



THE TWELVE-STEP REVIEW

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Fall 2017

Dear friends,

Here is my schedule for retreats and conferences, but please always check with the parish, for the schedule sometimes changes.

- October 20 - 28. Parish Mission (St. Jude Novena), St. Dominic Church, San Francisco.
- November 6 - 9. Parish Mission, Immaculate Conception, Mattoon, IL.
- December 4 - 7. Parish Mission, Sacred Heart, Terrace, B.C., Canada.
- December 11 - 14. Parish Mission, Annunciation, Prince Rupert, B.C., Canada.
- February 19 - 22. Parish Mission, St. Joseph, Loreauville, LA.
- March 5 - 8. Parish Mission, St. Anthony, Renton, WA.

- March 12 - 15. Parish Mission, St. Charles Borromeo, Peru, IN.
- March 19 - 21. Parish Mission, Our Lady of Victory, Paris, TX.

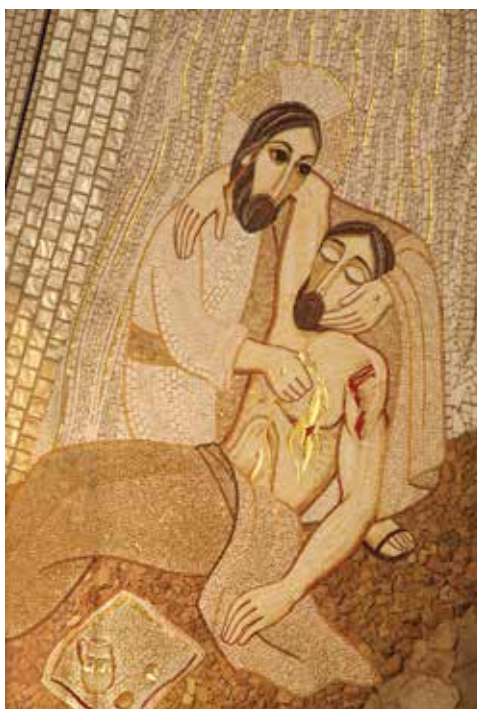
“The heart is as divine a gift as the mind; and to neglect it in the search for God is to seek ruin.”

R.H. Benson

Lord of the World

Feeling and Healing Your Emotions

Something I always like to cover in my missions is the role of feelings and emotions in our moral lives. Someone just gave me a copy of a book by Susan Forward, *Emotional Blackmail*. It's about those who prey upon people's emotions as a form of manipulation. Such people are masters of knowing how to win from their victims what they want. A typical example I give is the person who shows up at the rectory to receive a free handout, someone who portrays himself as desperate for some Christian charity. He obviously wouldn't go to an Apple store or to a Ford Motors dealer for a free handout. It is those who work in the name of Christ, i.e. those who minister from churches, who are easy prey to this emotional blackmail. I jokingly



tell people that such manipulators learn their skills from street people conventions, where they learn what tools of manipulation are currently in vogue and which churches are easy prey. But there

is some truth to this, for it often happens that they come with the same *modus operandi*. One year the tactic was having a relationship with a Vietnam veteran.

At that time there was a lot of sympathy generated for the veterans, and rightly so. The street people convention presented the attendees with some scenarios of manipulation relating to the Vietnam veteran tool.

Thus one day when it was my turn to be on duty in the parish, I encountered one such emotional blackmailer. “Hello, Father, my name is Johnny and I live in a little apartment across the street”—*lie number one*. Why would he tell me where he lived? Because I don't recognize him as a parishioner, so why would he come to us for a handout?

Continued on page 3

RECOMMENDATIONS:

FATHER EMMERICH'S PAMPHLET SERIES:

\$1.00 each pamphlet. Call for bulk orders. Good for parish pamphlet racks.

1. *The Passions*: deals with the role of our feelings and emotions.
2. *Detaching with Love*: explains a popular theme of our retreats.
3. *Friendship*: explains the Christian nature of friendship and its importance for healing and recovery.
4. *Sexual Sobriety*: explores recovery from the sin of lust and the need for chastity in Christian life.
5. *The 12-Step Series*: a series of separate pamphlets, one for each of the 12 steps.

OUR LATEST PAMPHLET *In the Image of God He Created Them* deals with the issue of pornography addiction and gives practical solutions for healing in keeping with the principles of 12-step recovery and Catholic moral principles.

EMOTIONAL BLACKMAIL: When the People in Your Life Use Fear, Obligation, and Guilt to Manipulate You by Susan Forward who presents the anatomy of a relationship damaged by manipulation, and gives readers the necessary tools to respond in a reasonable, responsible, and loving way to emotional blackmail. Softcover, \$15.99, plus shipping and handling.



OUR LADY OF RECOVERY. We've had many requests for Our Lady of Recovery prayer cards and so we had another 2,000 printed. They are available to you for free (we simply ask a modest donation to cover shipping and handling costs). The new cards are larger: 4" x 6".



TOXIC PARENTS: Overcoming Their Hurtful Legacy and Reclaiming Your Life is another best-seller by Susan Forward. In it she asks: When you were a child:

- Did your parents tell you you were bad or worthless?
- Did your parents use physical pain to discipline you?
- Did you have to take care of your parents because of their problems?
- Were you often frightened of your parents?
- Did your parents do anything to you that had to be kept secret?

Paperback, \$15.99, plus shipping and handling.

THE VERBALLY ABUSIVE RELATIONSHIP: How to Recognize It and How to Respond by Patricia Evans. Shows you why verbal abuse is more widespread than ever, and how to deal with it. She shows how to recognize abuse when it happens, respond to abusers safely and appropriately, and most important, lead a happier, healthier life. Evans reveals the Outside Stresses driving the rise in verbal abuse—and shows how to mitigate the devastating effects on relationships. She also outlines the Levels of Abuse that characterize this kind of behavior—from subtle, insidious put-downs that can erode your self-esteem to full-out tantrums of name-calling, screaming, and threatening that can escalate into physical abuse. Drawing from hundreds of real situations suffered by real people, Evans offers strategies, sample scripts, and action plans designed to help a person deal with verbal abuse—and the abuser. Paperback, \$15.95, plus shipping and handling.

Feeling & Healing Your Emotions, continued from p. 1

Because he lives in our neighborhood. Are you starting to feel responsible for his well-being? After all, the Bible teaches, “Love your neighbor.” Make no mistake, manipulators who come to the church for a free handout know their Bible. It, too, can be a tool of manipulation!

Second, he doesn't have a job right now, he tells me. At street people conventions the attendees are trained: “Don't portray yourself as a lazy bum who doesn't want to work!” So the guy explains, “My company downsized”—*lie number two*. Smells like convention advice to me. “And”, he continues (now get this), “I've taken in a Vietnam veteran”—*lie number three*, meant to bring on the sympathy. Poor man, lost his job to downsizing, but is he wallowing in self-pity? No—he's thinking of others, in this case a Vietnam veteran with whom he graciously shares his apartment. Wow, what kindness. What Christian wouldn't want to help someone in his predicament? The truth is, however, he's lying. The scenario he paints is a typical one.

And so over the years I've had to come up with a test. If they don't pass my test, I can't help these people. So I politely ask:

1. “Can I get hold of your family members who can help you?” He has none! Sad, indeed.
2. “What about some of your friends who might be able to help you?” He has none. Terribly sad to be all alone in the world.
3. “What about the Vietnam veteran—is there anyone of his family we can contact to explain what's happened to him?” No one.
4. Finally I ask, “What church do you belong to?” If he belonged to the First Baptist Church of Arlington, Virginia, I could contact Pastor Smith who could vouch for him, and then I could help him.

But he responds, “Is that really important, Father?” implying that God isn't concerned about what church you attend. And so I reply, “I wouldn't care if you belonged to Atheists of America. At least you would belong. But you have no family, no friends, no community. What have you been doing for 35 years so that you have no background? I can't help you.” And truly I can't, because he's not looking for help. He's using *emotional blackmail* to manipulate me into giving him a free handout.

Many Christians might think it unchristian, unbiblical not to come to his aid. But what does the Bible warn about such people?

“Our orders—backed up by the Lord Jesus—are to refuse to have anything to do with those among you who are lazy and refuse to work the way we taught you. Don't permit them to freeload on the rest. We showed you how

to pull your weight when we were with you, so get on with it. We didn't sit around on our hands expecting others to take care of us. In fact, we worked our fingers to the bone, up half the night moonlighting so you wouldn't be burdened with taking care of us. . . .

“Don't you remember the rule we had when we lived with you? ‘If you don't work, you don't eat.’ And now we're getting reports that a bunch of lazy good-for-nothings are taking advantage of you. This must not be tolerated. We command them to get to work immediately—no excuses, no arguments—and earn their own keep.” (2 Thess 3:6-13)

Most Christians have never heard a sermon on Christian work ethic. This Christian work ethic enunciated by St. Paul is also found in the early Church document called *The Didache* which warns Christian communities about freeloaders (11:3-6). And St. Benedict put it in his rule for monks. St. Benedict wanted his

Emotions should be servants, not masters—
or at least not tyrants.

R. H. Benson: *The Sentimentalists* (20th century)

Fear is the foundation of safety.
Tertullian (3rd century)

monks to treat those seeking help as if they were Christ Himself, but Benedict knew some were freeloaders there to take advantage of the monastery, and he warned about them.

I feel sorry for the men and women who work so tirelessly for the St. Vincent de Paul Society who have to deal with those exploiting the system by their lies. You'd be shocked at the lies that are told by those who prey upon people's emotions.

But emotional blackmailers can also often be found in families where irresponsible children prey upon their parents' emotions to support their irresponsibility. People who genuinely care for one another don't target them with emotional blackmail to get what they want. It's difficult for the recipient of the blackmail to respond in a healthy way because they're made to feel guilty. Such relationships built on emotional blackmail don't nourish a person's well-being. The person who gives in to the blackmail isn't helping but harming, thus the title of a wonderful book by Angelyn Miller—*The Enabler: When Helping Hurts the Ones You Love*. Sometimes it is necessary to engage in fraternal correction for the good of the person confronted. We are told to do so by Christ (Matthew 18:15). Dr. Von Hildebrand makes this point, saying:

It is very often necessary to draw a person's attention to the wrong he had done us—in fact, necessary for his own good. To pass over it in silence may easily encourage him in his bad dispositions.

But if a person caves in to the emotional blackmail, the offender gets away with it, only to come back for more. Feelings and emotions are good if we put them to good use.

The Role of Feelings and Emotions

Passions (i.e. feelings and emotions) are part and parcel of human life, and in and of themselves they have no moral value. They are neither morally good nor morally wrong. They are a-moral. What gives them a moral component is what we do about them.

We must keep in mind that the good Christian does not aim at a state of apathy, that is, the stilling of all his emotions (as with the Buddhist), but at a condition in which the passions are regulated by his will, and are thus made virtuous. **The misuse of the will** is always at the root of

sin, not feelings as such. We may have feelings we wish we didn't have because we think that to feel something deeply equals guilt, and so a person may try to stuff the unwanted feeling—not a very healthy thing to do. Or a person acts out of unrealistic guilt feelings instead of responding appropriately.

What God expects of us, above all else, is a serious application to sanctifying our passions, whereby we don't allow them to make our decisions for us when we know that a certain course of action would be wrong. For example, a woman fails to protect her child because she fears her boyfriend's response. Her fear is understandable, but it shouldn't deter her from taking appropriate steps to protect her child.

With regard to anger, for example—is anger wrong? Again, there is no moral value to how we feel. What we do about the anger is what gives a moral component. Thus we can be angry because of an injustice we've had to suffer. That's not wrong, but to act out of that anger by getting revenge is evil. We can channel our anger into doing something virtuous because of the anger, as with the two women whose daughters were destroyed by drunk drivers. Rightfully they got mad and so they started MADD: Mothers Against Drunk Driving, bringing a great good out of their anger. Thus does Scripture warn us, "Be angry but don't sin" (Ephesians 4:26); that is, don't respond in a sinful manner because of the anger.

A person should not go to confession and confess his passions as if they were sinful in and of themselves. I can work myself up into a frenzy and then act in a sinful manner. That's wrong because I purposefully made myself angry in order to get even, and thus there is something to confess. But there is nothing wrong about unwanted feelings. As St. Augustine puts it: "...our doctrine inquires not so much *whether* one be angry but *wherefore*; *why* he is sad and not *whether* he is sad, and so also of fear." Thus we never want to say to anyone, "You shouldn't feel that way." That will simply make them depressed. "Okay, you feel this way; now, what can we do about it?"—is the approach we ought to take. In other words, emotions should be servants, not masters. ❁

