



# MISSION ENRICHMENT

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

If we are to lead a life that is open to change, we will most likely find ourselves traveling down paths that we never expected, but that lead us to places we have always wanted to be. – William C. Hammond

## Year of Jesus Christ, Savior and Evangelizer



At the message of the angel, the Virgin Mary does not hide her surprise. It is the astonishment of realizing that God, to become man, had chosen her, a simple maid of Nazareth: not someone who lived in a palace amid power and riches, or who had done extraordinary things, but simply someone who was open to God and put her trust in him, even without understanding everything: ... God always surprises us, he overturns our categories, he wreaks havoc with our plans. And he tells us: Trust me, do not be afraid, let yourself be surprised, leave yourself behind and follow me! † Pope Francis

## Fall: A Solemn Harvest

from *Midwives of an Unnamed Future* by Mary Ruth Broz, RSM, and Barbara Flynn)

**D**uring fall, as the days are getting shorter and most of us are wondering where summer went, Mother Earth is preparing to let go and move on. She seems to know better than we that the true nature of life, as Clarissa Pinkola Estés reminds us, is “to grow, to give, to get used up, and to leave seed for the new!” Perhaps it is no accident that All Soul’s Day and Thanksgiving are poignantly situated in the center of this season that is not afraid of death....

Instead of encouraging us to resist our own mortality and inevitable losses, **the fall season reminds us that our spiritual work is to honor once again the life/death/life cycle and live it with as much grace and wisdom as we know how.** In contrast to the world view that sees life as moving from beginning to end, from birth to death, the autumn landscape challenges us to embrace a more cyclical understanding of the universe. It helps us see how death and letting go are part of a much larger process, one that is intimately connected to new life—if we can trust in the ebb and flow. In a similar way, it introduces us to the Paschal Mystery as it is meant to unfold in our personal lives as well.

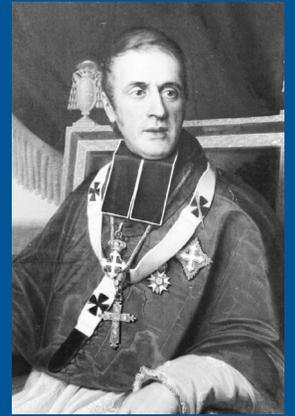
**Prayer during this autumn season is mostly heart work—taking a deep breath, allowing the slow work of yielding to take place, letting the tears come to water the ground, making room for mystery, trusting our intuition, opening our hands little by little. Through it all, we are being led to hold**



*continued on back page*

## From the *From the Founder's Writings* Bishop De Mazenod's Diary November 12, 1838

... Letter from Honorat. He gives me an account of the beginning of the mission in Aubignan (in the Vaucluse). These are real missionaries! This letter is in singular contrast to the one written by Fr. Courtès about Rognes where he is giving a mission at the same time. Fr. Honorat's letter is



consoling, joyful; the marvels of grace can be seen in it. It is all the things we ourselves saw being brought about by our ministry when we had the happiness of giving missions ourselves. Fr. Courtès' letter is icy. He is a preacher with an audience of indifferent people, and he does not have the confidence to foresee their conversion. Honorat has no doubt that the population of Aubignan, which number about 1,800, will, without exception, profit by the mission. Honorat is pleased with all his fellow workers. Courtès complains about all of his. The secret of this difference is that Honorat places his full trust in God's help because he is accustomed to witnessing the miracles that are worked through it, and Courtès who does not have the same experience, thinks only of the human means available to him. ... †

Ideas or comments are welcome.

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# 11 Excellent Stress-Reducers

(from The Hope Heart Institute, Seattle)

1. **Take good care of your body.** Eat and drink sensibly. Overdoing alcohol and food may seem to reduce stress at the time, but only adds to it in the long run.
2. **Get regular aerobic exercise** – aim for 30 minutes a day, most days of the week.
3. **Schedule a relaxing activity every day.** It may be spending time at a hobby or sitting quietly to meditate.
4. **Keep a journal.** Writing things down helps you keep things in perspective.
5. **Be assertive.** Stand up for your rights and beliefs – while respecting those of others. Don't feel that you always have to live up to others' expectations.
6. **Take responsibility for your life** – to a point. Control what you can and leave the rest behind.
7. **Practice good time management.** Ask for help when it's appropriate, set priorities, pace yourself – and take time out for yourself.
8. **Live by your values.** The more your actions reflect your beliefs, the better you will feel.
9. **Set realistic goals and expectations.** It's healthy to realize you can't be 100% successful at everything all at once.
10. **Develop a forgiving attitude.** Give people a break. Let them do their own thing. Remember that you are not the general manager of the universe.
11. **When you feel overwhelmed,** remind yourself of all the things you do well.



## Promises Broke

[Author's note: In these later years we have learned that the material discussed regarding alcoholism and alcoholic families applies to other types of dysfunctional families as well. If you did not grow up with alcoholism but lived, for example, with other compulsive behaviors such as gambling, drug abuse or overeating, or you experienced chronic illness or profound religious attitudes, or lived in foster care or other potentially dysfunctional systems, you may find that you identify with these same characteristics.]

**It's not very hard to understand why it is that you want everything immediately.** Putting things off gives you so much trouble because when you were growing up if you did not get what you asked for in that very moment, that was the end of it. If you said, "I want this now," and your parents said, "You can't do it now, but you can do it by the end of the week," or, "We can talk about it later," you knew that was the end of it. **You knew that promises for the future were broken. That was one consistent thing in your life.**

"Cindy" expresses it this way: *"It becomes compulsive, and I seem to lose the ability to project myself into the future to see what it really would be like, to see if that's really what I want to do. In the moment, if I'm feeling something negative with somebody, I seem to have a complete inability to feel and touch and taste the parts that are good, even though I know they are there. I can't feel them, so they are of no worth to me somehow."*

These are Sam's insights: *"It's very rigid with me. It's not that I start out to hurt somebody, but that the other person usually gets hurt in the process. Almost always somebody gets hurt. Even after I recognize it, I keep on going anyway. Whatever my agenda is, I adhere to it rigidly. There's a great deal of momentum behind it. There's a lot of energy and it just keeps right on barreling through. There's this concept of blinders. I may have been told facts that would slow another person down or to check something out, but once I'm on this thing, rarely do I check things*

## Loneliness

by Wayne Brouwer

(from *1001 Quotes, Illustrations & Humorous Stories*)

The German philosopher Schopenhauer compared the human race to a bunch of porcupines huddling together on a cold winter's night. He said, "The colder it gets outside, the more we huddle together for warmth; but the closer we get to one another; the more we hurt one another with our sharp quills. And in the lonely night of earth's winter eventually we begin to drift apart and wander out on our own and freeze to death in our loneliness."

Christ has given us an alternative: to forgive each other for the pokes we receive. That allows us to stay together and stay warm. †



out. *And if I do, I rarely listen.*"

As a result of this behavior, more often than not, the light at the end of the tunnel is the headlamp of an oncoming train. You have not been able to see the reaction or the implications of what you do. As a result, you create many outrageous situations for yourself...

You find that you will quit a job without realizing that you have no other means of support. You'll marry without really getting to know the other person. You end up very concerned about your behavior, but before you can begin to look at it and change it, you have to spend a great deal of time and energy extricating yourself from a mess. So, it is self-defeating on many levels.

Impulsivity is a very childlike behavior. Adult children of alcoholics are impulsive. They tend to lock themselves into a course of action without giving serious consideration to alternative behaviors or possible consequences. Ordinarily, children are impulsive. But when you were a child you were more of a parent than a child, so your present impulsive behavior is something you missed during your childhood. If you miss out on one stage, quite often you make it up at another time in your life. When a child has a parent, who functions as a parent and the child acts out impulsively, they say, "You cannot do that. Because if you did that, there is a consequence."

**As a child, you could not predict the outcomes of any given behavior, so you don't know how to do it now.** Also, there was no consistency at home... No one said to you, "These are the possible consequences of that behavior. Let's talk about other things that you might do."

The situation is further complicated by a terrible sense of urgency. If you don't do it immediately, you will not get a second chance. And you are used to living from crisis to crisis. If things go smoothly, it's even more unsettling than when you're in a crisis. So, it's not surprising that you may even create a crisis.

**This impulsive behavior is not deliberate or calculated. It is behavior**

**over which you have lost control.** This is the characteristic that is most unsettling to you, that frightens you the most and that you really want to change.

That was the reality of your life. If you didn't do it immediately, it simply would not happen. This makes it very difficult for you to plan for the future. For you to say, "This is what I'm going to do two years from now and this is the manner in which I am going to do it," is very much of a struggle. You want what you want when you want it because a little part of you knows even though it is probably no longer true, that if you didn't go after it now, if you don't grab on now and grab on tight, it will never happen.

The sense of, "This is my last chance," is with you all the time. You even become impatient with yourself when you decide to work on patience and don't become patient immediately. Patience, therefore, is something that you must work very hard to acquire....

If you are not receiving professional help, there are ways that you can begin to overcome impulsivity yourself. You will recognize that impulsivity because there is a lot of energy involved. You will recognize it because you will feel driven, impelled, and you can think of nothing else.

When you get that feeling, say to yourself, "Who else is going to be affected by this behavior?" I'm not suggesting that you say, "This is good" or "This is bad" or "I shouldn't do this" or "I should do this" because, in the moment, this is the only way that you see it, and it really doesn't matter whether you like or dislike it....

**I am not telling you what decision to make. I am suggesting that you find a way to buy time.** So that you consider the implications of your actions. Here, as in every other aspect of your life, choice is important. If you make a conscious active choice and are willing to be held accountable for your behavior, you will feel much better about yourself, regardless of the choice you make.

Your life experience has been such that if what was promised didn't happen

immediately, it simply didn't happen. Now that you are not living in the same environment however, the rules can change.

I'm not going to pretend the gratification that you wait for is always more wonderful than what you decided in the moment you wanted. That would be foolish and unrealistic. Sometimes deferred gratification is more wonderful, and the experience is richer, but it does lack the excitement of doing what you want when you want to do it.

The problem with immediate gratification is not how it feels in the moment. It feels great in the moment. It's not as simple as experiencing something in the moment. **What you need to recognize is that you're conning yourself... you're fooling yourself, and you're playing games with yourself. At the very least, you're rationalizing...**

Ask yourself at the moment you must have a dessert, "Am I going to get caught?" It's an interesting question, isn't it? From the moment you decide, you begin to rationalize. "It's really a small portion... I was good yesterday. I only had a light lunch." I don't have to tell you all of the things you say to yourself.

If you ask yourself if you're going to get caught, your response might be different. Yes, you're going to get caught. You're not going to lose the weight that you want to lose... **Yes, you are always going to get caught.**

After realizing you can get caught, the next question to ask yourself, is, **"Is it worth it?"** If the answer is yes, enjoy the experience. If the answer is no and you decide either to delay or give up an experience that is only offered in the moment, you also will feel good about yourself. You will feel a sense of satisfaction because you had a choice.

Having a choice is critical. It allows you the freedom to act or not to act, which is the greatest gift we can give ourselves. It frees you from the necessity of acting out your impulses and puts you in charge of your life. What a very good place to be. †



**the blessings that are there to be gathered by those who have the eyes to see.**

As we embrace the awareness that life itself is seasonal, we are cultivating a spirituality that is sure to sustain us through the long winters ahead. Without even realizing it, we are connecting the circle of life as it should be connected, embracing the profound mystery that the “life-death-life again” cycle is what life itself is really all about.

The work of Mother Earth is finished for another year, and it is time for us to rest as well. We do not have to master the cycles. We only need to go with the flow. With vines picked clean for another year, we seem more able to hear a sacred whisper rising from the earth, letting us know it is time to move on. The hard work of harvest is over. And yet our hearts tell us that the soul work of learning its lessons goes on and on. †

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THE CHURCH SHOULD BE A COMMUNITY OF DATES INSTEAD OF PUMPKINS. PUMPKINS YOU CAN HARVEST IN SIX MONTHS. DATES HAVE TO BE PLANTED AND TENDED BY PEOPLE WHO WILL NOT LIVE TO HARVEST THEM. DATES ARE FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS.

— GEORGE CHAUNCEY

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## Sunday Sermons

by James F. Colaianni

There is a wonderful story of a grandmother who went to Church one Sunday, aglow with joyful anticipation. Her grandchildren were coming next day to spend a week with her. She was so happy about it she put five dollars in the collection basket. The very next Sunday, after the grandchildren had just left, she put twenty-five dollars in the collection basket.

# How the World Celebrates

by Robin Epstein (from Real Simple, Dec. 2003-Jan. 2004)

## INDIA

**Diwali, the festival of lights, Hindu New Year, 13th Day of the month of Asvina (October or November)**

During this five-day celebration, Hindus fill their houses and gardens nightly with clay oil lamps or candles. The lights celebrate the once banished mythic hero, Rama and his wife, Sita, and welcome Lakshmi, goddess of prosperity, into their homes. Families draw rangoli, decorative patterns made in rice flour, at the entrance to their houses or in front of their household shrines.

The Essence: To light candles is to give thanks for the blessings of the past year and shines the way for good fortune in the next.

## POLAND

**Wigilia, Christmas Eve Supper**

This meal, which features several types of fish, begins when the first star appears in the evening sky. (Children are sent outside to keep watch.) The host gives everyone a piece of the oplatek, a paper thin wafer embossed with a Nativity scene, then guests break off pieces to give one another, offering a wish in the process. An empty seat is left to welcome a stranger who would otherwise be alone (and to symbolically invite Jesus, the birthday boy, to the table).

The Essence: Oplatek wishes are a chance to settle any misunderstandings that may have accumulated during the past year.

## SWEDEN

**Feast Day of Santa Lucia, beginning of the Christmas season, December 13**

According to legend, Santa Lucia, a fourth-century Sicilian virgin, wore a wreath of candles to light her way as she brought food to Christians hiding in dark tunnels to escape persecution. (The story is particularly appealing to Swedes, whose country is dark during much of the winter.) Her generosity is reenacted every year on the morning of December 13, when the eldest daughter of each Swedish family, dressed in a white gown (usually with a red sash, representing the blood of the martyred saint) and an illuminated crown, brings a tray of saffron buns and hot coffee to her parents in bed.

The Essence: The ritual evokes Lucia’s spirit of compassion and hope in bleak times.

## SPAIN

**The 12 Grapes of Noche Vieja, New Year’s Eve**

At the stroke of midnight, Spaniards eat one grape for each toll of the clock. They observe this century-old ritual (which began after a spectacular harvest) whether they’re at home, in a packed restaurant in Barcelona, or in Madrid’s Puerta del Sol, where the grape-eating countdown, like the ball drop in Times Square, is televised.

The Essence: The good harvest is celebrated in the hope of attracting good luck and riches in the coming year.

## IRELAND

**An open door, a loaf of bread, and a dark-haired man, New Year’s Eve**

The Irish light a candle and, at the last stroke of midnight, throw open their front doors to welcome the New Year, and they hope that a dark-haired man will be the first person to cross the threshold, a good-luck omen. In some places, women beat the door with loaves of bread while yelling, “A Happy New Year!”

The Essence: The bread ritual ensures ample food in the coming year (and the dark-haired man doesn’t sound so bad, either).

## ISRAEL

**Tu B’Shevat, a tree-planting ritual, 15th day of Shvat**

On the 15th day of the month of Shvat (mid-January to mid-February), many Jews throughout the world celebrate the end of the rainy season by planting trees, eating fruit, and sometimes having a Seder. Originally a nature festival, Tu B’Shevat evolved into a day for emphasizing people’s responsibility to the earth.

The Essence: New beginnings and connection to the land.

## GREECE

**Saint Basil’s Day, New Year’s Day**

On this day, inspired by Saint Basil – a fourth-century bishop and father of the Greek Orthodox Church, known for his generosity to the poor and the needy – families visit, exchange gifts, and celebrate with a feast. The meal includes Vassilopita (Saint Basil’s cake), a bread or cake inside which is baked a foil wrapped gold or silver coin that the diners then search for. To acknowledge the saint’s kindness, the first piece of Vassilopita is set aside for him.

The Essence: Whoever finds the coin, a symbol of good fortune, can look forward to a happy New Year.

## PHILIPPINES

**Polka dots and coins, New Year’s Eve**

On New Year’s Eve, men and women in the Philippines wear polka dots, keep coins in their pockets, and adorn their tables with round foods, such as grapes.

The Essence: According to Filipino folklore, circles symbolize future good luck and riches. †

