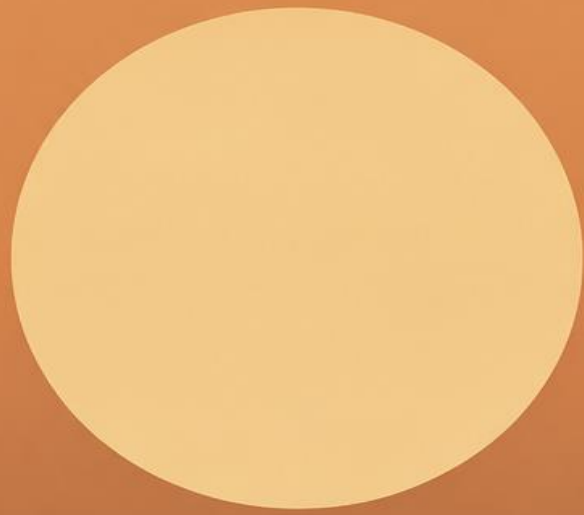




SPIRITUALITY'S TRUTH

Each One's True Seamless Garment

DR. FRANCIS J. MCGARRY

Spirituality's Truth

Each One's True Seamless Garment

You can take away a man's gods but only to give him others in return....obsessive factors arrive in their stead, charged with demonic energy. (The Undiscovered Self - Carl Jung - pg. 77)

Not only is the way of Faith which God wants you to follow most advantageous to you, it is also very necessary, for you are very well aware that other ways led you astray and caused you to lose God. (Letters of John Baptiste De La Salle - pg. 234)

Self-Publishing Company
Hollywood, Florida 33019
Phone: 954-249-5782

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My Gratitude And Love...

To The DeLaSalle Christian Brothers, for leading, nurturing, caring and mentoring. I had been a member of the Christian Brother's community for eleven years.

To Rosemary, my wonderful eternal love teacher and/or love partner.

To Concept House, Polly Jones, Executive Director, Bill Barnola, Program Director, Woody Pine, Clinical Director, Becky Sam M.S., Supervisor of Clinical Staff, John Smith, Counselor

To St. Thomas University, Miami, Florida, for assisting in accommodating my continual persistent, spiritual curiosity with teaching and counseling on its behalf.

To Heather Wright - for endless hours of typing and correcting so thoroughly, so consistently, and so efficiently

INTRODUCTION

It's usually a surprise. We find out that the person next to us can be ultimately on the same journey as we are...and after the same fulfillment. We all want to participate in life as fully as we can. Grasping for the brass ring signifies seeking a sense of purpose in life, the energy risk, someone or something to love.

We would like it all to eventually make sense. To do that, I, Frank, need a personal God, yet an infinite, awesome, mysterious God...who really cannot be comprehended or understood... but I hunger and I need to hunger for Him or Her.

In my effort to grasp this Mystery, I want my dawn to dusk, as well as my sleeping unconscious to be all part of and directly related to this watching existence.

In my own effort to pursue this, I chose to do clinical work for over twenty-five years with our brother's and sisters, sons and daughters struggling with drug and alcohol abuse via Concept House. They taught me, they brought me along with their stories of profound, emotional deprivation. Having two loving, caring parents was seldom their experience. More often they were recipients of considerable psychological pain, as well as physical and sexual abuse. Yet they too saw the luxury of others struggling with intimate nourishment and making it. The image of others honoring commitment as individuals, couples or families whetted their appetites. Yet their emotional, family and cultural education left them longing in pain. The use of drugs became their negative religious ritual. It gave them a place to rest, a place to seek asylum, a place to hide out temporarily. Because of this unconscious self-destructive dimension of their decision-making, the peace was short-lived and their grief had been even greater.

I was spiritually blessed with this opportunity to listen to them over the years with the third ear, hopefully a skill of all psychotherapists. And in doing so, it is also very clear we each are all pursuing a spiritual journey. The elements, concepts and dimensions written about here are basically the same ones we each hunger for. Therefore, these writings address the universal invitation we are all presented with, to recover from humanity's vulnerability (alleged original sin from Adam and Eve). Like Pogo says, quite simply and innocently, in that famous cartoon, "We have met the enemy, and they is us." So on one hand many of my teachers who reveal to me the need for this very basic information are substance abusers in treatment. But the reality is clear, we all need to be coming out of this broad frame of reference to honor each one's special spiritual journey. So why not also incorporate these universal concepts in all our nation's school systems as well? Spirituality is Universal.

Using concepts of Martin Luther King Jr. St. Teresa of Avila, St. Francis of Assisi, Dr. Daniel Casriel, psychiatrist, and Eric Berne, Psychiatrist and founder of Transactional Analysis, among others, I drew up this outline. Yet, these ten ideas were responses to questions indirectly asked for twenty-five years in Concept House, a residential treatment center for substance abusing men and women, located in Miami, Florida, directed by Father Jim Jones, Episcopal Priest and a very successful program.

From time to time I would say to these beautiful, searching, wounded, vulnerable people, "You give me more than I give you." They have invited me in and guided me continually. What follows is the result of our mutually-shared explorations. It certainly is the same as my road and, I'm quite certain, it is also a very commonly-traveled road for all of us so our non-users are also included here.

I have also included a copy of their special philosophy, read each morning at the Concept House program. Every client needs to memorize it and recite it in turn before the "family".

The author of this beautiful commentary is Richard Beauveau, a client, who has been in treatment at Areba in New York City in 1968.

PHILOSOPHY

We are here because there is no refuge finally from ourselves. Until we confront ourselves in the eyes and hearts of others, we are running. Until we suffer them to share our secrets, we have no safety from them. Afraid to be known, we cannot know either ourselves nor any others. We will be alone. Where else but in this common ground can we find such a mirror?

Here together, we can at last appear clearly to ourselves--not as the giant of our dreams or the dwarf of our fears, but as a human being. part of a whole, with a share in its purpose.

In this ground we can each take root and grow--not alone anymore as in death, but alive to ourselves and to others!!

PEACE

EXACTLY WHERE ARE WE GOING?

**"One's spirituality would be reflected and expressed in the particular symbols one was drawn to and utilized in one's religious expression and self-understanding."
(Spirituality and Pastoral Care - Dan Browning Pg. 51)**

Obviously, it's not true for everyone, but I found out I work better with a plan or an outline. Then it occurred to me that people I have been working with in the residential treatment center might also benefit from creating a plan.

It needs to be one that is universal, not parochial; one that appeals rather to the common struggle that each one of us grapples with in our lives, and yet can make complete sense. And this does, in terms of a spiritual life.

A more fundamental need in this drug rehab program was also to provide clear, positive, healthy motivation for clients. That is to say, when someone comes into a therapeutic center with the motivation to get off drugs, as such, it is a negative motivation. It seems to be fear-oriented. It's not really bad to have some fear present. Wanting to learn defensively to protect oneself from danger is, in reality, a good dimension. However, it needs to be a side effect or secondary to something else. There still has to be a broader, underlying, positive frame of reference. In that way, "the plan" has a much better chance of working successfully.

Those of us who do not have such a behavior problem included here also walk along the same or very similar path. So the invitation to all of us, in reality, is the same. Do we have a strong positive belief system to whatever degree? Does it energize us? Does it invite love to be the primary basic factor in all our daily undertakings and our life? Does it also give fulfillment, purpose, and meaning? If it does, then it presumes a desire for transcendence.

We are all hungry. Physical hunger easily suggests to us a deep, natural need. On the emotional, psychological, and spiritual levels, we also have to find ways to feed ourselves to be nourished in a healthy, mature fashion behind a true, strong sense of purpose.

Our personal problems came initially, we thought, when each of us felt, recognized or perceived that we were not being sufficiently fed emotionally as young children. And in many, many cases, we weren't. If we thought we were, it may still not have been sufficiently substantial.

Yet behind all of those descriptions of emotional, spiritual inadequacy also is the quote attributed to Augustine of Hippo.

"Our lives are made for thee of God, and they shall ever be restless till they rest in thee."

On some level, it will always be incomplete simply because I believe our destiny is to be with God fully down the road. So each of us as human beings with eternal souls will continue to hunger for the Infinite, Loving, Caring, Mystery called God. But back to the plan or outline.

When men and women enter drug and alcohol treatment, it is usually a very serious decision. Values, whatever they are, need to be identified. Responding rather than reacting needs to become the *modus operandi*. Cleaning out the remnants (deep wounds and attitudes subsequent to the wounding) of emotional trauma needs to be primary. Then, having endured a tentative structure that the client chooses to not run away from, they begin to raise their heads and look for better, significant direction in spirituality.

So treatment, or this personal spiritual encounter, is usually the same thing, invites a conversation. Rather like Paul getting knocked off his horse to the ground, the client often feels he, too, psychologically gets knocked to the ground. And, as we all know, that is a painful, specific, but direct invitation to change in some fashion.

So as we all "sit on the ground, having bottomed out on some level (pun intended) we also raise our eyes and slowly look around. saying "What do I do now?"

At this point, I chose a simple, honest statement attributed to Martin Luther King Jr., who said, "If a man (or woman) hasn't discovered something he (or she) will die for, he (or she) isn't fit to live! It can't be made any clearer. And if it continues to be unclear, he may find himself again sitting on the ground looking up in bewilderment, wondering what really happened.

Having seen the power of King's statement and owning the truth of it, even though it might kick up some fear, we move then to the first consideration to ten axioms or parameters to be guided on his, her, our journey. These beliefs are the result of working for twenty-five years at Concept House, a residential treatment center and listening to what may have been missing in their lives.

We are all aware of our individuality, wants, needs and personal gifts. At the same time we search for direction to feed our spirit. Our desire for purpose, fulfillment and, for many, creates needed restlessness. The uniqueness of bringing all of them together and how it can be accommodated with each one's seamless spiritual garment is primary.

HOW TO BE GUIDED ON THE JOURNEY

FRANCIS J. McGARRY, D. Min.

"If man (or woman) hasn't discovered something he (she) will die for, he (or she) isn't fit to live." - Martin Luther King Jr.

1. Each of you needs to discover your purpose in life.
2. You also have very particular gifts, talents and specific uniqueness.
3. Then you need to be ready to die to yourself daily, living to yourself spiritually
4. You are to constantly increase your sense of love by using your gifts in and for community as well as in personal committed relationships.
5. You will be taught lessons continually; some you might hate, but you will be taught nevertheless.
6. If you are scared, hurt or angry, you most likely have the problem!
7. Other people are merely reflections of you; when there is dissatisfaction, you project onto them what you don't like about yourself.
8. Your conscious decisions and choices are to guide you. Your unconscious suppressed experiences can destroy true meaning and pleasure, unless properly addressed.
9. So you are invited to participate in life, you will either embrace the invitation... or you will drag it behind you!
10. You can remember all of this daily... or you can forget it.

“For it is in giving that we receive,
And in dying that we are born to eternal Life.”

Prayer of St. Francis

HOW TO BE GUIDED ON THE JOURNEY

PURPOSE

1. Each of You Needs to Discover Your Purpose in Life

One obvious implication of that statement is that it also needs to be a purpose that is clearly positive, so it can help you move forward.

Usually, we find meaning on a day-by-day level in pursuing something that turns us on. But beyond that, we have other questions: why are we here, why were we born, why did the Infinite Creator choose to give us the personal gift of life, or the gift of personal life? Think on it, perhaps for the first time.

A number of times, the treatment program's audience is a little surprised at the question. For many of them, this kind of consideration seems like a luxury. For others, their experience with that kind of authority figure, religious leaders, is not too different from other earlier unhealthy authority role models. And then there are those few who smile, acknowledging that it had been part of their very early journey and got sidetracked. But it seems like long, long ago. And finally, there were also a few who seemed flattered by this necessary imperative.

Perhaps this could be the first time someone has directly asked you. That's O.K., and there is no need for an immediate answer...think about it...wonder about it. But in order to go forward in a way that is fulfilling, you need to address this thoroughly. And my bias is you were given life as an opportunity to grow, to develop and love in a thousand different ways.. and it all came from and/or was initiated by the Ultimate Mystery, the Ultimate Force, the Ultimate Father or Mother, Infinite God...Reflect on it, and yes, it really can be flattering to all of us But what exactly is your purpose on this earth? Where are you going? What are you to do here? Wouldn't it be nice, also, if these questions might be explored in our schools, as evidenced so clearly as truly desirable, as previously indicated in Rachael Kessler's significant book. The Soul of Education: Helping Students Find Connection, Compassion, and Character at School, it is one very rich

commentary on the embraced spiritual concepts in public education several years ago. Spirituality is also universal.

For some the purpose is overtly philosophical. Having a soul - an eternal principle of life and honoring it with nurturing, reflecting, examination of behavior and seeking spiritual assistance may be our purpose in life.

For others, whose early lives are so predicated on finding what it takes to survive, purpose in life is immediately more existential. Since the family unit may have been more unsettled, physically abusive or overtly controlling, "getting on with life" becomes the individual's goal or challenge, a survival invitation.

The naturally bright or intellectually gifted child can find both refuge and success in the academic area. The talented athlete can find a therapeutic outlet as well as a fundamentally important education in consistent discipline and teamwork. This also strongly fosters and encourages one toward a more meaningful purpose in life.

For the rest of us, it would do us well in school to be able to find out the qualities or characteristics that belong in a certain, specific degree to our personalities. In discovering these basic strengths, we can easily see or understand the kind of work that interests us. Some of us, we feel, know what attracts us, but it is much easier to accomplish it if, in fact, it is based upon our natural energies and spirituality. If I also know my specific type of personality, strengths, and liabilities, I have power interpersonally,

As an introverted, intuitive, thinking Judger (Myers-Briggs Typology Inventory), I've chosen learning, teaching, counseling, and writing as satisfying, fulfilling outlets that continue to bring me greater joy in life. And being an analytic thinker makes all of this naturally fascinating.

Another tool that is helpful in this area, in the sense that it identifies predetermined energies in nine possible ways, is called the Enneagram. It singles out nine unique styles of addressing reality (behaving, communicating and achieving), another wonderful guide.

The benefit of these tools is immediately much greater personal self-knowledge and self-awareness. It also then offers more significant information for colleagues or peers who surround us that in turn can provide more realistic expectations all around.

All of this, again, is in terms of a more pragmatic effort to assist us in deciding our greater purpose in life and how to pursue it. We are here - soul, mind, body, personality, gifts to seek personal, spiritual maturity, finding

fulfillment at the same time in assisting the community. All variables aside, our life was not an accident; the invitation to find individual and communal fulfillment is also not an accident. We need to make the most intelligent, discerning choice, inviting discipline now and hopefully fulfillment later on.

GIFTS

2. **You also have very particular gifts, talents, and specific uniqueness.**

As indicated, every one of us is born with a very special, unique personality or personhood. It comprises a lot of variables. Some of them are predictable. Your position in the family as eldest, middle, youngest or only brings with it certain attitudes or beliefs.

The Myers-Briggs, predicated on Carl Jung's theory of psychological type, invites us to find out relatively what four of its eight categories you have and possibly to what degree. The eight categories actually are polarities on four spectra e.g., extrovert or introvert, sensate or intuitive thinker or feeler, judger or perceiver.

As mentioned, another frequent theory that is used and is very helpful is called the Enneagram, meaning nine styles. Each one of these nine styles is manifested in a positive way in our persona, but each of the nine is also predicated upon a compulsion, a strong fear-based conditioned response. It is good to know what drives you and what compels you. Spiritually motivated, you now confront your particular compulsion on a daily basis.

In the program, many of the clients were afforded the opportunity to find out who he or she is, so that intra-personal, as well as external expectations, could be more realistic. Usually, when we get scared, hurt, or angry as adults, it is because of false, different, or unrealistic expectations on our part, not the other person's.

But another kind of gift is basically acquired; it is not inherent in who we are, rather, it is what has happened to us on the journey.

When any one of us is traumatically injured on the emotional level, we are indeed in great pain. Subsequent to that, we can then easily be both angry and frightened....and for a long time.

However, there is the option of eventually summoning up the courage to directly confront the wound or the experience. We can go back to it, sharing

feelings about it, relive it, and redirect the process in a healthier fashion. Then as a consequence of all of that, we invite and allow the healing to occur.

How long will that take? We don't really know other than there will be time when you will be able to speak about it with no emotional reactions. Then, it seems, the healing will have taken place.

So what about each gift? Actually, at that point, it is fairly simple. When the wound is healed or healed sufficiently, it can become your gift. It has become a special sensitivity you now have that, initiated originally by traumatic pain, has been addressed, understood, and granted sufficient catharsis. You, wounded healer, can now be there for someone else who comes along with the same kind, or similar traumatic open wound. It further adds to your uniqueness. It now empowers you, along with other "inherited" natural gifts, to assist someone less experienced on the journey.

A final comment relative to gift empowerment, hopefully not in a way that suggests sadism. I let people know that, generally speaking, emotional trauma is quite likely to occur to each of us. I also further indicate to them that a feeling or experience of betrayal usually accommodates strong emotional trauma.

Betrayal or being betrayed is best described as a significant, very powerful emotional hurt, for which there is no true way to humanly justify or correct. The overwhelming pain is there. There is no recourse, no way of getting a modicum of satisfaction regarding what has been done at this time. It also brings, apart from tremendous pain, fear and anger, a desperate sense of aloneness as well. Perhaps it also might suggest, because of feelings at the time, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me". (Jesus Christ)

But that experience, too, of betrayal is invited to become a gift. The challenge at that time, among others, is keeping one's power, not to act off one's feelings. Acting off feelings is a temporary way of immediately expressing, in a self-destructive manner, the overwhelming pain, rage or anger. To become emotionally abusive, to resort to violence against things or people, to pick up" (drugs), to act in a manner harmful to yourself, another person, or another thing would be acting off your feelings. You would have lost your power and later on regretted it.

So perhaps there could be a crumb of "shock-absorbing information" to say now that, probably at one point in your life, you may be betrayed. Perhaps once or even several times. It just might help so that you know, however overwhelming, painful and anguish-producing it is, that you have choices, you can still be in control. You do not have to act off your feelings, or self-destruct in any fashion, indeed it is always a spiritual invitation.

DYING DAILY

3. Then you need to be ready to die to yourself daily so you can embrace living spiritually.

We want to take the “daily dying” and address it more as a quite ordinary spiritual invitation. It is apart from the trauma, generally speaking, but it still is the daily invitation to all of us who walk the face of the earth. As spiritual beings (a hero or heroine is one who gets lost in a cause outside themselves - Joseph Campbell) who breathe oxygen for air and give off carbon dioxide to live physically, we need to breathe in daily opportunities as maturing invitations and exhale them by deciding responsibly to love, primarily meeting the needs of the other initially. Obviously, sometimes we are caught off guard, but the pattern, bringing us closer to the essence of loving relationships, needs to be choosing to give, often addressing the love of others before ourselves.

At this point, we might go to Francis of Assisi, who says in his famous prayer. "For it is in giving that we receive, and in dying that we are born to eternal life." That prayer is said more easily as the day unfolds. As evening comes, however, fatigue and low energy become more the norm; we might feel like asking much more directly for personal guidance to make the drive home without profanity or disturbing, distracting gestures.

So the dying daily refers to the limitless invitations we have during each day to interact and respond. The alarm goes off or the clock radio blasts us ... our first invitation to acknowledge a truth of our reality....it's time to wake up. Do we sometimes act off our feelings? We are indeed vulnerable at that sudden invitation to consciousness, but our first deliberate choice is now in front of us. Waking up may take time, anywhere between thirty minutes to three hours (to three years, to thirty years).

And that parade of opportunity ceases only when we go to sleep. Driving to and from work is also a prime consideration for maintaining our power. We can be as careful and as disciplined as we might, but it's the other who can cut in

front of us or a look from behind that could possibly throw us off so that we scream, criticize or gesture angrily. And when we do any one of those things, we give up our power, we have accepted the immediate suggestion from the incident and allowed ourselves to be "hooked" emotionally.

Getting caught off guard is also often the choicest moment for "psychological vomiting". And each time we chose immediately to respond with negativity, criticism, berating or colorful language, we allowed them to have our power. Our self-control, the result of inner work, is lost temporarily. The shadow part of us is out in his or her glory.

The shadow is actually necessary on the philosophical level. When we were shown, modeled or asked to imitate good behavior, we just as quickly had established a category for bad behavior. So all the disapproved conduct, the early traumas, the unaccepted or rejected behaviors became our shadow material. And since these behaviors are not O.K., we suppress them, we deny them.

In addition to that, we may also have many other repressed experiences that were hurtful and painful. All were usually compelled to be kept inside unless we were loved very well or managed to seek therapy. That, in turn, invites healthy ownership of the shadow part of each of us. Going further within to exorcise many of our deep, scarring, emotional traumas in therapy can also be a metaphorical surgery on the shadow. Having relived and relieved any number of those psychological or psyche violations, we regain greater freedom and greater personal well-being. We would no longer carry about with us many of those unconscious, denied determinants that had been interfering consistently with our daily interpersonal living. Regardless, whatever our own sense of perceived goodness and wholeness, the pained, hidden, negative emotional experiences that may have occurred years before will always affect our attitude and behavior in the present...unless we go back therapeutically, heal and move on.

So back to dying daily. Rather than behave in a manner that gives ourselves immediate pleasure, immediate gratification, and feel bad later on down the road, we make other choices, embracing the spiritual.

We recognize this emotional part of us and its inclination to assert itself immediately when anything happens that stirs us. Instead, we choose to monitor our responses so that strong, negative, emotional expressions are replaced with adult, intelligent replies, or even silence. Then, we directly advertise to our local world that we can be responsible, we can handle stress. In that context, anyway,

we can have positive, mature interpersonal interaction at least at that particular moment. And if you do it twice in a row, you could be suggesting a pattern?

COMMUNITY

4. You are to constantly increase your sense of love by using your gifts in and for community, as well as in personal committed relationships.

The invitation here is quite clear. We need each other for continued mutual maturity and growth. I need you to help me; you need others to help you. We need each other to teach and learn on all sorts of levels. We are here to deepen, to enrich, to understand the nature of love. And the love we experience and understand now is not the same love we understood and experienced five years ago. We are invited to evolve.... indefinitely.

It would make sense as I understand my gifts as an introvert (more serious, reflective person who gets energy back by being alone), intuitive (can see possibilities and read" on several levels), thinker (analyzes to seek cause and effect in a more impersonal, rational way), judger (someone who needs to seek closure on issues, responsibilities and discussions), and as a middle child (liberal challenging attitude) who is a five on the Enneagram (observer and perennial student), that I would pursue education, enjoy studying, do therapy, pursue teaching and enjoy writing as well. Those are my paramount natural curiosities and energies, which I capitalize on to discover a vocation in life. And fortunately, I did find it.

It is a vocation because it serves two purposes; it allows me psychologically and spiritually to enrich, grow and nurture myself as I then attempt to meet the needs first of the other students in the broad sense who seek me out professionally or ministerially.

The vocation or calling aspect comes from the awareness to strengthen my gifts to participate fully in the community. I also chose then to use my personal beliefs and religious faith to add more significance and greater richness to my personal journey. It is my journey that invites me to focus on others, the

community at large. and continue to evolve emotionally, psychologically and spiritually. We need to insist on it happening and ask that it be honored.

The reality is that it is extremely difficult for us not to imagine interacting with people, quite constantly and consistently. So the need of each of us for the other, floods our senses as we go on with daily activities. Each one as an individual has his or her own sense of unique, special personhood. Yet any learning that we do comes by way of someone else. The tension presented by each of us to maintain our own individuality, values and sense of personal purpose, while honoring the necessary constant relationships with relatives, friends and acquaintances in general, is very consuming and challenging. It is also the substance that feeds our growth physically, emotionally, psychologically and spiritually. If we try to maintain the status quo, stay stuck - psychologically (usually indicative of a fear of growing) and unconsciously not grow, we still expend tremendous energy in that process. We live negatively, motivated strongly and constantly by fear! Capitalizing on passivity, avoidance becomes primary. As we are "successful" at passivity and avoidance, we deprive ourselves of healthy food and sustenance, undermining as well our spiritual and emotional well-being. Meanwhile, as Bob Dylan says so wonderfully, "If you're not busy being born, you're busy dying."

Again, I'm reminded of the statement attributed to Teresa of Avila... "We either embrace the cross or we drag it behind us." I suppose the ultimate challenge to that statement can occur when someone takes his or her life. The sense is that suicide is an attempt at "letting the cross go completely". I can't imagine, in terms of spiritual and philosophical justice or karma, that the letting go of the cross via suicide, in fact, really happens. If each one's soul is eternal, as I do believe, especially with karma, somehow suicide would merely be a temporary intervention, inviting yet further challenges or revelations to come.

David Hawkins offers us his comment on karma. "Karma really means accountability; every entity is answerable to the universe. It's also well known that positive karma (good works, prayer, selfless service, benevolent acts) can compensate and undo bad karma."

In any event, we have the paradoxical comment again. You are individual, you are a single entity, but you only survive in any sense of the word as part of

continual unions or relationships. And it's all about love.. the height, the depth, the breadth, the sweetness, the pain, the joy of love and loving each one, anyone and everyone.

But for many of us, we also need to be part of a more specific community as well. We want a group of people who believe what we believe, who come together periodically to interact, share, relate, support, to show relevance, celebrate, and at certain times perhaps worship. We then leave more energized and more motivated by something very essential

Some seem more obviously spiritual, others not quite that way. Their purpose is usually predicated upon belief in a Creator who is also mysterious, as well as, suggestively present in various ways. The practical concerns are to share feelings, behavior and rituals so that spiritual motivation prevails. Giving up some alleged good in the present, such as sharing time in some committed fashion so that we maintain discipline and responsibility now and for the future, expresses a spirituality. The motivation (specific religious belief) is your choice. A sense of sacrifice is characteristic of any true, spiritual belief system or simply those who see it, sacrificing, as a means to an end that will benefit children or family.

Each group delineates its basic assumptions for coming together as a community. The more sophisticated ones - organized religions - also create dogma, rituals, rubrics (rules for rituals, liturgies, people coming together in a group to honor and worship) as well as special days (holy days) and special attire for celebrants (priests, ministers, rabbis or imams).

The less sophisticated ones, or perhaps those that are simpler, are just that, simpler in their purpose, approaches and structures.

One of these simpler approaches that also addresses spirituality and recovery is with the twelve-step programs. One needs to generally believe in God, commonly referred to as a Higher Power. The principle of community is quickly identified because recovery from any addiction needs to rely on the psychological and emotional presence of others. That also is universal - that we all really need each other for thorough good mental health and psychological balance.

Then we have our purging or cleansing process. We identify defects, offenses and crimes. Owning them, learning from them, understanding them, confessing them and trying to make amends is very significantly beneficial. That's

one marvelous agenda for maintaining the spiritual aliveness of both individuals and the group. Anonymity is also extremely helpful in embracing this wonderful structure, this most true, spiritual community.

These organizations usually avoid a hierarchical structure, characteristic of most spiritual, religious communities. And, to ensure its true effectiveness as a saving, nurturing community program, it invites and strongly recommends individuals join the group after several sessions to then choose a sponsor. This is a special one-on-one arrangement with a wiser, more skilled recovering person who guides the novice through twelve "cleansing, illuminating, unifying steps," older terms for the classical spiritual journey toward union with God.

Assuming that abstention from those substances or behaviors continues, the new person, having then carefully completed the twelve steps with his or her sponsor, chooses "to give back" to the community in whatever way is appropriate. "You only keep it by giving it away," is one of rich, paradoxical comments identifying the spiritual base of this program, as well as the nature of love.

But particularly significant in this process is the one-on-one arrangement. The ultimate teaching agreement, attributed to Mark Hopkins, a famous educator, is "the student sitting on one end of a log and the teacher on the other end." It is also easily a parent-to-child metaphor.

This one-on-one structure, using also the twelve steps as the guide, ensures the emotional vulnerability of the novice, a most necessary step for the beginning of recovery. And for my part as a therapist, if a man or woman seeks assistance from me regarding an alcohol program. I have several initial questions. If the client sees himself or herself as not needing a residential program, I then recommend a twelve-step program. I also indicate that I will only continue to work with them if they soon enough select or seek out a sponsor. The last step is strongly indicative of the willingness to be emotionally authentic and therefore, the intention is to address the problem as thoroughly and completely as possible, which, of course, is the only valid way.

THE LEARNING

5. You will be taught lessons continually; some you will hate, but you will be taught nevertheless.

Among other things that this touches, it identifies the strong need for commitment. Pain is guaranteed - not a great selling point, but it can then bring wisdom. The experience with commitment that many substance abusers have is easily complex. Originally, there may have been some strong belief in the family of origin seemingly honored, but it was so painful, alienating, and abusive that the aftermath of that experience has been continually unpleasant. They also, as adults, are attracted by the possibility of union with someone and the desire or attraction for that kind of commitment. Yet the emotional damage through the earlier years doesn't predispose them initially to be successful in personally committed relationships. If the family is quite dysfunctional and doesn't allow its children to be treated in a sufficiently caring way (survival is their only concern), then the possibility of codependence being present in the children can be quite strong. The children wanted caring, affirming love. Instead, they lived with general fear and apprehension. That may help survival, but it doesn't invite sufficient comfort and emotional maturity. Therefore, later on, unconsciously, when they meet, they may settle quickly, (fear) and can easily make self-destructive decisions because of the strong, defensive, immediate need to always have someone in their lives.

If he has to have you, he may not have the raw material to be mature and want you in a more discriminating, positive way. You have to be sure both of you are growing and continue to embrace it indefinitely.

At that point, he can either go back to get therapy, dealing specifically with the nature of true intimacy and mutual vulnerability, or he can go forward and make unconscious, self-destructive decisions. He repeats he must have

someone, without being able to be confident, emotionally honest and sufficiently discriminating in his choosing. That thinking gives birth to self-destructive decision-making or bad choices, the result of which, in this case, can be controlling co-dependency; it suggests more of a parent-child relationship rather than two searching, maturing adults, sharing equally.

If I were to make a generalization, and that's all it would be, it seems a greater percentage of the male clients in treatment seem not to have had genuine, intimate (game-free relating on the emotional level) experiences. If it is not part of their experiences as young or younger men, then it can be very difficult to learn later on, so that commitment and interpersonal success can be honored.

So, in commitment, there will be lessons that we dislike intensely. If there is a fairly significant healthy frame of reference, via modeling, as well as a grasp of the nature of spirituality and the necessity of mutual vulnerability on some level, to provide nurturing, then there is a greater hope for us to make it.

On the other hand, being committed also brings its own kind of freedom, special blessings, greater purpose and meaning, as well as an exclusive invitation to a particular community. That kind of commitment more closely included one in family interpersonal relations. Because of the uniqueness of the commitment, its own strong spiritual frame of reference is also addressed. And, ironically, commitment is predicated upon freedom to choose, granting also disciplined freedom of expression after choosing.

Then, of course, whatever or however the learning happens, there can always be the karma frame of reference. For those of us who believe in the principle, it indicates that there is a great deal we have to learn. We may have a number of lives which are to cleanse us, purify us, free us relative to the knowledge and power of love. So we will go on learning indefinitely, and some, or perhaps much, will be fearful and distasteful in certain contexts or points of view. But if we don't accept the invitation today for whatever challenge, then it will come later, till it is addressed and incorporated by us. And, as a gentle admonition, creating more sophisticated security measures in schools around the country addresses a part of the problem but not its heart. Because of ignoring or avoiding this hunger, we do allow "obsessive factors (to) arise in their stead, charged with demonic energy." (Carl Jung's Undiscovered Self.) and culminating perhaps in Columbine-like experiences.

EMOTIONAL RESPONSIBILITY

6. If you are scared, hurt or angry, you have the problem.

Lots of people are surprised when this statement is presented and clarified. For years, we liked the idea that it was people and things outside of ourselves which made us angry or hurt us. We could then retaliate as "champions of social justice", replying often with strong, colorful language. Having been hurt, scared and/or angry, we had permission to vent and be hostile in expression, possibly resorting to violence. Where did we learn it?

Our concern fundamentally is for spiritual maturity, the art of remaining in charge of oneself, the challenge of maintaining a sense of discipline in all areas of each one's life, from a positive point of view, we then have a chance to discover well the role of conscious and unconscious expectations.

It is challenging enough to pursue daily responsibilities on the conscious level. Yet we have to be more careful that we have not set ourselves up unconsciously. One way of acknowledging that truth is being aware of how many of us, if not most, unconsciously suppress negative, painful experiences.

We do this for a variety of rationalizations - reasons that are accommodating and seem to make sense to us. They may let us keep suppressing the first three, five, or eight such experiences. Meanwhile, because we chose not to address the feelings and incidents that we just encountered, we unconsciously (out of our conscious awareness) are setting ourselves up to explode. And it is usually far out of perspective to the latest interpersonal experience. We repressed, stuffed, denied or didn't know a healthier handling of the situation, so we quietly claim it as the straw that broke the camel's back."

If we go back to the first couple of incidents that perceptibly brought emotional discomfort to us, we discover we may have had expectations,

conscious or unconscious, of that person. He did not honor our expectations of him. We then became disappointed, bothered, scared, or furious.

Rather than choose to own the psychological truth...of the conscious and unconscious expectations we placed on the other person...and reflect quietly within, we often go from the subjective (our) emotional feeling to our head for special abusive litanies. By virtue of the previous thorough training that we put ourselves through, we then come up with criticisms and strong emotional condemnations for the other person. We put them down possibly in an effort to punish them and make them responsible for our feelings of intense distress; we hurt them to straighten them out, to teach him or her a lesson. (Aren't we wonderful?)

It is easier to see with this example also how the verbal criticism and rejection of the other person can lead to domestic violence. Frustration for either or both can then be so great. The need to be in control as opposed to emotionally authentic becomes paramount. The verbal aggressor then chooses (another separate decision) to possibly strike and/or hit the other person. Control is manifested temporarily at a great price. And we all know that as long as control, overtly or covertly, is the strong dominant point of view, the desire for love, mutual emotional vulnerability is denied. That, in turn, negates the concept of psychological, emotional, and spiritual nurturing. Instead of empowering each one, it constrains or binds the individuals involved. We then move into or resume the realm of the official dysfunctional family that we all read about. So if I'm hurt, puzzled, confused, thrown for a loss, pissed off, whatever description, I then need to carefully examine my expectations. I need to see how I consciously or unconsciously set myself up. And, of course, closeness only comes with honoring emotional vulnerability, an eventual sensitive sharing of feelings to create healing and deeper love.

Willingness to reflect and constantly go within is primary. We don't want to be addicted to any habits that are alleged compensations for feeling bad. We do want to honor what is truly happening emotionally. Since we all hunger for intimacy and nurturing, we need to be educated or reeducated. We can then feel free to trust and be willing to be vulnerable. And of course, karma can possibly be another factor. Whatever truths we learn in this life, we may not be invited to learn in our other lives.

Teaching young school children the difference between inner power (reflecting, self-restraint, not acting off feelings) and an outer negative power (verbal abuse, name-calling or violence) tied to character development would be a profound behavioral beginning. At the same time, it also might need to stem only from an authentic, positive, spiritual system in order to have a lasting effect, in order to be true.

JUDGING AS SELF PORTRAITS

7. **Other people are merely reflections of us; when we feel dissatisfied, we can easily criticize others for points of view or attitudes that we also have. It is easier to criticize them in our brother or sister, rather than own the initial truth as ours ...and take charge of our inner life instead.**

This commentary is not too far from the previous one on emotional responsibility. It perhaps takes it from another angle. And it is a little more elaborately written than the initial statement.

In Jungian terminology, our shadow (negative energy) basically comes out on other people, places or things. Since we really do not like the shadow part of ourselves, the part where we store all of our repressed, denied feelings and experiences or shameful, embarrassing encounters, as well as whatever else we don't like about ourselves, it unconsciously is invited out. It comes out in times of great stress, fatigue or vulnerability. The implication is to hopefully make it land gently. So, when most of us (all of us) get angry, critical, disapproving, or condemning, it is because we, ourselves, also behave the same way as the offender. But do we unconsciously welcome the opportunity to express our disapproval of other people's behavior?

Admittedly, most of us probably haven't committed murder or homicide, but remember those early Sunday mornings at 3:45, 4:00, or 4:30 a.m., when your adolescent offspring comes through the front door. What were your thoughts or imaginings that half-hour before that? It usually vacillated between fear and anger...what kind of anger, what kind of colorful imaginings? The Inquisition usually paled in comparison during those sunrises. Thank God the Cistercian monks and nuns were up at that hour in various parts of the country, begging intercession for both parents and child who were soon to meet in an encounter. I'm sure that spirited souls, as well as our grand and great-grandparents, were

also darting back and forth, shooting out positive energies and intervening to prevent the possibility of maiming or crippling??

So when I begin to wend my way home at dusk, and proceed from 1-95 to A1A via Hallandale Beach Boulevard, I need to initially reflect. That's because oftentimes I don't. It frequently has been a good day, but if someone in the left lane should daydream, be in a trance or simply be reflective and go slower than the suggested speed limit, it is very easy to be impatient. Impatience for me can invite a verbal "shadow party".

If it's just as easy to let negative, colorful, rich mumblings come forth, then it's even easier on the "right" day (sarcasm) to vomit psychologically, meanwhile, I eventually acknowledge that I also have done the same exact thing in the left lane myself...on another day...but, of course, that was different?

The invitation again is to take control of one's own spiritual life. Admittedly, those who have been subject to addiction often may have come from tempestuous, abusive, enmeshed, unhealthy homes. That doesn't change the nature of the journey. Those in recovery are identified as such because of having previously become dependent or addicted to a substance, some condition or activity to avoid greater suffering.

Since about the age of one or two, possibly when each of us had been "kicked out of paradise" according to M. Scott Peck and Maria Von Franz, we have all been trying to recover from that loss, representing the ending of the perception that each of us and our mother are one. Instead, we find out we were separate and now are on our own completely!

As long as we embrace the nature of our humanity while trying to close the gap between that which is human and that which is divine, we are all vulnerable. hungry and yet wanting to participate fully in the Ultimate Love Experience. Yet, the invitation to maintain constant discipline framed against a positive desire toward knowing God and God's will for us is slowed down considerably by the immediate, negatively honest, but often disturbing and embarrassing shadow. Having become conscious, finally, of this very personal dimension, we grow so we can accept it, embrace it and walk forward together, with our shadow, processing all of our daily experiences. Hopefully, later on, we'll smile at them

and create the highly therapeutic belly laugh, a personal, powerful medication available to all without prescription.

A CLEANSING

8. **Your conscious decision and choices are to guide you. Your unconscious suppressed experiences can easily destroy true meaning and pleasure in life, unless properly addressed.**

The unconscious, as suggested, contains denied, repressed, pained experiences which, till purged, create fear and attitudinal changes in our conscious behavior and decision-making process. So when we have denied, avoided and ignored traumatic experiences, they can take a toll indefinitely. Usually, it's subtle in effect, yet obvious when examined and reflected upon. The inner exploration is usually a necessity if a healthy life with a positive, loving point of view is desired. If we want to love, if we wish to be able to examine fear, pain, anger and joy with a group or our partner in a vulnerable, responsible fashion, we need to be able to go within. We need to examine what happened in the past, relive perhaps the feelings and certain emotions to share the pain. We might then start to become free of that experience and its effect on our behavior and attitude. It will take time and effort, and it is also understandable to see it initially as a very frightening process.

Our energy in repressing painful, traumatic experiences can temporarily succeed in seemingly eliminating them from our consciousness. Sometimes it takes an unusual condition or circumstance that allows us to get in touch with these feelings, revealing immediate discomfort and perhaps spontaneous expression.

My father spent the last twenty-seven years of his life on Wards Island, New York, in the Manhattan State Hospital. A very sensitive, warm, quiet man who had a seventh-grade education, no consistent profession or trade, with a wife and six children; over the years, he continued to repress his thoughts,

feelings, hopes and beliefs. When I was sixteen years old, living away from home, after several years of his deteriorating behavior, he exploded one day in a culmination of rage, pain and paranoid delusion. The police across the street in the 40th Precinct were summoned by my fourteen-year-old brother, as my twelve-year-old sister stunned my father with a crystal ashtray. My father was taken away and, because of his unhealthy emotional condition, would not make it back home again. He died on Wards Island twenty-seven years later.

Relative to all of that, about fifteen years before his death, my father was also a community hero. When I was between five to six years of age, playing down the street in the Bronx, (East 139 St.). I saw him come out the front door at 408, head completely bandaged, look around and go back inside. For foiling an attempted jail break as a head keeper in Bronx County Jail, he received serious head injuries and a gold watch. Later on, it was indicated that the beating he received on his head would, in fact, have been instrumental in his later breakdown. As has been the case, more recently, with many athletes who experience strong physical contact playing sports, my father's injury precipitated a gradually deteriorating personality. Through specific research by my daughter, Kathy's efforts, a nurse who was responding to and aware of his personal history since the injury, suggested he had experienced chronic traumatic encephalopathy back in the 1930's.

I resisted working on this issue for a long while. Fear and sadness at times would come out, but that was a small amount of pine sap oozing out on the bark. Eventually, I did work on the sadness of the loss of the most important figure in a boy's life, his father.

About ten years after that and several painful movies ("One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest"), I really thought I was over the loss. I was participating in a clinical group one day run by George Robinson, a skilled therapist in South Miami. We were asked to get in touch with anger. I thought I couldn't get in touch with anything. All of a sudden, I began rocking in my chair and started yelling at my father. Part of me was angry at him because his problems and removal from our family caused us all many different kinds of pain. I was angry that the result of his severe head injury denied us fathering. I was very angry, yet I was completely unaware, unconscious of that particular feeling inside, as well as being afraid in general of owning any kind of negative feeling toward him.

Since then, more work on my issues, as well as a greater sensitivity toward young men in therapy with comparable father concerns, has helped me put things in a richer, more positive perspective.

So yes, we have to go within with a truly skilled listener. We need to be open to exploring whatever hints of being denied, repressed or avoided experience so that ultimately the wound can become a gift. We, in fact, can now become empowered by the initial negative experience...and become a more fulfilling resource to our community because of processing the pain or traumas. We then rise out of its ashes and phoenix-like, create a better, healed life.

FIGHT or FLIGHT

9. **So you are invited to participate in life; you will either embrace the challenge...or you will drag it behind you.**

In reality, the substance of that statement is attributed to Teresa of Avila. Since several of my clients might not be Christian, I changed the word "cross" to the word "challenge". As Christians, our early experience with family and church, embracing the story of Jesus, has taught us a number of meanings and associations with the cross.

But one of the ironies or perhaps paradoxes of this dimension is that running away from the challenge or the cross does not allow fulfillment, satisfactory meaning or good mental and spiritual health. Yet in the last analysis, all our journeys are similar.

Both a monk and a convicted felon live structured lives that are predictable, simple and part of a very specific community. The monk chose his life; the convicted felon had to be taken away and placed with a new community. The monk truly wants to sacrifice and seeks out detachment from the world (distracting or negative influences) as he further steps along the journey to seek closer union and love with his God.

The felon is judged no longer deserving of privileges in the larger community. He is usually sent to a correctional institution to follow a specific schedule, limiting freedom and creating detachment from the world, from family, loved ones, and friends. The monk, meanwhile, chose to give most of them up willingly.

In reality, the truth also is that each one of us, regardless of conditions and circumstances, is born and hopefully brought along to pursue a growing,

maturing relationship with our God. Regardless of ethnicity, race, color or creed, the invitation is the same to each of us... and it might come with a variety of emotions, as well as joy. Thus, for Christians at least, and perhaps more universally, we then visualize “embracing the cross?” We accept this invitation to a positive, challenging, growing, loving life with usually only caring suggestions and reflective questions to guide us. And yet it can easily become somewhat complex. (And by implication, it seems that Teresa of Avila was identifying karma when she said “you will drag it behind you”, rather than simply discarding it!)

But that, too, is not an accident. The lack of specific clarity can lead us to discernment, which leads us to meditation and prayer, encouraging us also to seek mentors, spiritual parents, and wiser guides to assist us. I often reflect on Jean Bolen's opening comment in her book The Tao of Psychology, which beautifully balances the spiritual and the psychological readiness, maybe it is simply grace, “when the pupil is ready, the teacher will come.”

There could also be, perhaps, a sadder version than the convicted felon, but possibly that might be fairly arbitrary. I think of our brothers and sisters living in cardboard houses under bridges or in the more remote areas of our communities, hungry on too many levels. We have identified them as the homeless, referring to the lack of physical, material facilities in which to live. Yet the complexity of their lives indicates much more clearly as psychological, spiritual alienation, hidden quite thoroughly behind many confused emotions.

Since it took most of them a fairly long time before they gave up, for the want of better words, it may then take us in the communities a slower, longer, caring time before the concept of helping and trusting becomes meaningful to them. Perhaps we need to ask them to help us to do that, to help us learn from them how we can help them.

A sad perception, of course, for the most part, is that they can be identified, dragging their crosses behind because of life's perceived cruelty. We, meanwhile, have to create stronger, positive energy and conditions that will allow them to reflect once again that life as such can be a more meaningful, purposeful invitation, and they, of course, can also address their own karma. But that is not to deny responding most compassionately to each as we experience them.

MATURITY.....AS THE LAST OPTION?

10. You can remember all of this.....or you can forget it.

That's kind of ambiguous as far as statements go. Yet in essence, it spells out the process and the truth of life.

Growing up beyond the physical dimension becomes a challenge. It invites us to continually change by confronting our fears. The rest of our lives, we mature relative to what psychological information we inherited, how we were nurtured in our family and what risks we are willing to take, considering those and many other variables.

And, as we move from one decade to the next, different fears surface in terms of varied opportunities to challenge, confront and grow. But the spiritual pursuit belongs to each person alone, knowing, of course, we spend the bulk of our time and energy interacting with others for the duration of our life. Many of us are also anticipating the eternal life of the spirit after passing over.

When a person says to you, "What should I do?", the temptation ordinarily is to tell them. Yet in so doing, we deny an opportunity for them to confront their own issues. And, of course, if the advice we give backfires, they then have someone to blame for this error, while deflecting the person's maturity.

Archie Bunker, for all the comical aspects of his behavior, is angry and critical because he is so afraid. He fears closeness, vulnerability, and the trust that goes along with it. So his alienating, critical behavior invites others to stay away from him. Thus, he keeps strong fear as his unconscious motivating factor to stay alone...as we laugh and see ourselves in him.

Obviously, if I have been rejected very thoroughly as a young child, if there was very little warmth, delight, affection and nurturing, I can have more than my share of fear and/or anxiety as a young adult. Getting close to healthy people will be awkward. Greater interest will be shown unconsciously in people who are

probably more familiar with my frame of reference. Assuming adolescence ends around the early twenties, I may find myself entering into some committed relationships and not succeeding before sufficient pain and therapy guide me to a more settled place. And I may finally acquire from my two or three divorces or failed relationships the emotional truth and maturity I could have received had I been earlier in a fairly healthy family. Instead, growing up was more painful, complex and costly later on in life.

But the issue for any one of us remains the same. What are the fears we have that interfere with consistent, responsible behavior? What are the early anxieties we have that allow others eventually to treat us abusively? What are the issues we have that cause us to criticize, condemn and excoriate people because they ask gentle but challenging questions, perhaps regarding our religious beliefs or personal values? Why can't we share regarding the personal convictions we think we have chosen, feeling relaxed and confident?

Regardless of how each one of us wants to examine life and make one of its thousands of decisions incumbent upon us, we will always be examining fear or apprehension in various shapes and forms, evaluating and deciding to risk, or choosing to forget about it. We can courageously remember all of these personal truths and beliefs daily or we can try to forget them till another day. The latter judgment suggests that fear may still very well be in control. And yet, our journey is grappling with an understanding of the positive aspects and dimensions of love. It's all about love, loving and becoming more sophisticated about our growing, expanding love. And while we're at it, meaning "love, loving and becoming more sophisticated about our growing, expanding love," not all spiritualities have theologies as part of them. Perhaps the majority do, but there are still certain spiritualities that truly embrace and acknowledge transcendence as it relates to loving, but do not necessarily pursue a belief in God or an afterlife.

As described, spirituality, the other side of the coin of love, is a mental-health, emotional, psychological, behavioral issues. Religion, as such, is the domain of one particular, chosen orthodoxy or point of view predicated upon a historical, spiritual myth or story. Education's ignoring of this universal, inherent is failing the transcendental invitation that we are all born with is a philosophical disservice to the whole educational process. But the very substance of everyone's most fundamental, personal descriptive journey is seemingly ignored.

The "Columbines" of the country are and have been legion. They are all metaphors that, for all of our gifts and power as a nation, tell us we continue to put external structures, "security" around chaos, self-destruction and violence. It can only be truly addressed from within each one's own. We need to be ready to

invite all students to truly understand the fullness of nature and the scope of one's inner journey. It is only personal, inner power, reflective spirituality that gives rise to all the fruits of character education, and an eventual greater moral awareness.

What is the true origin of character building? Transcendence, self-knowledge, self-discipline and sacrifice. School them in a confident, loving, complete way, not an arbitrary way.

PART II

OTHER VARIABLES

"Spiritual life may be most simply defined as the art and discipline of presence to the sacred."

(Spirituality and the Gentle Life, Adrian Van Kaam) 1974 pg. 9

"But thinking about 'spirit' must be continually informed by depth psychology, because depth psychology provides a thorough-going analysis of the way we become the kinds of persons we become and what keeps us that way."

(Spirituality and Pastoral Care, Don Browning) 1985 Pg. 31

SOUL?

I think it's smart to start off with a question mark in the title. The first reason is that I wonder how, or to what extent, people truly take in and accommodate the concept of soul. It is so profound, so basic, so fundamental, so consistently addressed throughout spiritual, theological and religious history. Yet it also seems like it might be quite difficult to define or understand.

Perhaps there are those of you who are possibly confused at the assumption that it needs definition. You might be saying that the soul is known intuitively and that soul expression is fairly obvious. And you could be right.

There are others for whom comprehension on another level is needed. Perhaps these others are more analytic in their approach. Also, possibly the personal, emotional, and psychological damage is so great in the growing-up phase that negative emotions are the immediate responses to questions like this. Having been hurt and/or deprived so consistently emanating from our primary authority figures, it is easily implied that we may have a thorough lack of familiarity with it. It might also suggest anger in us because it seems contrary; how can we get in touch with the luxury of that consideration?

A still further option is humorously suggested in W. Somerset Maugham's comment regarding the framework needed to write about the soul: "There are three rules for writing about the soul. Unfortunately, no one knows what they are."¹

This particular book quoted from has a variety of efforts at definition or activities of the soul coming from different authors. Marianne Williamson's comments are very challenging, interesting and quite powerful:

"Our soul is our life. Everything else is a fiction - a mind game, in authenticity. Without nourishing our own souls, we can't nourish the world,

for we cannot give what we do not have. As we attend to our souls, we emanate invisibly and involuntarily the light we have received." 2

1 Carlson, Richard and Shield, Benjamin, Handbook for the Soul (Little, Brown and Company 1995) Pg. XVI

2 Ibid., Pg. XII

Then I think of Father Charlie Hart, Ph.D., our metaphysics teacher and a priest at Catholic University in D.C., in 1952. He looked like many of the Irishmen who might camp out in McDonnell's saloon in the south Bronx or perhaps wear a transit authority uniform going to work on the subways. Yet, wisdom and knowledge simply poured out of him. Every once in a while, lecturing, he would smile or chuckle, saying, shrugging his shoulders, "Nemo dat quod non habet"... "no one gives what he/she doesn't have". The chuckle was to say, "It's that simple, I hope you really comprehend this truth."

For those in recovery, nourishing souls can still be a new experience or recent discovery.....yet it is our eternal substance; it is ultimately who we are and who we will always be....Forever.

Albert Schweitzer's statement is also very telling, particularly in identifying symptoms that indicate soul problems:

"As soon as you notice the slightest sign of indifference, the moment you become aware of the loss of a certain seriousness, of longing, of enthusiasm, of zest, take it as a warning. You should realize your soul suffers if you live superficially." 3

There is also another piece of psychological information that can be applied here. As Albert Schweitzer indicates his perception of truth, he is also choosing to participate in projection. When he says, "as soon as you notice the slightest sign of indifference, take it as a warning", he is, in reality, saying something a little different. The statement becomes. "If I were you and I was experiencing the slightest sign of indifference, I would take it as a warning." That would be the basis of his statement initially quoted. It is predicated upon an unconscious response, which is also something we all do quite easily. If he had prefaced his statement as...This is a projection of mine, perhaps, but I think we all need to take the slightest sign of indifference as a warning regarding the healthiness of our souls, then it would perhaps be more accurate and a more aware commentary.

In any event, the suggestion offered by Schweitzer is one of eternal vigilance that each of us needs to bring to the inner journey and to soul-care.

3 Ibid., Pg. 9

I want to refer now to several of Jean Shinoda Bolen's statements having to do with soul. As a psychiatrist and Jungian analyst whose personal journey involves embracing traditions of the East and West, she has much to offer for our consideration.

"When people come for therapy, the soul is present. When they speak to me of the experiences that have affected them deeply, trusting me with their vulnerability, or tell me dreams rich with symbolic meaning, or reveal what they have never shown another person, know that we are meeting at the soul level, that we are not just in an office (or group room) but in sanctuary and that an invisible, transpersonal healing energy enters our space." 4

It's a long sentence, containing a great deal, but the focus here, relative to what soul is reflects activity and deep vulnerability. The personal, truly lyrical emotional sharing during times of need and in the process of seeking a trusted listener is soul-based. Sharing significant hidden secrets in search of healing, acceptance and loving is soul expression.

My own experience as a group therapist at Concept House for over twenty-five years was often one of being present to a holy, sacramental experience. The depth, the profundity, the pain, the sharing of a secret revealed the powerful personal revelations, first time only, brought sacredness to these interpersonal encounters. And indeed, I felt particularly blessed many times over. As indicated previously, I would frequently say "You give me more than I give you."

Thomas Moore's description, in essence, also captures the thinking and feeling of Jean Bolen:

"To be able to express our most intimate feelings and thoughts without fear of betrayal is one of the great quests of life of the soul. An important step in soul care is to give time and attention to those relationships that allow us to do this." 5

Marion Woodman, Jungian analyst and author, helps us see the concept of soul in a slightly different fashion, more of what it is.

"I think of my soul as the eternal part of me that lives in my body, day in and day out. In a way, my soul's the bridge between spirit and body, and, as such, is a uniter of opposites. The unity that is created by my soul is crucial to my well-being without a soul at center, would either transcend into spirit or become mired in matter." 6

4 Ibid., Pg. 3

5 Ibid., Pg. 28

6 Ibid., Pg. 33

Melody Beattie, another early prominent author, lecturer, presenter of workshops, has several very significant comments that lift us up and direct us:

"We are here to learn about love to let others love us, to discover that love is a living force-real broad, encompassing. I have also learned that universal love is there for me and will be there for me, if I'm open to it and believe in it" 7

As a recovering person, we need to pay particular attention to the richness of her comments. Her continual reference also to the indefinite aspect or the evolutionary dimension of the soul's journey is paramount:

"There is no rule book for the soul's journey. That means we have to not only connect with our soul but also trust where it is leading us I think that's a big part of the journey for us. Trust." 8

And she comments further on the soul-nurturing issue:

"Sometimes I'm amazed it is so simple to free my soul on any given day. It can be as easy as walking on the beach or touching a tree. It could come from taking a break to get a cup of coffee with a friend." 9

So we each have an eternal soul, it is identified as our principle of life. It will not die. It is essential to truly live in a spiritual fashion. It demands or warrants attention. It is restored or revitalized when we stop, take time out, reflect, become emotionally authentic, and be touched by beauty in seeing, hearing, and relating on the intuitive level.

If we do not take care of it or do not have the tools or the maturity to be aware of it and address its needs, we can set ourselves up to lose joy, fun, spontaneity, delight, silliness, warmth, giving and receiving of affection, all of which is at the soul of life.

Perhaps easily damaged in our unhealthy, dysfunctional childhood, our early adult life can be spent in resurrecting this life principle within us that searches for spiritual freedom. For many of us, that can be a tedious, challenging task. But we take it with us wherever we go. Having eventual dialogue with our

soul, our eternal life principle, as a form of relaxation can easily be therapeutic, intimate and revitalizing.

7 Ibid., Pg. 187

8 Ibid., Pg. 187

9 Ibid., Pg. 186

"Growth of the soul is our goal" says Joan Borysenko, author, lecturer, clinical psychologist, and there are many ways to encourage that growth, such as through love, nature, healing our wounds, forgiveness and service. The soul grows well in giving and receiving love. I nourish my soul daily by loving others and being vulnerable to their love." 10

Like the rest of you, I also try to nourish my soul daily by loving others and being vulnerable to their love.

I'm glad also I was able to realize my dream up to this point and participate in learning to love using my clinical and teaching skills in, through, and with the community.

While still a member of a Roman Catholic religious community and attending a lecture at LaSalle Military Academy at Oakdale, Long Island, one summer, I was struck by an idea. Brother Joseph Finnegan, principal of a parochial elementary school in the Bronx, was all about education. Our community members lived with vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience. Its charism was teaching as Roman Catholic Brothers in the elementary, secondary and college levels. Joe Finnegan started to talk about the power of the role of fear in the learning and schooling process. This was attractive and fascinating. Probably as a shy introvert, it constituted a good part of my own educational experience. Anyway, it whetted my learning appetite. I never forgot it. And I'm deeply indebted to the Brothers for the introduction to teaching academically, psychologically and spiritually.

Then, as a teaching brother in New York City, I attended Manhattan College on Saturday mornings for graduate courses. Entering the classroom building, hoping and climbing the stairs of a vestibule, I glanced to the right on the bulletin board was a brochure with a picture of a Brother counselor with a client. That also caught me. That's what I wanted to pursue. It was a significant association and revelation for me, another powerful yes! I would choose to become a clinician, and one-on-one relationships came into focus.

10 Ibid., Pg. 46

At the same time, I was also feeling the pressure in a year or so to take final vows. Up to this point, I had three years of one-year vows and one commitment of three-year vows. Since age 19, then, I had lived the committed (vows) religious life, but as I indicated in one of my poems, "the tailoring didn't fit anymore." My sheltered life had led me to believe up to that point this vocation, with all its joy and hardships, was the will of God for me. Not having great personal confidence then, other than doing well what I should do and being drawn to the introverted monastic dimensions of religious life, I was in a lot of conflict. The inner confusion and tension had been going on for a couple of years. But saying perhaps it was time to move on was scary and difficult. At final vows, I would have been part of the community for eleven years.

I love my colleagues and respect the older brothers deeply, yet I truly felt I was beginning to die slowly inside now. My initial solution, sarcastically, of course, to that was to try harder, to be more effective, more understanding, more tolerant, more self-sacrificing for my students. The assumption then, was I must be doing something wrong.

But I was clearly aware now, for a while, the joy wasn't there. The energy inside me was tight, unrelaxed, not turned on with the concept of continuing this chosen style of life beyond age twenty-five. However, one great source of pride, joy and pleasure at that time was my apparent successful basketball coaching of the C.Y.O. St. John's 85 pd. (That was their limit) basketball team. We went undefeated that year, winning the New York City title with a 25-0 record! Obviously, it was smart then to retire as a coach. But what a special joy that was!

Upon leaving, I didn't know where I would go or what I would do, but in truth to my soul or psyche, I had to get away. I had to leave. The commitment to teaching was challenging. Athletic activities after school were great. I was young and had much physical energy, but I didn't fit beyond that anymore. Being spiritually informed was not a problem. Embracing the lifestyle indefinitely was uncomfortable now. Thus, leaving was a chance to hopefully restore my psychic energy, my soul's life. to reestablish what my broader parameters were. I was also attracted conceptually to the possibility of family life, a wife and children. That brought the suggestion of greater life and energy to my soul. I had more

recently tried very hard but it wasn't working. I would now leave with my suitcase, foot locker, a check for \$250.00. Heading home to start a new life again in the South Bronx, June 20, 1957, having been thanked by Brother Philip.

I went from teaching in a parochial school to an English teacher in a public junior high school on Long Island, to becoming a guidance counselor for six years. Finally, in 1971, I took the children and Rosemary across the country before arriving in Florida and embraced working in a drug rehab program in Hialeah. At that point, I started to realize my wish as a psychotherapist. My curiosity was sparked, truly charged, and my learning moved in the direction I wanted. Then my eventual dream, evolving as a mental health counselor, marriage and family therapist, husband of a warm, loving wife, Rosemary, who gave birth to four teachers (of their parents), my daughter, Kathy, and my sons Frank, Neal, and Terry came to its fullest.

Each morning now, after waking, having a good cup of coffee and a hot shower, I express my curiosity and my gratitude with many thoughts and reflections. Facing the ocean's dawning horizon, several waving palm trees, a few gliding pelicans against a multi-shaded, pink sunrise, I softly repeat Mary's affirmation, her Magnificat, "My soul magnifies the Lord, my spirit rejoices in God, my Savior, because He who is mighty has done great things to me and holy is his." We, Rosemary and I, are so blessed!

For a man whose father spent his last twenty-seven years in the state hospital on Wards Island in New York and died there, being present to all my children brings daily richness and joy. But I also feel a special blessing to be present to the boys who are now wonderful men in the family.

Rosemary and I both agree, as we each are thankful for who we are and where we are now, that our life needs to be and will continue being present to those who welcome whatever gifts we have to share. At this point, but at any point on the journey, I defer again to Jean Bolen's comment in The Tao of Psychology, "When the pupil is ready, the teacher will come." That also refers to anyone of us who decides perhaps today is the day," to accept the spiritual challenge on a daily basis and focus on the discipline of loving, not acting off feelings now, so that a sense of peace and strong purpose can be present later on.

AND THE SUBSTANCE OF RELIGION'S JOURNEY?

That's easily the concern of people who represent us regarding those who believe differently than we do. What may we all have in common? What is similar among Protestants, Jewish, Islamic, Catholics, etc.? There are, in fact, certain very significant and specific aspects that are part of us all throughout the world.

Initially, even though most of us are born into particular religious beliefs or religious denominations, we each need to seek our own personal convictions and be certain to honor them. Thus, the spiritual journey, searching for Truth, the Summum Bonum, GD, Yahweh, Infinite God, Allah or the Universe is our common search. Moving through the quite programmed series of beliefs, characteristics of any denomination, as we mature, we are also invited universally to share those beliefs. Thus, the process of disagreeing or dissenting needs to be identified as a natural part of growth for each sojourner. Contingent upon personality type, well as other variables, we start to push away from some traditional beliefs or perceptions. They don't fit for us and it is our choice to continue searching.

As is characteristic of most organized religions, allowing room to dissent, disagree and yet remain with this tension regarding certain alleged, revered or dogmatic truths of the mosque, church, temple or synagogue might become problematic. But the spiritual journey remains predominantly between one's self and one's Creator; it also invites the encouraging wisdom of the particular spiritual community. And there's the rub, says Dominic Crossan, Roman Catholic Theologian, "Does it empower me or constrain me?" Basically, it needs to be clearly empowering; otherwise, controlling becomes the theme and spirituality is insistently choked. Searching for spiritual truth with each one's inherent desire for that which transcends is common...common to us all, and having the freedom to do so needs always to be honored.

Following upon those thoughts, we can discover a fairly broad foundation of religion in Rollo May, in his wonderful book, *The Cry For Myth*, he singles out as universal, these fundamental concepts:

- a. myth - the spiritual, challenging, heroic story, perhaps divine or divinity based.
- b. symbol - particular designs, objects or inanimate expressions of the primary myth or spiritual story.
- c. rituals - formalized expressions of praise or worship, usually bringing religious members together around their myth.

The myth is again identified as the truly heroic, spiritual story such as those expressed in the writings of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John regarding Jesus, or the Jewish story focusing on the Torah and the Talmud seeking a messiah, the five books of Moses (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy).

The Koran, sacred text of Islam, shares the revelations of God to Muhammad, suggesting as well a patriarchal point of view and follows Rollo May's concepts.

Out of each of these holy stories, we also have each group's concomitant symbols, as well as their chosen rituals and pious or devoted practices. Each particular group, then, also becomes stabilized and solidified behind its codification of principle, belief and specification of religious holidays and religious practices.

Problems arise when the genuine belief in one's own spiritual, religious truth becomes seemingly so fulfilling and so satisfying that certain individuals want to proclaim it as the only one, true, non-negotiable religious belief. When a religious person or belief system sees itself that way, when it insists indirectly, if not directly that therefore it is superior to other true, sincere, seemingly authentic

religions, it immediately and philosophically starts to remove itself from the continued, authentic dynamic life of evolving true, spiritual, searching. An alleged genuine, holy, historical, heroic story-creation can then slide quickly toward inauthentic, rhetorical processing.

So far, all of that is fairly formal. But how about your great-grandparents or grandparents who have passed over? If we think carefully, we probably regard many of them the same way: very special, very dedicated, loving, and wise.

Because we grew to love and cherish them, we also wanted to remember them. Seeing them also as heroes or heroines in a more localized fashion, we've chosen to share funny, humorous stories, as well as virtuous, principled anecdotes. Personal mementoes, pictures, jewelry, portraits, and special symbols as well, invite us to continue to repeat certain activities or routines, as we similarly honor rituals in more formalized beliefs of religion.

So we do look for people to affirm, we look for people to imitate, look for people to love, and cherish in our memories. These people whom we had a chance to know and love, have put much energy in transcending, in spiritual journeying. They also remain part of our love-bond (which lasts forever, George Anderson says repeatedly in his book Lessons from the Light), they are part, therefore, of our continuing to be a live, mystical body.

All of these previous distinctions, processes, routines and activities on the philosophical levels are also common to most of us who ascribe to any one of many different communities, or religious beliefs. Perhaps now we can understand a little more broadly, anyway, that there is easily a commonality to all spiritual searches, or sojourns. Along with that could also come a greater respect for each one, for anyone's journey. And, of course, following up on that, we all end at the same spiritual position to arrive where we started and know the place for the first time (Four Quartets - T.S. Eliot)

KARMA

Karma raises a lot of questions. For those more conventionally schooled in terms of this-is-the-only-life-each-one-of-us-has-on-the-human-level, it raises many issues. Meanwhile, prominent organized religions continue to lose their influence because of insistent rigidity. The myth must continue to evolve.

If karma exists as a principle suggesting that we need to or are asked to follow a curriculum for loving, that much is fine. But the idea that the learning each one of us needs to acquire goes beyond a normal lifetime, because we can seemingly refuse the karmic invitations presented to us, and push us toward considerations such as many reincarnations, many past lives.

Gary Zukav, in his wonderful book, The Seat of the Soul, addresses on both a philosophical and spiritual level the nature and conceptual elements of the journey. One idea he identifies as a constant is the role of karma.

In an effort to understand this, he uses comparison, "Within physical reality the dynamic of karma is reflected by the third law of motion: "For every action there is an equal and opposite reaction..." pg. 40

There is then the indication that for every choice we make, there is an additional response. When we love, love comes back; when we hate, hostility, anger and/or rejection of some sort comes back.

"The person who intends hatred for others experiences the hatred of hatred from others. The person who intends love for others experiences the intention of love from others." pg. 40

Further along, we have another clarification of his conception of karma
"The law of karma governs the balancing of energy within our system of morality and within those of our neighbors. It serves humanity as an impersonal and universal teacher of responsibility." Pg. 41

There are a variety of suggestions that, in turn, emanate from the few distinctions we have made here up to this point. We do not pick up on all the spiritual invitations that Gary offers in this chapter of his book. There is at least one of them, though, that could possibly stop us in our misperceived program tracks. That has to do with judging, its role with karma and our continual, challenging interpersonal experience. (Meanwhile, each one's shadow is dying to judge?)

In referring to the lives of Christ and Gandhi, he asks a question. "Did neither Christ nor Gandhi know the meaning of justice? They knew non-judgmental justice?... It is a perception that allows you to see everything in life, but does not manage your negative emotions... Non-judgmental justice is the freedom of seeing what you see and experiencing what you experience without responding negatively." pg. 45

That pretty much establishes one of our primary goals in the ongoing purging, illuminating, unifying process of life...or lives.

The first book that introduced me to this philosophy and psychology of reincarnation was printed in 1976, a Pocket Book edition by Dick Sutphen, called You Were Born Again to be With Each Other. The first chapter of the book is Love and Karma. His comments seem to be less philosophical, but do suggest quite strongly that we are all in for a long haul...or perhaps as long, long haul.

"Lovers from the past will reincarnate within the same time frame again and again. Although they will not remember events of their past lives when they meet in the next life, they will be strongly attracted to each other, and love will be renewed."

Later on, the continuity of our consistent togetherness is again reaffirmed.

"You were reborn to be with those you have known before. You were guided and maneuvered by unseen help from the other side and by your own unconscious, intuitive, and extrasensory abilities to seek each other out again and again."

So the karmic frame of reference is quite clear in highlighting several ideas. We will live many lives to learn many truths, different types and kinds of wisdom, all of which can be embraced by the breadth and depths of love, loving or love information. And the invitations to grow, the test or the purification process can also be varied, deep and complex.

Another further current commentary on past life, reincarnation and karma is the wonderful writings of Brian Weiss, MD. A sensitive, caring man as evidenced in his written work and in oral presentations, he shook up conventional policy with his first book, Many Lives, Many Masters, about twenty-five years ago. His more recent publications are further elaborations of these concepts and his personal experiences incorporating these spiritual beliefs as a psychiatrist.

So if this is new information, it perhaps can easily be threatening and, if you are not careful of what you fear, you might act off it and send out a cascade of criticism. But this kind of information is easily an assumption now of most prominent healers and psychologists.

I'm not sure what it says, in terms of what may be called bad news or good news, and to those more directly involved in recovery, but it certainly brings a lot of different options, possibilities and even hope. And it also adds a greater form of sophistication to each one's spiritual journey.

Perhaps it could be a little difficult to share thoroughly the option of karma (each one's choice) with children; however, it certainly capitalizes upon the notice of justice and fairness. "That's not fair" certainly is one of the most common cries of young people. The trickiest part can be selling to the young ones to get "fairness" straightened out eventually.

AND THEN THERE'S THE MYSTERY OF IT

"So it was awful. Why did it happen? How come it happened? I wish it didn't happen..." but when it happens, whatever it might be, it is an invitation. It is always an invitation, always a spiritual challenge.

The sudden loss of a loved one, the attraction of drugs, the absence of caring, warmth and love coming up, the process of long and gradual suffering for ones we know and love; all of that can serve to invite us to recover from that pain and loss, to heal our wounds. With that wound and its gradual healing process comes a gift. As an acquired and learned gift, we now have more wisdom. Wisdom's power keeps us remembering, sharing when appropriate and staying spiritually balanced.

The loss of my father psychologically, spiritually and physically had kicked up many mixed feelings. His deterioration well before his violent, psychological and spiritual breakdown in 1949. (I wonder as well about the demons that went on in his head for many years. I also wonder about the complexity of this emotional, spiritual pain and his thorough, overwhelming sense of aloneness.) Lastly, as my devoted brother and sisters on Sunday afternoon for twenty-seven years usually visited him to hear his fairly predictable conversations...why were they doing it? What was it about?

It is easy enough to get lost on the journey. It is easy enough to be stuck and alone. And yet if we begin to learn from scripture: "In your patience you will possess our souls," grace as opportunity also will manifest itself.

Recovery, the awakening up to life, is an invitation to all of us, to each of us. It asks us to make our lives responsible, productive and fulfilling. This happens when we arrive at a new level of learning. We realize that success, if it is real for us, is the manifestation of love on our part, with the continued support of those who went before us, as well as the caring and blessing of those around us. That is the one fundamental activity we engage in all our lives.....how to love,

how to be loving and how to maintain spiritual freedom and joy. This learning can appear endless, but if it is spiritual, it can bring fullness of life and fullness of love.

Change can also happen when self-destructive emotional behaviors finally surrender to intense, finely programmed fear. We start to let go and accept. We have continued struggling and it has finally begun to happen.

At that point, we are then able to embrace the presence of transcendental energy or grace through the beauty of the struggling, shared, loving human experience. Intuitively, we now begin to experience the universal challenge common to all of us; bouncy, spontaneous children, struggling, purposeful young adults and finally, tired, aging, wizened elders. Sharing in this slightly changing but eternally present search for love, we are all part of each other. With our souls living forever and our current, temporary embodied personalities, we all need, want and are part of each other. Yet our daily struggling experience says we are separate, trying to be part of each other, or at least part of some of us?

Perhaps we are too comfortable with God or the idea of God. Like our Jewish siblings and sojourners, we need to spell it G-D, because it truly is overwhelming. awe-filled mystery. We don't think or wonder on that aspect enough. We perhaps don't meditate deliberately and reflect quietly in respect to the Infinite Being Prospect.

In the Christian tradition, we have much information on love, particularly in this case, in the writing of John, the Evangelist. I'm quoting here from his first letter:

Letter of John 4:7-10

“Beloved, let us love one another
Because love is of God.
Everyone who loves is begotten of God
And had knowledge of God.”

1 Letter of John 4:11-18

If God loved us so
We must have the same love for one another.
No one has ever seen God,
Yet if we love one another
God dwells in us.

God is love,
And he who abides in love,
Abides in God,
And God in him.

Love has no room for fear.
Rather, perfect love casts out all fear,
And since fear has to do with negativity,
Love is not yet perfect in one who is afraid.

There is profound richness in these writings. John, who indeed was certainly a mystic, has suggested or highlighted several key points here:

- a. Love is everyone's journey.
- b. Truly loving is an expression of God's life, life in God.
- c. God, as Supreme and as Mystery, has never been seen (or comprehended).
- d. God offers himself in love to guide us in synchronicity, grace or opportunity.
- e. God, therefore, in genuine loving is present to and with us in daily experiences.
- f. God is Love.

Another comment regarding the universality of spiritual searching, only and always in love, comes from Sufism. As a mystical sect of Islam strongly based on love, devotion and the soul's longing to merge with God, we have verification of life in love, life as love from Araqi, spiritual writer of the 13th Century.

Love courses through everything.
No, Love is everything.
How can you say there is no Love?
When nothing but love exists.
All that you see has appeared because of Love
All shines from Love,
All pulses with Love,
All flows from Love -
No, once again, all is Love.

The direction of these ideas listed earlier assists us to recover our sense of being chosen as a child of God and to address the wounds that occur on the journey. Distorted, misperceived, ignorant or hostile loving has invited us to run and hide in a certain kind of darkness with our fear, pain and anger.

Revealing ourselves becomes the first priority (We are here because there is no refuge finally from ourselves...), accept the daily discipline that brings mature love of ourselves and of others, inviting us each daily sunrise to embrace the invitation to life again.

Using my father and my family of origin as a metaphor or symbol of the kinds of suffering we each might have experienced, I'm still not sure why it happened or if it had to happen. I know that the nature and depth of his intra-personal difficulties were missed by many, many people. I also know he got to a point where he was unwilling (afraid) to get help. I know he was now a quiet man who had been a fairly skilled athlete when he was young. I knew he was caring and proud, yet I was unaware of the degree of his sensitivity till I became skilled later on in handwriting analysis. I had some report cards from several elementary school years signed four times (quarterly) by him. It was very revealing of this deep delicate gift. I also know that my mother and father felt

emotional, sexual passion for each other as a young couple. I believe as well from a variety of my readings, that illness, as such, is a manifestation eventually of some emotional, psychological, or spiritual emptiness or distortion that has prior existence within the person. Having not been addressed, it comes out on the body.

But first, let me add an additional thought here to boost our sense of love and optimism even further. Hearing another comment by David Hawkins regarding the power of God's love can't help but add a little more spirited energy to the journey He reiterates that there can never be fear associated with the Infinite Loving God.

"The concept of God as fearful is actually the ultimate joke of the Ego's theater of the absurd." It's a little creative but very basic. Here is a further clarification regarding physical and mental illness.

"Ultimately, however, whether they are manifest physically, psychologically, or spiritually, all wounds derive from a sickness of the soul. They may be purely personal or they may extend outward to our families, our friends and our whole race." Healing the Wounded King: What the Story of the (Holy Grail has to tell us about Our Journey toward Spiritual Wholeness. (Gnosis, Spring 1999, #51)

All of these thoughts invite each of us to look at our woundedness, whether manifested by substance abuse, by an unhealthy, fear-oriented yet hostile, uncooperative attitude, perhaps, as well by sexual exploitation or physical abuse.

So for each of us the woundedness is based on long-term quiet suffering of the spirit of our person or soul. Just as frequently our denial or repressing of that possibility lends us to lack of awareness or perhaps not even feeling we have the courage or the right to address it, the woundedness.

But it remains an invitation. Yet it is not one that I can truly give an answer to sixty years later other than some response to karma. The easiest frame of reference to my father's suffering is perhaps the description the poet John Milton ascribes on some level as "man's inhumanity to man." It was a subtle process but many variables of all kinds contributed to his psychological deterioration and physical injuries. At this point we aren't really sure of much else.

On the other hand, my intuitive self, that part of me that currently senses and reads people on several levels at once, brings me to a broader insight and belief. At this point in my life because of my chance to mature psychologically and spiritually, all of this is necessary.

"With all its sham, drudgery and broken dreams, it still is a beautiful world"

(Desiderata) And I believe my parents with their souls are in a good place. With my eternal soul and my (our-all of us) hunger for the desire of an endless, fulfilling love I will be with them at some point...and Frank and Annabelle (my parents) will be whole, healed and joyful. (It is possible that the journey for us all goes on for many more lives, but there will be an end to the temporariness and a final fulfilling, loving, eternal communion.) I believe this as I said on an intuitive level and with my whole being right now at this point in my life. This was not my "whole being" belief when I was younger.

At that point, it was cognitive, not truly from the heart. I had the opportunity to study and learn much spiritual and religious information. And like Parsifal in the Legend of the Holy Grail, it has only been as the result of confronting dragons" in later real life and saving damsels" over these many years that I can now claim ownership of some spiritual wisdom. Our home-spun garments made for us by our "Mothers" (parents, churches, schools, committees) have been worn out on the journey as they should, to be replaced by our new, more personal, experiential wisdom. And that's the nature of our journey!

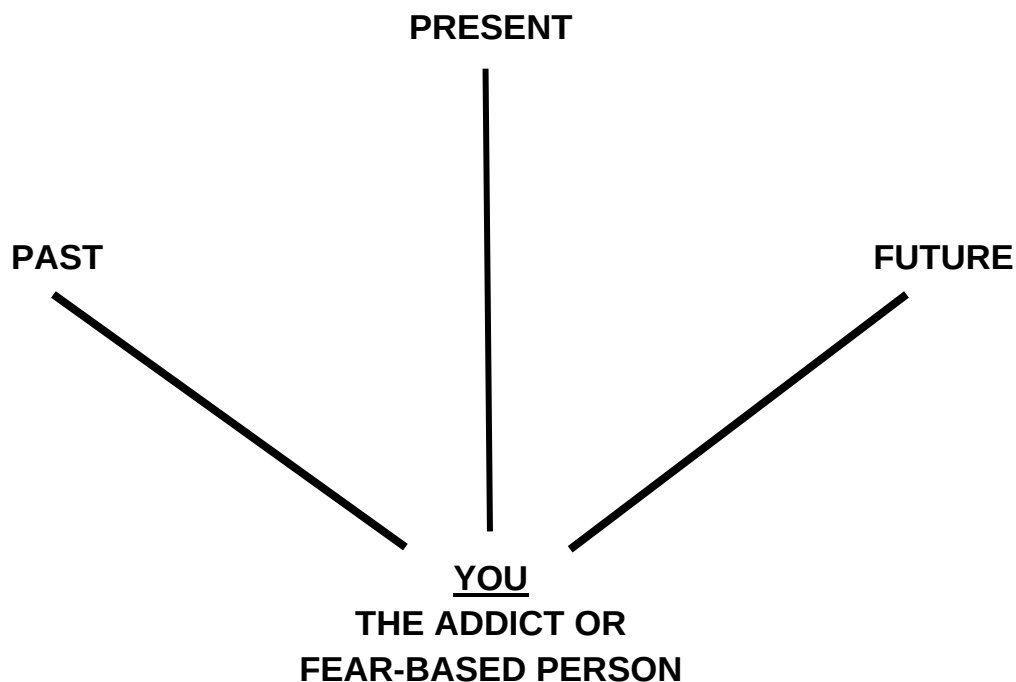
Hopefully, we each will also get to the level or the place of our mystical pragmatist, St Francis of Assisi. Perhaps we will understand and say with him, as has been said by others thousands and thousands of times over the years since

"O Divine Master,
Grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled
as to console;
To be understood, as to understand:
To be loved as to love;
For it is in giving that we receive,
It is in pardoning that we are pardoned,
And it is in dying
That we are born to eternal life."

The journey indeed is very long and quite arduous at times... and may go beyond many lifetimes. Yet, it is the same journey of recovery and healing for all of us. For those addicted, it brings a special uniqueness and challenge to their journey. But this basic invitation is sent ultimately to us as we all recover. As indicated in the last suggestions, we can choose to remember all of this daily. or we can put it off. Then there could be karma?

So we really are all one in our loving. We are all one in our desire to love And consciously or unconsciously, we are all one in hungering for the Final Ultimate Complete, Eternal Love,

ONE DAY AT A TIME or GRACE IS IN THE NOW



We all hear many different slogans, pithy statements, and mottoes regarding any activity we might embrace. I like hearing that the proof of the pudding is in the taste," or the tail is wagging the dog." Of course, I will never forget Brother Austin

O'Malley's quick, universal slogan or punch line, "People who do that will do other things." Peering back, others initially look with apprehension or confusion because we were expecting an indictment. After a second or two, it would then bring a slow smile.

For all of us recovering people, one day at a time" is a much-embraced and truly comforting phrase. I want to look a little further into it so we can comprehend the fullness of its healthy spirituality.

The unhealthy, often the compelling part of us (when scared, hurt or angry) goes unconsciously or even consciously to the past and future. In that fashion, it takes our full and complete energy from the present time, the now that our Creator gave us. It (past and future) keeps us distracted. By being in the past and future during the present, we sabotage grace or opportunity given to us to be realized in the present.

Father Zlatko Sudac, a Croatian priest and mystic, also with the stigmata, comments to the same point:

“I asked myself and I asked you, do I ever live in this moment? Do I ever live in the present moment? I understood the answer was frequently no. I also feel guilt about the past, and I carry concern in my heart about the future.. but God is an experience of the now. God is something to perceive now. you can immerse yourself in him only in this present moment. “

Anxiety, fear of one form or another, is usually the counterproductive or self-destructive culprit. We, with poor self-esteem, want to beat ourselves up because of errors we made in the past. We focus on the unforgivable dimensions, which assist us in repeating our past histories endlessly. The ultimate issue is one of forgiveness with the help of a therapist or a priest, regarding letting go of the past. then we don't let the past rent space in our heads.

The other part is that we also allow ourselves to anxiously think about the future. That kind of projective thinking easily keeps us out of the present. We are here and Now, the place where Grace generally is offered to us.

Because we unconsciously are inclined to see things out of a perspective of the past or future, the addict or alcoholic part, likes it. Preoccupation and either direction, past or future, is food for the addictive or alcoholic dimension in that it takes energy out of the present, fostering self-destruction. If we personify it, the addicted part of us says great! Keeping this man or woman in the past or in the future blocks the growth and facilitates psychological and spiritual confusion. Let's continue to work hard to keep them focused and messed up that way. Pretty soon, he or she will become fed up and overwhelmed, will give up, walk out, and finally pick up or use again.. and that is what the unhealthy part of us usually seeks indirectly...emotional, spiritual death!

AND, YES, WE'RE ALL PREJUDICED

Again, not a comforting thought but a true one; we are all biased, we will discriminate. Actually, discriminating is a good word....the sign of an educated person, someone said a long time ago, is that he or she discriminates.

But back to prejudice. How come we are all biased?

Each one of us is born with a great curiosity, a strong desire to learn. Along with that, also is an apprehension regarding interacting with anyone. It's a complete part of the package; each of us also has a large reservoir of ignorance. In the beginning, for us it starts as a lack of knowledge and information; then, as we make our efforts towards growing, we're surrounded by parents, as well, whose learning and curiosity may be still resting on those two psychological anomalies, fear and ignorance.

The family atmosphere that envelopes any of us can be nurturing or critical. If criticism is strongly dominant and we experience the lack of warmth and affirmation, we easily become inhibited. Thus, the fear could be very strong and depending on the strength of our personality, our curiosity becomes limited. Taking a risk to ask questions or express confusion becomes difficult and even painful.

Continuing with that thought, if emotional or physical abuse is fairly constant, the necessary information we should be taking in is not offered. We are also conditioned to accept the subtle biases that surround the family unit. And the more education we receive, the broader our point of view can be, if it is basically positive and healthy.

With a dysfunctional family, fear is the more dominant emotional variable. Thus, the negative information received is great.....and, as young children, we perceive everything we experience at home as "normal". The plot thickens.

Assuming adolescence ends around age twenty, many of us then enter the world with fairly good, formal education and physically, sexually mature bodies but possibly immature emotional, adult interactions. In this case, two out of three

is not good enough, and never will be, contingent on the nature of the emotional, psychological, and spiritual journey.

If we haven't experienced true, loving intimacy coming up, we stand on the threshold of adulthood lacking in such a most basic, fundamental dimension. Because fear was capitalized upon in our family life, ignorance in the emotional interpersonal area is quite significant. And if psychological abuse was coming up, we have a lot of homework to address.

If our families were unhealthy, if emotional and perhaps physical abuse or anger was present, then the most important learning that comes with being responsible, caring, loving, is not present. The result is we are prejudiced or biased towards that kind of controlling, distant and often hostile atmosphere. and, if we are learning it from our parents, they, in turn, usually learn this psychological unhealthiness from their parents.

Coming from those kinds of backgrounds, we could have been significantly hurt, easily angered, and quite fearful of trust, emotional closeness and intimacy. For sexual activity could then be frightening because vulnerability is alien to us then, and game-free emotional sharing has not been part of our history. Now we're getting an idea of how biased and prejudiced we could be because of the fear-based, unhealthy orientation of our parents we may have received; we have a lot of inner work to do. Layers of anger-based fear, and pain could cover our intimacy's wishes. Hours of therapy and several kinds of therapy are needed so we can start to see the light of clarity, understanding, risk-taking and confidence. Our curiosity was always there, but our fear and ignorance were worked over negatively that, having hid out in drugs and/or alcohol on the journey, and placed us into a deeper negative frame of reference. Climbing out of that basement, moving into the new light and feeling better about ourselves is a very challenging step-by- step, one day at a time journey. And make no mistake, because of the human condition, everyone born of man and woman, grows up curious, with also fear, ignorance and a significant degree of prejudice..... everyone. Each of us, then, has the choice as maturing adults to reclaim that lost psychological terrain taken over by distorted, angered, exaggerated, unhealthy, fear and ignorance.

THE NATURE OF ACQUIRED BIAS OR ACQUIRED PREJUDICE

Dr. Frank McGarry, D. MIN

1. **Body**

Brain	)	
Eyes	)	
Ears	)	It Houses
Nerves	)	And Protects
Muscles	)	The Soul
Bones, Etc.	)	

2. **Mind**

Thinking	)	
Analyzing	)	
Sensing	)	
Intuiting	)	
Judging	)	
Perceiving	)	It assists
		And Guides

3. **Feelings**

Pain	)
Anger	)
Fear	)
Joy	)

Spirit

	It Manifests
Soul	Or Expresses
Body	The Nature of
Mind	Life of the
Feelings	Soul.

Surfacing of critical, negative, fear-based judgments or words of abuse for some of us could be expressed with a very considerable skill and much freedom, unfortunately. These terms or this attitude were not part of our pure, infant souls or memory banks when we were born. Yet, whatever we think we may be saying

now on the cognitive level, relative to evaluating and judging people to point out their “wrongdoing”, or unconscious choice, and often our conscious choice, is to alienate them. “This hurts me more than it hurts you” or “you made me get upset and say that”, as a process, it is fundamentally in error, inauthentic and irresponsible. Why are we so condemning and why do we attempt to animate a person because he or she did not live up to our expectations? And, lastly, why do we criticize, condemn or put down someone whom we do not really know? Let's take a look.

You are presented with a new experience or a new person! Since the experience or person is new, it causes new apprehension or some fear.

Your programming and/or values as influenced by you and your upbringing, also offer you a choice of some kind. There are two basic options:

A. I'm scared or a little tense, but I will own that to myself. I will reach out, taking a risk. I will try to accept and/or welcome that new, different person or experience.

B. I am scared or a little tense. I see something or someone new and different. I will put that person or that experience down, so I cannot own my fear and have the good taste or courage to take a risk and reach out. I will avoid, criticize, condemn or strike at the new experience or new person because I am afraid. I don't want to confront the fear; I want to act off of it.

The first choice invites love. The second choice invites alienation, fear, anxiety and rejection. The process is basically that simple, yet the programming for many of us is extremely challenging. The extrovert welcomes people. The introvert is more reflective, more hesitant. The sensate person focuses fairly exclusively on the here and now. The intuitive person sees options and reads on several levels. The thinker is inclined to be more personable and analytical. The feeler sees the person's feelings as the most significant value. Judges want to put closure on situations and finalize things. Perceivers want to keep all options open for the most part. So all of this is just one of the primary interpersonal variables intrinsic to knowing, deciding and communicating in general. (And we each own four of those choices.)

But the personal response usually starts with the gut, where the feelings are. It can go to the head and welcome or alienate. As indicated earlier, the first becomes love, the second stays at fear and is “protected” by criticism.

AND THEN THERE'S THE SACRAMENT OF TOUCHING

Lots of other families we knew did it, but we, fearful, maintained distance, being perceived as aloof and cool later on in life was, at that point, effortless and natural. Meanwhile, there was always my youngest sister, Ursula, an extrovert, who spent her earlier life merely wanting to have the freedom to be herself with five well-taught introverts. Also, as a budding therapist forty years ago, touching between client and counselor, for example, was a very clear boundary that should not be crossed. Meanwhile, there was much loving affection expressed by Rosemary, my wife, and her family, very comforting, but new to me.

My curiosity and learning about touch hugging, embracing, sending charged energy from my body to another, and likewise receiving it from him or her, starts with my observation of people engaged in mutual reaching out about fifty-five years ago. Kissing and short embraces had been accepted, but having the permission to perhaps envelope someone, holding them gently and sending messages of the great physical, emotional, and spiritual intensity one could feel had not been our norm and was frightening. However, I liked what I observed. I perceived and/or projected it as a much more thorough way of telling someone what I felt and thought about him or her. And there is for me now a special joy and pleasure I feel when I embrace people. It is simply a more wonderful, trusting encounter: rationalization, compensation, projection - the possibility of all of the above, but it is within me a little more of an affirming, loving experience. It is quite satisfying and joyful. Actually, it's terrific!

And I remember at the end of a wonderful week-long conference several years ago at Journey into Wholeness, Kanuga, North Carolina, as each of us moved through the crowd of eighty to a hundred twenty or so to say good-bye. Some known fairly well, some just new acquaintances, I reached out towards a woman my age, fairly slender. With the formality of this ritual we all seemed to swim in the opportunity for warmth, closeness and affection. It was a little surprising/

Putting our arms around each other, we held each other close, being well aware of the ground rules, or my assumptions, that in male-female hugging the woman lets the man know it is ok. to hug, as well as when it is time to release the embrace.

So, having curled our arms around each other, we stood there hugging for at least six seconds. Sensing she was starting to let go, I slowly released my arms. At the same moment, mutually charged emotionally and spiritually, she stepped away several inches saying, "I finally welcomed what I came for!" The lectures were wonderful, nestled in the autumnal coziness of the Smoky Mountains and meeting people from all over the country was great. But the warm, loving, affectionate holding of a man and woman to just relish the body-and-soul nourishment was truly and thoroughly wonderful. Oddly enough but not really, words were inadequate...and apparently they will always be, for obvious reasons, the action says more than words.

Each of us hungers deeply for union of some kind. As we move into the power and energy of young adulthood, we are easily taken by the attraction that is emotional, sexual, physical and psychological - and it doesn't always take in all four dimensions. We add the spiritual dimension to any of these interactions because of bringing a transcendent belief and an emotional awareness to all interpersonal encounters. The truly mature spiritual awareness is reflected as we honor the intention of ultimately giving rather than taking, in each situation and experience!

Yet the power and energy that seemingly pulls us is often so strong and overwhelming. The personal, pleasurable satisfaction on the part of the ego. challenging the self, can fight to be dominant beyond agreement.

But this very powerful natural desire to be part of a union, starting in infancy, being part of one, several or many loves, naturally lends itself to physical interaction. The joy of open, warm acceptance and its concomitant, affectionate expression in kissing, holding, touching, hugging, embracing certainly feeds the hunger for wholesome, balanced union.

All of these specific expressions are indeed suggestions, invitations, guides and hopefully encouraging affirmations along the journey, beckoning us to the Ultimate Union with our Infinite, Loving Creator for all eternity. So the concept of desiring union is always a compelling part of our conscious and unconscious life...to be loved and to love...to feel warm and close...to sense affirmation and approval...to hold and embrace and often, in adult committed

relationships, to offer our anxious, driven, tense bodies to each other as a gift. And touching, kissing, holding, and hugging bring so much freedom and the most powerful non-verbal love and affirmation.

Oftentimes, telephone conversations bind us together, cards, messages, and gifts strengthen or reinforce our unions. And, strolling through the mall, observing our sexual peers in a not-too-obvious way, so immediately attractive, we can use our eyes to see if the quick exchange of glances suggests any kind of true opportunity, wondering for further possible interaction and closeness. We reflect, we hope, and we fantasize. We do all of that in expectation that our always-thorough, constant desire for union and closeness can be initiated and perhaps satiated at least temporarily. One day, perhaps, when there are really no days or nights, we also believe and hope to experience finally the True, Constant, Eternal, Warm, Over-powering Mystical, Spiritual union...the euphoric, overwhelming coming-together that will not end. It may involve several or more lives, many different reincarnations, thousands of love efforts and love attempts. All are experiences directed to the thoroughly compelling desires of love and union in whatever is the fullest sense possible. And one day, when all the winds have died down, and physical life becomes a memory, there will be, I pray, hope and believe, only the Communion of Love for us all.

This area of touch is easily a time of vulnerability. It directly addresses the hungers we all have. It also questions our personal comfortableness and confidence regarding that kind of closeness.

Another common awkward or fearful effort has to do with embracing itself. When we have our arms around each other mutually, we males often, after one or two seconds, start to slap each other on the back. The intimate, uncomfortableness suggesting the most fundamental great fear (no past successful intimate experience) possibly with male-to-male physical expression is compensated for by tapping or slapping each other. Then, when several seconds have transpired, the ritual ends quickly. With mutual, silent agreement, we approvingly move away.

No amount of rhetoric will substitute for the growth that needs to occur with each of us in this area. Like any other personal experience, we need to wonder about, examine, and eventually confront our fears. At the same time, we need to let comfort and discomfort emotionally be criteria for guiding these kinds of decisions. However, as we approach this dimension of knowing and loving, we might need to remind ourselves it is at least a wish, if not a need, a desire and a hunger that we probably all have.

I have a very strong sense of appreciation to those men, and women, who seventy years ago, seemingly honored but very politely put up with my

initial cognitive efforts at hugging. Embracing a steel coat-hanger would be the metaphor used to describe someone feeling my physical presence around them before I could truly begin to trust and relax into the pleasure and delight of warmly embracing someone closely for a few seconds

With all the delight, intimacy, pleasure, affirmation and strength that come from a firm, yet relaxed, warm hug and/or kiss, each of us could bear several thoughts in mind.

We came together to express love, affection and caring. We came to give to each other. Ordinarily, when either one of us communicates verbally or non-verbally to the other, assuming that the experience as such is satisfactory and complete, that particular expression then also needs to end. And, of course, when it is an act of giving, it truly is love. So if my partner stops to keep it going at that point wants to be controlling and meets my needs primarily. At that precise time, if I continue the activity, I start to take instead of giving.

All personal, touching, intimate expressions are indeed an honor and a gift and should be regarded as such, always. And in view of its power to make us more whole, it can also be sacramental. As a therapist, I usually choose to respond to clients' invitations for contact for many, no contact is their wish; for others, shaking hands at best might be their desire for contact for others, both men and women, they might reach out to hug and embrace warmly. And so it happens, with great sensitivity, caring, pleasure, and high energy. And, when the other person gently gives an indication that his or her wish is to slowly release, so be it, because like all paradoxical, spiritual truths, the experiencing needs to be in the giving.

I remember when my three sons and my daughter (a five-year span for all) were moving into their pre-teen phases. Sharing hugs and kisses had been quite natural and spontaneous with each of us. Now they were moving into adolescence; what was the protocol for sharing affection here in between fathers and sons as well as maturing daughters?

I spoke about my concern with Rosemary, my warm, outgoing wife and mother. As she has done at other appropriate times, she listened well and with a soft smile on her face, she started to giggle. It was gentle and chuckling, a delightful, amusing response that was also understanding, but she also communicated an air of slight uncomfortableness and unnecessary concern like "you're kidding, aren't you?"

They are now in their fifties. We all have hugged openly and kissed each other coming and going. And it continues to create great feelings of pleasure, pride, joy and closeness....Forever.

One of the most desired goals of therapy, naturally, is inner healing.

alleviating of tension or arriving at peace which is the result of hard work and a willingness to confront fears. There were many times at Concept House's groups whereby one client is in strong conflict with another. They can ask to address the perceived frustration. I lead them both through the mutual sharing of feelings. If each wants to work it through, it resolves itself by this mutual, alternate sharing of emotions (fear, anger and pain) in non-judgmental dialogue. When the dialogue symbolically wears itself out to an accepting, friendly resolution, it can also culminate in a mutually enjoyed embrace by the two clients. I then invite each of them to do a "go-round" to all group members, saying something that expresses vulnerability and invites response, e.g. "Sometimes I'm afraid to get close to people, will you help me?" Ordinarily, the response is very supportive and is responded to with a hug from each person.

Again, the females hugging and kissing females do it easier and eagerly. The males usually comply, but a little awkwardly. If I'm invited to reach out, I respond affirmingly and warmly. Perhaps the father image invites greater trust. Usually, it is a mutually rich response, and no one has to reach out doubting that requests for assistance will not be addressed cognitively and effectively. And it is indeed a beautiful physical and emotional sharing.

Touching is loving. (The Pleasure Bond - Masters and Johnson) Yet personal histories, personal pain and confusion that become fear from our histories, get in the way. Touching in its various forms can be the ultimate, non-verbal expression of love and caring. It can be the richest, most satisfying personal expression of affirmation. Seemingly, it can also be quite effortless. Maybe we just need more practice in paradoxically learning to receive physically, psychologically, and spiritually as the result of truly giving. It is a wonderful, deeply rich place to be, and as expected fears also need to be challenged.

AND THE GAMIEST GAME OF ALL?

I'm not really sure it's the gamiest, but it is one we all play with great frequency. Its appeal is universal - it touches everybody as an option to hide, to run away. But hiding is only part of the payoff. The other part is to get the person who is the unconscious recipient of the passivity from the game player to become angry or frustrated. Thus, when I'm passive, I'm really quietly angry and I want to aggravate or irritate you so you get upset. When you get upset, I feel satisfied

that I frustrated you, and you, in turn, lose your cool. I'm smug. I'm smiling within. On an immature level. I'm winning the game and not growing up. What a thrill!

So what is passivity? It is an indirect, unconscious or dishonest way of avoiding responsibility. Rather than say "No, I don't want to own the responsibility, I don't like it or I just don't want to be inconvenienced," we avoid cooperating in an indirect way.

I have four choices I can make if I'm going to be passive. And there are times when we might actually try two or three of them sequentially. The indirect uncooperative responses to a responsibility invitation are:

1. Do Nothing
2. Do it exactly
3. Do it agitatedly
4. Become incapacitated or violent

If a parent asks or requests us to do something, we offer no reply. We didn't hear it, we were "heavily involved in something else, we removed ourselves quietly to another room, perhaps a bathroom, which usually calls for a sense of immediacy! We are asked again a second time, with the same results. Finally, the questioner becomes overtly angry, perhaps a scream and we, in turn, say "What's the matter with you? What are you getting all bent out of shape for? Give me a break, I didn't hear you or can I help it if I had to go to the bathroom?"

If you are going to church, synagogue or mosque because you were told to do it, if that is your basic motive, then you are only doing as you were told. You are not going because you stopped for a while and then decided to go back because you chose to do so willingly and freely. If you clean your room according to the three specific requirements I make as a parent, you again may not be really choosing the responsibility. If it is your room (so to speak) claim ownership of it, if he does what I said but also does anything else that will be a thorough and complete job, then the responsibility is truly being claimed and owned by you.

The third dimension of passivity is to undertake a responsibility with a disturbing, negative attitude. As you do the work, you communicate your dissatisfaction in several ways. You might not hear it, you might question or comment in any way that is just to continue being difficult or aggravating. "Now?...I was just getting ready to do my twelve-page research paper?...Boys (young men) don't do dishes." Then, having started the job, we do it sloppily, incompletely, drag it out, make life difficult in any way for those in the immediate five-mile radius. That would be doing it agitatedly; trying to get other people bothered by your lousy job or by the disturbing, angry feelings you want to give

them through the generosity of your irritated, annoyed, aggravated heart. And the last kind of passivity is when the person requested to perform responsibilities becomes negatively overwhelming. They also continue to be at our disposal and we might continue to choose any of them.

So those are the four primary choices we have made in the past to indirectly or dishonestly avoid responsibilities. They also continue to be at our disposal and we will continue to choose some of them. That's not the issue. The concern is how often and to what degree do we choose passivity. It also again touches upon a lot of variables such as personality type, sense of self-esteem and our own level of maturity, as well as, "How meaningful and significant is this issue anyway?" There are also those times when passivity can be a beneficial option, a way to somehow be careful, a needed means to alleviate or avoid a painful, disturbing option...but not a lifestyle

So passivity, the indirect and/or dishonest way of avoiding responsibilities, is part of everyone's life. And if we came from a significantly dysfunctional family, where emotional abuse paralleled disagreeing with the status quo in the family, we easily could have poor self-esteem and lack the gifts or the ability for mature interacting with others. But we do want love...or more love...or greater love and we do need to grow. So we can choose again, not to run and hide in whatever fashion; we can choose to confront our fears and do the needed inner work in a spiritually courageous way to strengthen our marriage.

But what about responding to passive people? What's the best way? As expected, the principle is the same throughout the recovery process. Don't get hooked, don't get angry, keep your power, respond in a mature, intelligent way.

In terms of someone who "does nothing", choose to not get angry at their gamey avoidance. Continue to bring it to them in a conscious, deliberate, accurate way.

For those who do it exactly, give them the basic responsibility to do the job. Let them think it through: let them decide how to do it. Then, when finished, see if, in fact, they brought you a completed job. If it isn't completed from the point of view of true responsibility, then question them as to what may not have been done and ask them to detail how it can, will be done better. Then, right at that time, have them finish the job completely.

For those who do it agitatedly, ask them the usual, is everything okay? Are you bothered? Are you upset? Then listen to them if that happens to be the call. Actually, it's like talking to a child in this situation, and it can be a child truly, but

it's just as likely that it is someone of adult years who is giving his or her best effort to not grow up, to not be a responsible adult.

The concept behind keep your power, by the way, is ensuring of inner peace. We have peace when we are devoid of tension. We also have peace when we are able to protect against possible tension by the discipline of not getting emotionally disturbed to the point of overreacting or not responding. The inner work, the constant monitoring of inner energy, is the prerequisite for maintaining balance and peace. If we lose our peace, it is because someone or something invited us to give away our power and we accepted the invitation.

The last category - incapacitation or violence - needs to be attended to with the same resolve. The child throws fits in an effort to get his or her way. The adult acts out fits that can lead to throwing things, breaking things or hitting people... all of which are acts of violence and threaten the souls. none of it under any circumstances acceptable...none of it. So again, you don't get hooked, you don't allow yourself to become overwrought with things you participate in the same process. You continue to hold your power, you can continue to not act off your feelings, you remain in charge of what is going on inside you. You make certain, regardless of the storm outside, you don't get sucked into the game. You choose to hold your power and not act off your feelings. In this context, acting off your feelings is running away from the issue, it is symbolic using another way to hide out. It is opposed to enduring and seeing through to the end in a responsible, mature way. Obviously, it can be very tiring and draining but, as indicated earlier, it is part of the third axiom; you need to be ready to die to yourself daily, so you can live to yourself spiritually. Or, as St Francis suggests..

“And it is in (this kind of dying), that we are born to eternal life.”

CLOSENESS: INTIMACY, SEXUALITY, VULNERABILITY

As mentioned earlier on, this area is another universal concern that many of us have difficulty with. It presupposes a lot of variables - some neutral, some acquired, but the hunger is deep and pervasive.

Obviously It is an attractive experience: man, woman, mutual curiosity and mutual invitations. I look at you, hear you speak, and see you interacting. The first part - attraction - is true for me. I am drawn to you. Now I hope I "ring your bell." just in terms of an initial bell ringing. A special attraction on your part to me, so I risk and find out. Then, when the attraction is mutually acknowledged, what do we do? What is each of us after? But the feeling part starts to become more

powerful, somewhat electrified. The chemistry between us is strong and seems quite good. Where do we (I) go from here?

So we try out the mutual psychological, emotional, sexual and perhaps spiritual attractiveness. We date with some consistency, then we can allow ourselves to get to know each other. (Love presupposes knowledge or awareness of some kind.)

If things continue to go well, do we stop and identify, at least in general? where we might be going, what we hope for and perhaps, expect from each other?

And what about your personal maturity relative to coming from a dysfunctional family? What have we seen modeled for us regarding men and women's roles, communication processes, expression of affection, and tenderness? What effect has our family of origin had on us regarding the interpersonal dimension of our attitudes and beliefs? Is intimacy. (game-free relating on the emotional level) part of our best experience at all?

Every so often, I would bring up "sexuality and making love" in the groups at Concept House in terms of the broad strokes, we men chase a possible partner or pursue him or her in wanting to make an initial contact. What happens after that can vary I also agree with John Sanford, Jungian analyst, who says as basic commentary, that men are turned on visually, women are turned on verbally

"So why would you get high making love?" I would ask. (They had identified the approach earlier.) Initially, the men in general, and some of the women, would say to enhance or add a special "greater than usual" dimension to the love-making. But after further significant conversation, the idea of being turned on to love-making and the fear of what love intimately and sexually really is would surface. Getting high then would cover their fear, they owned up to it.

Not knowing spiritually what intimacy is and not having been taught or schooled with sensitivity, tenderness and being truly present to the other person can create great fear and defensiveness. The rest of the interpersonal sharing and learning may not have been part of those in recovery or the drug-free members of a dysfunctional family's life. It simply wasn't there.

Part of what therapy is, then, in treatment is addressing intimacy, relating in an authentic way in sharing feelings, that approach was practiced frequently in addressing different personal conflicts that were brought to the group.

The one owning the conflict initially, after introducing the problem in a group, asks the other person if he or she will come to the middle of the floor. Both

sit facing each other directly in chairs. I monitor the conversation so that it only stays focused with feelings or emotions in any alternating fashion.

- "How do you feel sitting in front of John Gorge? "Tell him," says

Frank (This process is John's. I feel angry and scared sitting in front of you.

- "John, how do you feel? Tell George," says Frank

- "George, I feel scared and angry as well, sitting in front of you, but I also feel good because you are choosing to confront our issue in an honest way.

- "George?" says Frank

- "I don't feel as scared or angry now, because of what John shared, but closeness scares me

- "OK. George," says Frank. "What is your perception of what occurred on Tuesday? Using I statements, feeling words, no judgment words and no defending or disproving, he explains it as best he can.

After each in turn shares perceptions of the truth (that's all we have), then each is asked how he feels at that particular point. This unique process usually eliminates the identified tension and allows true feelings to surface for each in turn. Often, the ending becomes choosing to hug each other warmly for the addressing of the incident and the disciplined handling of emotions (scared, hurt, angry, good or a combination of those four options). So these participants in this exercise in group learn another choice in conflict resolution successfully.

Because of that exercise, they have an experience in personal processing, in choosing a more pure way of relating. The tension can dissolve itself, and a desire to share good feelings comes forth. And such discipline suggests a spiritual choice. And it's really not complex, just organized clearly.

It can be tough or difficult not letting painful, hurting judgments or negative statements take over. But if our hostile dimensions seem to take over, the result will be considerable bad feelings and further alienation. And if that is the bulk of what had been modeled for us, it's going to take much personal work, a lot of effort on our part to change our way of processing, as well as our attitude. However, it sure beats continued hostility, pain and loneliness, something we all may have learned earlier and want to let go fairly desperately.

If we choose to learn about intimacy, we can, then in fact, also become more vulnerable, trusting and one caring to and for each other. It is then not difficult to imagine a greater sense of mutual freedom, inviting also the giving and

receiving of affection for those couples who were honoring a psychological, emotional, and sexual attraction to each other.

I remember also leading the women's group in Concept House and discussing the question of sexual intercourse or lovemaking. "If you really had the choice (no cultural pressure) to not participate in love making until you really wanted to, when would you be most free to do so?" Eventually, the responses came to indicate that after they truly embraced initially the genuine commitment to live together, or rather, when they were married. Interesting answer, particularly since these women came mostly from family experiences that lacked a clear indication of boundaries and often different kinds of abuse. Their women's responses wait until marriage, purifying our behavior.

One traditional set of dynamics ascribed to classical spirituality, meaning the love of the person in searching for his or her God, are three phases: purgation, illumination and unification. It easily also describes the normal spiritual journey of each couple's relationship.....and, in fact, might very well describe the steps in the surreal love-making activity itself.

Purgation also begins after they have started their own marriage. It goes with the territory. They both will be more conscious of our beginning, so we choose to refine ourselves as we embrace our relationship.

As our maturity grows on a daily basis, the talking eventually will rise to a satisfying level in which both are pleased and into their desired maturity.

During group sessions, generally speaking, in working with certain clients, more quickly with the females, the anger goes to pain. Then there are tears, sharing fears, frustrations, and disappointments, but it is also healing completely. It is at this point that others in the group become softly transfixed. Gradually, gentle weeping wells up in the eyes of other female group members. It is immediately and consistently clear that this aspect of communicating, emotional honesty, draws others in and affects them very deeply. Your personal vulnerability, your emotional, game-free self-revelation, is the most powerful, drawing-in, attractive aspect of yourself. This is what people truly respond to.

The greater challenge, of course, is only to participate in a committed or exclusive relationship, knowing that genuine emotional vulnerability is necessary for the nurturing of each in the union. Manifestations of fear, pain and anger acquired early on often become walls or attitudinal games that serve to keep people out. Now you want to share your life with someone. Now you want to create a loving union; you want an equal partnership, yet many of the defensive ways we have used to protect ourselves in general have to be put aside. At that point you need to allow your loving partner to experience true, authentic, emotional sharing....

But it can be so hard to consciously be open. It can be so fearful. We feel that, because we have been hurt so many times, it can be very difficult to trust. Yet the risk must be taken. This learning must be acquired so the mutual loving can be fed.

So building a committed relationship and creating a loving union is challenging. If you have worked on and claim as your own the truth of the 10 axioms of how to be guided on the journey, it's a good start. Committed relationships could take a great deal of scrutiny and care before arriving at a commitment. Living together before official commitments are indicated as another recent phenomenon.

Regardless of your loving commitment, whatever it is, there will be the processing of tension, yours, mine, his, hers. It is indeed a very best spiritual joy to be able to keep the fire of love burning, reminding ourselves that we receive and in dying we are born to Eternal life.- St. Francis

The principle with any adult commitment is to embrace a journey of searching, knowing and loving, seeking truth and enduring the challenges along with the rich joy of one's spirit.

The conjugal or committed relationship is most special and very purposeful; processing of tension with oneself and one's beloved is part of the essence of the sacrament. The one-on-one constant, for giving of love and a loving union, is the daily renewal of belief, Hope and Faith as the true sacramental essence. We, the participants, are the ministers of the sacrament that invite embracing 24 hours a day. Constant daily opportunity for growth, continual inner work, consistent self-examination in an effort to be with the concert with your own personality, the invitations of the union, and reframing it all with God's love.

SO LET'S BRING IT ALL TOGETHER

Initially, that title sounds simply like a good practical idea. And yet, what I'm also saying in this summary is that it's routinely more like a daily slogan for all of us. That doesn't make it any easier, but it does let you know the nature of the journey, each day. Bringing it together refers to your own sense of personal well-being, your own sense of combined body, mind, and spirit, your own sense of spiritual balance, wholeness and strong commitment.

You did receive the gift of life. There was a great, wonderful sense of joy

initially at your birth; a truly beautiful, new, totally dependent, precious infant came into the world. You hopefully were held, cuddled, adored, swooned over blessed, fed and you then quietly fell asleep. After that came the variables, that's a nice way of saying that it might not all have gone according to the ideal plan.

When you were three, four, five, six, or seven years of age, you didn't say "When I grow up, I'm determined to be a surly, unhappy, disappointed young man

or woman." You didn't say consciously, "Since my needs as a child were not being met, I will become defiant, hostile and uncooperative." Lastly, you didn't sit down. Reflect and then choose deliberately a lifestyle of substance or relationship abuse. It happened indirectly and usually unconsciously.

Yet the influence of so many negative factors, the complexity of your mother and/or father experience, perhaps the absence of one or the other, physically or psychologically, from your life, the presence of verbal, emotional or physical abuse, could have left you with fairly significant personal damage. It is then easy to see you seeking a sense of refuge, a temporary comfort, a running away, protection or simply hiding out passively, which eventually leads to abusing substances. And even at that, you also consciously didn't say "This will be my permanent, indefinite way of avoiding reality." The process was a little more subtle. In any event, you could eventually find yourself dependent on some condition, circumstance, or substance in the beginning, compulsively needing it later on, to the point of addiction, lying, stealing, cheating, literally or figuratively. The struggle is always very consuming. The compelling driving dimension can easily move to preoccupation, the need for inner sharing, emotional vulnerability, and loving friends or community members remains paramount. It must happen that way. You need people immediately! Real, true, deeply caring.

And this is where the ten axioms come in. The compulsion with drugs, or alcohol are both counterproductive and self-destructive. You, whoever you most need a positive purpose in life that turns your soul on body, mind, and spirit. You know it's going to be a sacrifice. Whether your goal is positive or negative, it still demands genuine sacrifice in either case?

So you desire spiritual beliefs and a true, vulnerable, honest community to assist you, as you also "assist" them. Perhaps mutual sharing of vulnerability and a process for reconciling better explain the word assist. Spiritual principles, believing in some perceived absolute, a true highest power, perhaps, a compassionate, caring, loving God and a community. These are the saving ingredients that led to a fulfillment and recovery. Don't worry about pain, fear and anger, it comes with the territory, it comes to each and every one embracing the journey and greater or lesser degrees and at different times.

And finally, the last dimension is your “readiness”. You now start to understand your demons, know how to battle them and have put many of the primary ones to sleep. You are ready to keep the others at bay. I know it's kind of tricky, yet there really is this place called readiness. Perhaps it also could be of grace? Enough pain, enough years, enough wisdom from your journey so far and the final, spiritual desperation, which also easily is a gifted opportunity. All this can lead to a conversion, a turning apart and mind, along with commitment, a desire to be willing to die daily, our normal sacrifice.

It doesn't deny risk; it doesn't deny worry and faltering; it doesn't deny error. It does affirm that you will endorse the spiritual dimension of the journey. It also endorses partnership in a true authentic community. and, as Len Chandler wrote in his song, Forty Years Ago, it accentuates “keep on keeping on”.

This is why we bring it together every morning, and this is why in the evening, we wonder to what extent we keep it together during the day. So we all embrace the paradox. We must work very hard to maintain our individuality and yet work just as carefully to be an authentic part of a viable, spiritual community, such as a twelve-step program. If the community is truly spiritually mature, it will at least wholeheartedly embrace the axioms. If it doesn't, keep searching, keep asking, keep looking.... It's all part of “keep on keeping on”. that, in turn, continues to be part of bringing it all together.

So we have to struggle to discover and honor our gifts to commit ourselves to our true God, to find purpose with our gifts in community, striving constantly for wholeness and balance. Yet with it all, one way or another, are our daily reflections or prayers to God, knowing that is to be hopefully our primary relationship throughout life

"This above all, to thine own self be true, and, as the night
Follows the day, thou shalt be false to no man or woman."

(Shakespeare, Hamlet)

Relationships can only make complete sense if they are chosen freely, not seductively, not by demand or manipulatively. That statement is simple, so direct and so powerful. Yet, perhaps having not been thoroughly loved in many cases to the point of feeling good about ourselves, and not being consciously taught to be responsible and caring in decision-making, we could have more than our share of fear. That easily could lead us to become compelled, driven, manipulative and perhaps finally self-destructive, but here is always an option....Infinite Love.

There's the rub! We need to reclaim once more as much as possible the sense of soul, trust, innocence, self-acceptance and wonderment that we came

into the world with. But in some cases, it is now a demanding project. We know damage has been done and we still want our spiritual hunger to be honored with Infinite Mystery for the rest of our lives. We then become experienced and adequately mature to know that, having healed our wound or wounds sufficiently over time, we then are led to spend our lives giving to others. We choose to seek to do so out of love, a free choice? The goal for each of us always remains to insist on spiritual freedom. Find your church! Find your synagogue! Find your special locale! Grace is always there. Love is always there. Friendships are always there. Your spiritual search needs Divine assistance. Having sought after these truths, you will also rise with these Graces! He will always be there for you. She will always welcome you.

AND FINALLY, PASSING OVER... OR THE ROAD UNIVERSALLY TRAVELLED

Is the title a little confusing? Well, it's just really an effort to put in place a universally perceived truth, a belief, and, for many, a conviction, that we do not ever die, but rather only really experience a physical loss. Our body, at one time small and cuddly, then moving to a richness in terms of physical and sexual maturity, culminates with a gradual, deteriorating pattern. "An aged man is but a paltry thing, a tattered coat upon a stick" is one descriptive image offered by William Butler Yeats, a famous Irish poet. Not particularly encouraging directly or indirectly regarding men, women, and old age, perhaps we might also have a little bit of W.B. Yeats' own inner dissatisfaction or fears regarding our aging process. Yet, there still is the inevitability of the eventual quiet, surrendering kindly to the counsel of the years" (Desiderata), to which our ailing bodies will acquiesce. The challenge is to hopefully find ways so that the predictable physical deterioration occurs gradually, not too severely, and with spiritual purpose. Having said that, there are and will be many impairments, spiritual invitations, to some of our older friends and kin because of physical disease and illness. The pain, aggravation and stress that will be part of the growing, spiritual, physical, aging process can easily be overwhelming at times. Yet spiritual, love choices and invitations continually surround all people and circumstances. For some, six minutes or six days may be ill, dying time. For others, six years might also be the spiritually, growing challenge before them and us. Eventually, we do see physical life ending. The separation, because of our earthly, loving

relationships, also invites a grieving process of denial, sadness, anger, depression and acceptance regarding those loved ones we release. As then, we all arrive at Heaven! What a love-party!

We are invited to grieve many losses throughout our lives. Some of these possibilities are loss of aunts, uncles, kin in general; loss of certain abilities or wholeness via a severing or permanently damaging of an arm, leg, finger, eye sight; loss of dreams such as career possibility, psychological death of a marriage or loss of community and old friends because of choice to move or because of imperative to move (leave Cuba, Bosnia). All of these experiences, these permanent deprivations, invite the necessity of grieving. The imperative, the "must" behind grieving comes from the obvious true loss outside of ourselves that then needs to be correlated internally both psychologically and spiritually.

And if I choose not to grieve? If I choose not to honor the external death by letting go of feelings internally, by sharing again the denial, pain, anger, depression, moving finally to acceptance psychologically and spiritually, I freeze my own spiritual, psychological life. Whether consciously or unconsciously, I can get stuck because of some emotion or incident. I feel I cannot grow, I cannot advance, I do not heal.

Perhaps we're aware of some family members, relatives or friends who seem to be either sad or angry all the time, we can have someone stuck in sadness (depressed) or anger (bitterness). Listening to them once or several times might not be too bad. However, when this person begins to be identified by the power of this or that stuck emotion, we hear "Oh my Lord, not him again. I can no longer listen and be accepting or empathetic toward him. He refuses to own and address the finality of his loss. It is too painful for me to continue to be present to his depressed sadness or her continuing predictable bitterness, because of not really letting go."

As any one of us experiences a loss that is significant or meaningful to us and chooses (it is a choice) not to process it through, we begin to kill our own spiritual life. Soon, like a creeping illness, it takes over us. If I do not let my loss of this person, dearly loved by me, be processed internally over time, I am also unconsciously trying to keep him or her alive.

By holding on to that person in that fashion, as indicated, I start then to slowly die psychologically and spiritually. Since I'm then stuck or dying psychologically and spiritually, I am not able to establish or even continue to maintain other significant, loving relationships going on in my life. It simply invites spiritual self-destruction.

Lastly, unless this close person, who has died in reality or "externally", is grieved by me internally, I can no longer live fully productively and creatively. Moving perhaps somewhat closely to paradox, we are then able to say we cannot create new life unless we have truly owned, acknowledged and allowed the old life to die. "Unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies of itself, it remains alone, but if it does die, it brings forth fruit a hundredfold", says Jesus.

When I can talk about this person's death or absence without feeling a sense of negative emotions surfacing, then it is likely I have finished. On the other hand, less analytically, one day when I wake up, I feel free of the grieving burden (a necessary but not a fun thing) I will sense and experience a welcoming freedom and joy regarding life in general. Since I would then finally feel free and be free, I can once again excitedly embrace life with all of its options and limitless possibilities.

Back to passing over. Back to reiterating that we actually do not die. Back to anticipating that perhaps "eye has not seen nor ear has not heard, nor can it actually enter into the imagination of man and woman, what things God has prepared for those who love him." - St. Paul.

The current world of mediums and channeling may still manage to cause some anxiety. Psychic gifts may also raise doubts for other people. They are perhaps still seen by many as cutting-edge postures according to organized religions. But like any powerful new perception or idea that we choose to discount, we can also react with great curiosity eventually and start to see spiritual benefits. Clairvoyance (imagining accurate perceptions of events to come), clairsentience (the inner knowing of truth now), channeling (the ability to communicate knowledge, wisdom, information from the supernatural sources via the temporary presence of personal entities within) and mediumship (the gift of making contact for friends or family with those who have passed over before them.) In any event, life after death has been a quite broadly perceived dimension for thousands of years. Although we are impressed by the universality of this belief (positive afterlife), for many, it really may still seem unclear, perhaps quite theoretical or abstract.

Among the many blessings and new insights emerging also during the continuing, evolutionary, collective, spiritual journey of the late 20th century and The beginning of the 21st century is also accommodating the evolution of new spiritual paradigms that seem more significant, unique, and ecological.

Organized religions are making their effort to adapt so that each will not die. But it still calls for quite radical, attitudinal changes warranting greater inner work, truer soul searching and much greater honesty and authenticity to restore their role. Only in that fashion can organized religions' acquired "unhealthiness"

start to be addressed and changed, avoiding self-destruction, and bringing new life. Going to any church brings greater nobility.

Holiness, inner balance, meditation, rich, deep, loving and special healing gifts do surface now via less fear, more confidence, and considerable prolonged searching. Affirming excitement and greater endorsement of these new ecological, spiritual models that are still philosophically ascetic and mystical can become the norm.

One of many truly human, spiritual, gifted, loving women who affirm and guide in so many ways, while having firsthand experience with those family and friends who have passed over, is psychic, medium Linda Georgian. Wouldn't it be nice to identify her as a priest or holy minister? Or are our biases and fears so deeply rooted that perhaps we want to condemn further evolving and adapting to these unique feminine gifts and their spiritual power?

The afterlife beliefs relative to Native Americans, for example, has been a fundamental one for thousands of years, "because they believe that it is the ultimate promotion, the final ritual elevation to a higher form of life, to the enjoyment of eternity in some form."

More specifically, Linda shares in "dreams, we also gain some insight into higher-dimensional dreams and the afterlife" - my mother would often visit with her parents in dreams. There, my grandmother would cook, my grandfather would tend his garden and both would talk about her life with her, answering questions and giving valuable advice. What a beautiful commentary on life for those who have passed over.

She comments further on, regarding some other specifics of the journey in the afterlife - "Through free will, each soul no matter how much in darkness it has when it arrives in the afterlife, can progress to the light. It also does not matter which religious tradition you may follow while on the earthly plane."

It is so thoroughly a natural part of our life, so thoroughly a basic reason for being on this earth, so thoroughly the invitation to a rich, overpowering, nurturing, more loving, warming, healing, yet continually growing part of our life.

Linda's experiences in communication with people who have passed focus more with family, kin and friends. Yet the informality of her continual, rich, loving personal conversations makes it sound like that... casual, ordinary (yet special), a simple yet most desired expectation, perhaps just another form, a soon-to-be more familiar manner in the communication process.

We therefore also need to become very familiar with synchronicity, clairvoyance, clairsentience, visible energy forms, dreams, symbols, senses of presence and physical movements of objects. These are part of everyone's personal spiritual growth curricula; the world of understanding

metaphysics (the level of simply being) and the physics of love (energy, medicine or healing is as insistent as the technological, continual, moving forward of computer influence. Either learn computers or become a hermit! We might say, as well, continue to learn the spiritual, metaphysical aspects of living and loving with its invitations towards refining the healing (loving) process or get left behind with the frightened cognitive illiterati. Change still is the only predictable variable.

Another disciple of interpersonal contact with those who have passed over is George Anderson. Discovering this very special gift as a young boy after an illness, he relates how difficult and painful it was growing up with it. Through ignorance, family and friends were so condemning. References to this wounding process still come up in his most rich and most illuminating book, *Lessons from the Light*, written in conjunction with Andrew Barone. The power of His words and the richness of his experiences are both energizing and comforting. George has been sought for years by thousands of people who have had children, husbands, wives, friends who have passed over while much pain and anguish is left behind with those who love lost ones, peacefully or violently.

In the first chapter of his book, George comments:

“They're those who passed in communicating through me to their loved ones on Earth is to help their families to understand that the loss they suffer is only of the physical and that, and their reality, nothing has really been lost... they also told me that they hear everything we tell them and try to help when they can't in their own way!”

Again, truly beautiful, comforting, loving dimensions.

Further on in the same chapter, there is an endorsement that some of us may hope for or possibly believe anyway, but to others it may seem unrealistic. Since the nature of all our relationships is an invitation to love, to know first and then might begin loving, not knowing when it will end, we might also suffer projected pain and anxiety about it.

“The afterlife people understand that love is a bond that cannot be broken, even by death, and that nothing separates us, but a little time.”

At least in my daily wanderings, but particularly in my car, it suggests monologues I might be having with Frank, Annabelle (parents), Edith, Marion, Vera, Eddie, Sydney (aunts and uncles), Eugene (brother) have enough credence that I can feel peace in my heart because what I'm doing is natural, Supernatural perhaps, but natural ultimately. One of the implied invitations with the analysis of these relationship situations is also with our loving God, our Ultimate Light or Ultimate Love.

Though awesome and mysterious, the need to pursue God, Allah or G_d, as Orthodox Jews say, because they can't imagine comprehending, much less being able to say the word God, as any kind of description, we need to still constantly pursue this relationship. Currently, the Roman Catholic Church has re-emphasized to all houses of worship that attending any house of worship is a genuine, valid church-attending spiritual experience. Attending any house of worship is a true, valid church experience. The Grace of God is Infinite.

Yet as a cognitive person, I also easily flipped all over the place while sitting in the chapel, 8:00 a.m. in the morning at mass. In one of my poems, I describe this distracting, anxious activity as “an eternal search for ice cubes in the oven.”

Beauty stuns me, overwhelms me, and disarms me as a creature experiencing the creator's artwork, be it people or sunrises. But thinking apart from such awesome interactions often can take me away from liturgy. And so many mantras also help bring me back. They ground me via the repetition of the same words that also bring clear images and focus spirituality in concert with slow, rhythmical breathing. Having found myself in various parts of the day's business, before the sun has barely broken over the horizon, I might choose two or three word expressions, repeated to myself consistently, that dispel these responsibilities, imaginative wandering.

But recent writings and the decentralization of religious power (organized religions surrendering patriarchal point of view reluctantly while often denying fundamental attitudinal conflicts within itself) have invited the individual to be more thoroughly responsible for him and herself. We have to find what is spiritually true for us as persons.

But the belief of certain spiritual messages is clear. It is a journey of loving understanding and commitment. It is a journey of choosing to die to oneself to grow spiritually and maturely. God remains a mystery yet the search to know and get closer to God is a constant mystical imperative. Each of us has an eternal soul that is a vehicle of love. All we are to do is learn to love greater, more deeply and richer. A more recent belief is all the variety of ways we can become sensitive to remain in contact with our loved ones, those in the body and those out of the body. They didn't die spiritually; they passed over for more learning and loving in a peaceful, affirming atmosphere. They are our guides, they are a Grace to us, usually indirectly but sometimes directly. In loving us, they know we will continue to be part of each other for all eternity. It's simply breathtaking.

So we each have started to recover initially from the shock of birth, to our entrance into a family, embracing what is being offered to us. Your personality

type, birth position in the family, and the Enneagram can verify some of the biases we all bring to tension...we then spend our lives processing our family life.

As the cauldron which purifies each of us on our journey, tension which can bring us to balance and wholeness, also brings some fear, pain and confusion as well. The healthiness of our family then comes into play. As individuals who need and want to go forward pursuing the Holy Grail-love, affirmation and understanding are necessary components - who gets them is both karmic and relative. Those who might not sufficiently may eventually run away, choose alcohol, drugs, violence, paralyzed rigidity, smothered feelings and distorted desires. And yet, while all this confusion, pain and rage goes on, relatives who passed over can become guides who hover over and around. They can assist in sending grace along with our guardian angels and such, all part of Divine Providence. We need, therefore, to experience the sense of optimism related by George Anderson. The nature of our illness is ultimately not very significant on the journey. Love as a goal and love as the energy that directs and supports us need to always be our focus. The temporariness of our lives, and the various rites of passage, continually invite us and get us ready to pass over. We get older gradually each day to nudge ourselves toward eternal spiritual life. Hopefully, we are able to pick up the hints and focus.

Why the souls feel the need to communicate from the hereafter is both simple and complex. The simple reason is that they see our pain and truly want to help us to understand that they are only separated from us by the physical, yet are still connected by the emotional. Now that they have had an opportunity to understand their existence and, in a large part, ours, they want very much to be able to keep us on the straight and narrow, namely our spiritual journey on earth, so that when we graduate to the Hereafter, we will have benefited from all that we have to learn here. Perhaps now we can see it all better after George Anderson's reflection.

SO WHY NOT?

Since transcendence, a desire to sacrifice for a greater good, as well as the desire to reflect on and seek the Greatest Good, is a universal option present to all human beings, we might do well to directly capitalize upon that truth. Then, as another part of that spiritual hunger, we also seek to join communities that uphold belief in certain special, sacred stories often predicated upon truly human, and often avowedly divine, yet persevering self-denying heroes. These unique

spiritual people, motivated by true, ascetical love and committed purpose, also leave behind symbols that constantly call us to think, talk, honor, remember and pray to them as these special, blessed heroes. Lastly, as a community, using the special sacred story and symbols peculiar to it, we also set up a number of rituals to celebrate our Holiest Hero and His/Her community. "As a spiritual group, we choose in a particular way to honor and celebrate the sanctified, grace-filled, holy person or perception of God." (Rollo May, The Cry for Myth) (Spirituality is a universal)

If all of this is true for the majority of mankind, the much greater majority, why not address these most profound ideas, principles, and concepts within the framework of public education? In that way, we could become much closer to identifying all the educational, consciousness-raising, and psychological needs of the human spirit. Admittedly, the school initially needs to prepare the student to succeed academically so he or she can master a discipline and contribute to the community in a positive, affirming way as an adult. But can't spirituality be at least as basic as all that and assist with greater motivation? Could we at least make it an academic option? It is difficult to deny such an option.

If the gift of transcendence - the referred to natural, spiritual invitation to sacrifice, to deny oneself in the present so that the future will hopefully be richer and more fulfilling - is universal, so also is the curiosity to find a spiritual community that transcends or gives purpose and meaning beyond this present life.

All these considerations are just as fundamental, if not more so, to human life as are any necessary, basic, academic curricula. Why then, in a truly universal way, do we begin not to address these broad spiritual concerns and interests as part of each one's basic philosophical, spiritually inherited, psychological frame of reference?

Our initial congressional, and therefore our current federal point of view since the United States was founded, is that "Congress shall make no law regarding the establishment of religion." That certainly needs to continue to be honored. But spirituality, which is the universal assumption or contains the assumptions all religions are predicated upon, has a right to be addressed academically, philosophically and psychologically, by itself.

The logic that locks out spirituality seems to be one of considerable fear, perhaps initially contingent upon the religious persecution that our forefathers experienced and escaped from in both Europe and England during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Because class, religious discrimination was so

politically prominent during those times, it therefore became a cause to celebrate to ensure absolute religious freedom from persecution. And apparently, we have been able to officially maintain this interpretation. But why not invite this more basic exploration of spirituality?

Many school districts offer character education, but not truly and realistically rooted in a spiritual base. Can there be character or character education if it is devoid of a spiritual foundation?

There are easily many strong beliefs regarding the power of spirituality as an ultimate frame of reference and balancer. We all need it, consciously or unconsciously, to get on with life in the most purposeful, fulfilled, highly motivated way. Ethics, meanwhile, is simply human concurrence or agreement; it is not rooted in true, evolving character.

Since "wisdom is the fruit of communion; ignorance the inevitable portion of those who keep themselves to themselves and stand apart judging, analyzing the things which they have never truly known". Then an idea as profound and basic as this is inviting, most challenging, and fulfilling.

(Essential Writings {Mysticism} by Evelyn Underhill) pg. 27

A little further in her book *Mysticism*, from which these present quotes are taken, Evelyn Underhill makes experiencing the necessary spiritual world even more clear.

"Life in its fullness, the life which shall develop and use all our capacities and fulfill all our possibilities, must involve correspondence not only with visible and ever-changing, but also our invisible and unchanging environment: the Spirit of all spirits in whom we all live and have our being."

C.Norman Shealy, M.D. Ph.D., a gifted physician who has continued to invest a great deal of energy on healing spirituality, shares his own personal convictions and beliefs regarding making someone physically whole. His book is called *Sacred Healing. The Curing Power of Energy and Spirituality*. This particular comment of his again relates to the universality of necessary spirituality

"When human consciousness does not reflect and transmit the qualities and powers of the soul, significant psychological and physical illness can result." Organized religions do not elaborate on the universality of spirituality. Each one offers its tailored perceptions of its own religious truth. Meanwhile, as suggested, there are some who own that the impact of certain organized religions can be more controlling rather than empowering. Its adherents perhaps feel the effect, directly or indirectly, of the symbolic Procrustean bed.

"Religions tend to establish ritual and dogma to support their particular ideological beliefs. Spirituality is a personal communion with God, soul, or divine energy." Shealy

He summarizes the impact of spiritual acceptance and belief in the introduction "It is ultimately consciousness and our attunement to the divine that determine health, nurturing, love, a desire to do good." Pg. XIX

We are all concerned with health, nurturing (to survive and thrive), loving (who we are), and a desire to do good (participating and sharing our gifts in community). And, along the same lines, since spirituality has a philosophy and a psychology or rather is a philosophy and can create a psychology, it then becomes a necessary concern of the academic, the educational or pedagogical.

Along these same lines, continued effort needs to be made so that the exploration and study of spirituality is not one that is compelled or demanded. Apart from the universal desire of transcendence in each one of us, we cannot assume, therefore, that each one of us raises it, spirituality to the place of universal, personal necessity.

Owning a theology, directly or indirectly, still remains a choice. Admittedly, most of us probably inherited our theology, an accommodating belief system, but continuing to accept and retain it is a separate invitation, indicative of growing maturity, regardless of the selection.

However, the decision to avoid addressing spirituality as a necessary curriculum suggestion could border on denying the child's right to complete an authentic, true education. We all choose to transcend regardless of theology. The majority of us embrace a theological belief that reframes our transcendence; why then is its substance constantly and deliberately avoided as part of our general educational process? And since the issue is that we may not trust ourselves, meaning trust each other to allow it to happen, what then is the conclusion? We have had much greater difficulty addressing the concept of Darwin's theory of evolution, so a maturity to offer spirituality, perhaps initially as an elective, may be frightening. Do we continue then to maintain a national spiritual immaturity?

Religion is a qualified commentary on spirituality. As is the case with all processes, religion also needs to be challenged in terms of goals, objectives, rituals and its parameters. Each explanation needs to make sense and be willing to be open to change or to different interpretations. All such religious interpretations are made by men and women.. all human beings, all political human beings, ordained or otherwise, all political human beings.

Some concepts, such as spiritual love, are also continual. Dying to the ego or to oneself constantly is essential to authentic, spiritual love. But policies and procedures in the last analysis created by human beings, regardless of religious

rhetoric, need to be subject to the challenge of not being constraining. Some organized religions, subject to both individual differences and the role of politics, can start to compromise themselves to the point of gradual self-destruction. One possible current example in the Roman Catholic Church is the pedophilia scandal, which involves the priests as pedophiles, breaking the victim's families, and finally, the bland ecclesial administrators. It still has not been thoroughly addressed.

The pedophiles seemingly have continued to be identified and are being addressed mostly; they are naturally scapegoats to truly unhealthy ones, while the church's administration that had been shuffling these pedophiles around for the past for years? These administrators with an apparent arbitrary sense of morality had simply chosen to become part of the woodwork, for the most part, usually hiding passively and very quietly. It is taking a long time to excoriate that dimension of it.

At this point the passivity of the Roman Catholic Church in general seems to continue to be considerable because of its pervasive, larger emotional, psychological illness within the system.

Again, if the invitation to transcend is who we are, and transcending is necessary as well, in order to foster survival and thriving, then why, as educators, psychologists and politicians, do we seemingly continue to run with fear and trepidation from exploring the substance of spirituality in our schools? Yet each of our own personal heroes, family members or otherwise, continues to be identified as deeply and thoroughly dedicated, committed spiritual people. We retain special pictures of them or have special mementoes that they owned and have been passed on to us with fondness and great respect.

Meanwhile, greater physical security continues to be increased or intensified in our nation's schools as a defensive choice.

All such approaches are defensive, external responses, fear-motivated. Spirituality alone invites a positive point of view, allowing character-developing choices and motivations. Defending ourselves is very necessary, but we also need, very much, the highest, richest, most fulfilling motivation, the sanity of true spirituality.

One further anecdotal experience. I had made a presentation on spirituality as a possible public school curriculum to a group of ministers who were pastors in South Florida.

There usually had been thirty to forty church leaders who would have shown up regularly. In this case, about seven or eight were present. By the time I finished my workshop, each of them appeared worried by its suggestion. Addressing this philosophical structure of spirituality and allowing each student,

perhaps, to theoretically reexamine his or her spiritual belief seemed to be a no-no. One clear implication I picked up was that possibly choosing one's spiritual road or path should not be directly allowed as a choice. It scared these clergy persons because the protegés would now be free to reflect and wonder in a more challenging, open atmosphere. That was very disturbing.

True peace and greater moral choice will come only if there is an established, authentic, clear, spiritual foundation or base. If the parties concerned do not ultimately understand the death of the ego or the death of selfishness for a genuine spiritual and supernatural belief, then it probably might not happen.

Admittedly, the "Conflict Resolution" courses, in our public schools, can bring us close, quite close to perceptive discerning, being able to understand more thoroughly. Becoming familiar with God, Infinite Love, or the Tao allows for a more thorough frame of reference relative to any clarification or inner work processing. Spirituality no longer needs to be an abstract consideration. And it has not been again with Rachael Kessler, as exemplified in *The Soul of Education* A.S.C.D. Publications, Alexandria, Va. With Rachael's sensitivity and insight as a public school teacher, she has shared most successfully many indirect or implied dimensions of the spiritual journey taught in certain public schools. For this, she needs to be strongly affirmed, honored, and appreciated.

Perhaps we can endorse the beauty of a spiritual frame of reference or spirituality program because it is, in reality, who we are. Instead of running with fear predicated upon "Congress shall make no law regarding the establishment of religion", let us rather see the human imperative behind all of that. It says that as finite rational, aspiring creatures, all are invited to continually transcend in order to survive and mature. Let us embrace the spiritual richness and principle behind each one's need for honoring heroes and heroines in daily life who have endorsed spirituality beyond what, in many cases, appeared to be humanly possible. Why?

What motivated them? Let's explore it and let's share as we discover it...which is what education is about and what life is about. David Hawkins suggests a very encouraging gradual naturalness to each one's journey, as well as, inviting a manner that seems a little more comforting "It is not a process of creating change, but allowing evolutionary spiritual emergence We grow, we are all invited to evolve; we have chosen to transcend as we have matured, and the spiritual part of us seeks to be fed incessantly, constantly needing to emerge to its richest fullness via spiritual exploration.

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