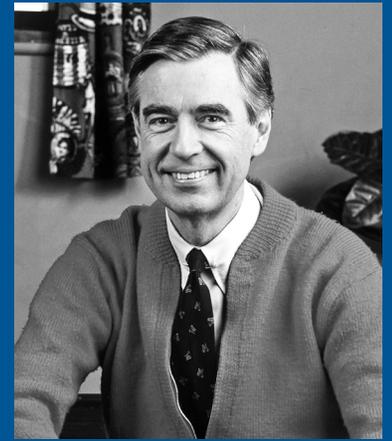
Life Journeys According to Mister Rogers

(by Fred Rogers, pp. 84-85)

A friend of mine visited a beautiful monastery where a dozen monks—most of them in their 70s and 80s—were living. This is a place which once had a population of sixty active men studying and following a very strict rule of living: praying together seven different times a day, seven days a week. They worked hard, and they were successful.

My friend asked one of the monks why he felt that over the years the community had dwindled from sixty to twelve. And his reply was: “We did everything right, but somewhere in all that living and praying and successful working, we lost the most important things of all, the thing that was so contagious and attracted people to us: We lost the basic love. Little by little the success replaced the love.”

The old monk ended by saying, “Oh, sure, you can have love *and* success, but the love has to remain first—always first: natural, accepting, affirming, inclusive, basic love.”



Love and success, always in that order. It's that simple AND that difficult. †

Meditations for Families

(from Today's Gift, Hazelden Foundation)



Tales told about the stars reflect a lot about the people who tell them. The constellation now called Orion was once called Hippolyta. Hippolyta was one of the Amazon queens. The Amazons were women warriors who had four leaders instead of one: two older women and two younger women. Everyone would benefit from the experience and wisdom of the older and strength and vigor of the younger.

After Hippolyta died, they named this constellation for her to honor her and remind themselves of her wisdom and bravery.

We can draw a good lesson from the value the Amazons placed on the contribution each one could make, no matter how young or old. When we remain alert to the possibility of learning from people we hadn't seriously considered as teachers, we are reminded of our often-forgotten value to others. †

THE UNANSWERABLE QUESTIONS

from *Hilarious One Liners*

- ~ How is it that we put a man on the moon before we figured out it would be a good idea to put wheels on luggage?
- ~ Is there ever a day that mattresses are not on sale?
- ~ Why do people believe you when you say there are four billion stars, but check when you say the paint is wet?
- ~ What was the best thing before sliced bread?
- ~ If we're not meant to have midnight snacks, why is there a light in the fridge?
- ~ You know that indestructible stuff they use to make the black box on an airplane? Why don't they make the whole plane out of that stuff?
- ~ Why do the *Alphabet Song* and 'Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star' have the same tune?

Are You Ready for Act Two?

(by Steven Goodier)

The date is June 24, 1859. Suddenly, there he is, atop a hill overlooking the plain of Solferino. The troops of Napoleon III (Louis Napoleon) prepare for battle with the Austrians below, and Henri Dunant has a box-seat view from his place on the hill.

Trumpets blare, muskets crack and cannons boom. The two armies crash into each other, as Henri looks on, transfixed. He sees the dust rising. He hears the screams of the injured. He watches bleeding, maimed men take their last breaths as he stares in horror at the scene below.

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Hope for Today (pp. 147, 220)

I grew up watching my father, who was a child during the Depression, spend large sums of money on himself and rarely on the family. I found it hard to buy gifts for my mother who grew up in an alcoholic home, because she had no wants. I often heard my parents say they had no savings. I learned this was acceptable.

Then I married. Within months I spent my husband's entire savings buying "needed" furnishings for the house. Then reality hit: My mother had spent her life in denial, and now I was doing the same. The only way I could change was to take some self-supporting actions. I started by authorizing automatic payments into a retirement fund, which is growing nicely. Now before I purchase something, I ask myself if it's something I want or something I need. If it's a want, I wait at least a week to see if the urge passes. If the urge

doesn't pass, I inventory the desire and make an effort to detach emotionally so that I can see the real reason why I want the item. These practices and others give me peace of mind.

Depression, compulsive overeating, and low self-esteem are some ways my father's alcoholism affected me. I had to attend many Al-Anon meetings, however, before I understood that the root of these shortcomings was my inability to be true to myself. I became aware of my tendency to let people take advantage of me because I wanted to please them. Yet I often felt depressed when I did something expected of me that ran counter to my goals or values. When I did stand up for myself, I felt guilty. My life was like walking a tightrope.

Al-Anon helped me discover my rights as a person. It began with being given the right to speak at meetings without interruption or advice. I was told that anonymity would be respected and that only I had the right to disclose it. This was possibly one of the first choices I had ever been given.

Eventually I heard that "no" is a complete sentence and that I had a right to refuse without explanation. I learned the value of applying the Serenity Prayer to relationships and to my people-pleasing. If nothing I do or say can make people like or dislike me, then I might as well do what is in my best interest as long as it hurts no one else.

Lastly, through service I learned how to set realistic goals and achieve them step-by-step. I learned that success is irrelevant. Failure can be an opportunity to grow, not to beat myself up. This is positive self-esteem is built. †

This Prayer of St. Teresa of Ávila, (1515-1582)

was found in her breviary (prayer book) and written in her own hand.

Let nothing disturb you,
nothing frighten you,
All things are passing.
God never changes.
Patience obtains all things.
Whoever has God lacks nothing.
God is enough.

Nada te turbenada te espante
Todo se pasa
Dios nose muda.
La paciencia todo alcanza.
Quien a Dios tiene
nada le falta
Solo Dios basta.



I remember a family coming out to visit me when I first moved to Albuquerque. They had three little children who all had croup. For three days, the house sounded like barking dogs! The poor kiddos vomited on everything in the house. I did five loads of laundry. I don't think we had one relaxing, enjoyable meal together. Having lived alone for much of my adult life, this was a shock. We vowed-religious, celibate folks sometimes think we're making a sacrifice, choosing the harder path. But the energy, commitment, and selflessness that's endlessly demanded of parents surpasses anything that has ever been asked of me.

It seems we must face unavoidable demands that require our response, even if we feel inadequate to meet the need right in front of us. We need these God-given reminders that we're not always the central reference point. Giving of our physical, mental, and emotional resources in such a way isn't usually ego-affirming, but it is a path toward holiness. It's not what *you* do that makes you holy. *It's what you allow to be done to you that makes you holy.*

... & Contemplation....

After recently visiting Mexico and some of the refugee centers along the Texas border and seeing so many children and babies with their parents, I was reminded that contemplative Christianity's rather monastic, solitary, silent approach just can't be adequate to describe contemplation for most people. It can't be, or many of God's children could never know God. **Contemplation is simply openness to God's loving presence in "what is" right in front of you**—which is what I saw these parents do. This presence to Presence can be cultivated in many ways that don't require sitting on a mat for twenty minutes.

Experiences of great love and great suffering can and will lead anyone to union. Every time you let your kids pull love out of you or when you let a relationship pull suffering out of you, you are present and surrendering to the flow. I think Catholics have also over-emphasized the celibate path which is a "luxury," it seems to me. I know

I enjoy that luxury—the Franciscans provide for all my needs, but most people I know have a mortgage or rent to pay and food to put on the table. So, I think it is really important that we broaden the definition of contemplation to a Trinitarian understanding of God—God as flow—and learning how to allow and participate in the flow. It's not really about detachment but healthy and unitive attachment.

If we expect the same disciplined practice of twenty minutes of silence twice a day of everyone—for example, busy parents of young children—I think we're setting ourselves up for delusion. *When you keep allowing love to flow toward you and toward others, that is a contemplative life.* It is not as easy as it seems. Many laypeople are far more mature in the spiritual life than those of us who have all the accoutrements of celibacy, quiet, and protected solitude.

Those who have a long-term object of love, like a spouse or children, grow through their commitment. I don't *have* an object of love like that. Now, I had Venus, my black Labrador, for fifteen years, and then she passed. I do have a wonderful staff who I think love me. I surely love them, but, I don't have to love them. I can go home and shut the door. But if you are a parent or a partner, you can't go home and shut the door to your loved ones. For all of us—whether we live alone or with others—the invitation is to open ourselves to the needs and suffering around us.

Hidden away in the middle of Parker Palmer's recent book, *On the Brink of Everything*, is a wonderful, simple definition of contemplation: "Contemplation is any way one has of penetrating *illusion and touching reality*." I think that's brilliant. There are things that force you toward a contemplative mind (for example, your mother's death), because they force you to face reality, and that can free you from a lot of illusions. I'm still grateful to the monastic and Buddhist teachers. But sitting in silence isn't the whole enchilada. Life is the whole enchilada. †

Henri doesn't mean to be there. He is only on a business trip – to speak to Louis Napoleon about a financial transaction between the Swiss and the French. But he arrived late and now finds himself in a position to witness first-hand the atrocities of war.

What Henri sees from his hill, however, pales in comparison with what he is soon to witness. Entering a small town shortly after the fierce encounter, Henri now observes the battle's refugees. Every building is filled with the mangled, the injured, the dead. Henri, aching with pity, decides to stay in the village three more days to comfort the young soldiers.

He realizes that his life will never be the same again. Driven by a powerful passion to abolish war, Henri Dunant will eventually lose his successful banking career and all his worldly possessions only to die as a virtual unknown in an obscure poorhouse.

But we remember Henri today because the Swiss humanitarian and activist was the first recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize (in 1901). We also remember him because he took his country's flag, a white cross on a red background, reversed the colors and founded what was to become a worldwide movement – the Red Cross.

Act One of Henri Dunant's life closed June 24, 1859. Act Two opened immediately and played the remainder of his 81 years.

Many people's lives can be divided into Act One and Act Two. The first performance ends when one decides to ultimately follow a new direction or passion. Henri's old life, driven by financial success, prestige and power, no longer satisfied. A new Henri Dunant emerged in Act Two; one who was motivated by love, compassion and an overriding commitment to abolish the horrors of war.

For many people like Henri, Act Two begins with a defining moment - it may be an experience, an important insight or perhaps even a rite of passage, such as a birthday. However it comes about, Act Two begins when the "old self" is laid to rest and a new self is born. At its best, this new self is one governed by different priorities and a renewed passion to live differently.

Act One might be closing in your life. If so, are you ready for Act Two? Something exciting may be about to begin. †

Last Wishes (1001 Quotes, Illustrations & Humorous Stories-Homiletics)

John Fetterman, rector of Grace Episcopal Church in Madison, Wisconsin, told of an elderly woman who died. Having never married, she requested no male pallbearers. In her handwritten instructions for her memorial service, she wrote, "They wouldn't take me out while I was alive; I don't want them to take me out when I'm dead." †