



THE TWELVE-STEP REVIEW

Fr. Emmerich Vogt, O.P.



Summer 2019

Dear friends,

Because of commitments of retreats and parish missions, and a hospital stay (minor operation), I wasn't able to produce a Spring newsletter.

Here are some future retreats and parish missions:

☛ October 18 - 20, Retreat at Casa Maria, 3721 Belmont Rd, Irondale, AL 35210. (205) 956-6760

☛ November 4 - 7, Parish Mission, Immaculate Conception, 320 N 21st St, Mattoon, IL 61938. (217) 235-0539

☛ November 11 - 14, Parish Mission, St. Joseph Morello, 7200 Auburn Folsom Rd, Granite Bay, CA 95746. (916) 786-5001.

☛ December 2 - 5, Parish Mission, St. Stephen, 13055 SE 192nd St, Renton, WA 98058. (253) 631-1940.

☛ December 9 - 12, Parish Mission, Star of the Sea, 1513 6th St, Bremerton, WA 98337, (360) 479-3777.

☛ December 16 - 19, Parish Mission, Holy Spirit Church, 421 Bluff St E, Carroll, IA 51401. (712) 792-4386.

☛ January 5 - 9, Parish Mission, St. Thomas, 1720 NW 19th St, Redmond, OR 97756; (541) 548-3785.

Please always check with the parish or retreat center, as schedules sometimes change.

Evangelization and the Steps

Christians often forget the blessings that have come to the world because of the preaching of the Gospel and the incarnation of that Gospel message in various parts of the world. For example, before Christ came, common people and the poor were not educated. Who brought education to the common man and the poor? Christians such as St. Angela Merici and St. LaSalle. Who took care of the sick poor, such as people inflicted with leprosy, before Christ? No one. It was people like St. Fabiola and Mother Teresa and Father Damien, etc. Thus does the Dalai Lama comment in his memoir *Freedom in Exile*: "I am ... very impressed with the practical work of Christians of all denominations through charitable organizations dedicated to health and education. There are many wonderful examples of these in India. This is one area where we can learn from our [Christian] brothers and sisters: it would be very useful if Buddhists could make a similar contribu-

tion to society. I feel that Buddhist monks and nuns tend to talk a great deal about compassion without doing much about it."

Thus does Jesus compare the kingdom of God to a baker putting yeast into dough, which causes the whole lump to rise. Christian men and women who live the fullness of faith in everyday life become a sign of hope for others who share their lives, either in the workplace, the home, or the neighborhood. Regarding this vocation, Vatican II tells us (*Lumen Gentium* IV:31):

They live in the world, that is, in each and in all of the secular professions and occupations. They live in the ordinary circumstances of family and social life, from which the very web of their existence is woven. They are called there by God that by exercising their proper function and led by the spirit of the Gospel they may work for the sanctification of

the world from within as a leaven. In this way they may make Christ known to others, especially by the testimony of a life resplendent in faith, hope and charity. Therefore, since they are tightly bound up in all types of temporal affairs, it is their special task to order and to throw light upon these affairs in such a way that they may come into being and then continually increase according to Christ to the praise of the Creator and the Redeemer.

When the Church calls for a new evangelization, she is calling each of us to a radical adherence to Gospel values, values that save the human person from the domain of evil. We might compare this to what happens, for example, in 12-step meetings when wounded people share their experience, strength, and hope with newcomers who are still lost — they are led out of the darkness into new light.

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INSPIRATION FROM THE SAINTS

The key to true sanctity for all our Saints is evangelical love — a love that evangelizes, a love that saves. Many years ago I met a very nasty, angry, gun-carrying drug pusher in a big city. But one day while he was driving in his truck, Mother Teresa came on the radio. He stopped the truck to listen to her. Something she said touched him and he told himself, “I’ve got to find those people” (meaning Mother Teresa’s Missionaries of Charity). He told me, “Father, the Sisters knew what I was doing and they loved me anyway!” This is what most often draws people to God: love, or moral beauty. People really don’t care how much you know until they know how much you care. And this is what living the Gospel accomplishes: the salvation of souls. As mentioned in the opening paragraph of this season’s newsletter, before Christ came, there was no good news preached to the poor, no education for the poor, no care for the sick poor.

SAINT ANGELA MERICI

Before the coming of the Redeemer common people and the poor did not have education available to them, nor did the sick poor, such as leprosy patients, have care given them. It was our Saints who brought education to the poor and care for the sick poor. St. Angela Merici was one such Saint. At the age of 10, Angela (along with her sister, who died only a few years later) became an orphan. When she was 20, distraught that around her hometown there were many young girls who had no education and no hope, her heart was moved to do something about it, and so she took it upon herself to evangelize and catechize these young girls, opening them up to the life of grace.

Inspired by the Holy Spirit, Angela became convinced there was great need for a better way of teaching these young girls. So, she opened her own home to them and began to teach them herself. She evangelized and catechized these young girls, opening them up to the life of grace. She incorporated other gals to join in her efforts which eventually became *The Company of Saint Ursula, or the Ursulines*. It was the first group of women religious to work outside of the cloister and became the first teaching order of women in the Catholic Church.

SAINT JOHN BAPTIST DE LASALLE

Another Saint who was orphaned at a rather young age was St. John Baptist de LaSalle. This circumstance obliged him to leave the seminary where he was studying because, now as the head of the family, he had the responsibility of educating his four brothers and two sisters. Later, a wealthy woman wanted to endow a school for the poor in St. LaSalle’s hometown. This eventually led St. LaSalle to found an Order of brothers to educate the poor. He thereby began a new religious institute, the first one with no priests among its members: *The Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools*, also known as the *De La Salle Brothers*, or simply *The Christian Brothers*.

SAINT FABIOLA

The first hospice for the sick poor was begun by St. Fabiola. After a conversion experience, Fabiola devoted her immense wealth to the needs of the poor and sick of Rome. She erected a fine hospital and waited on the sick patients herself, and treated those poor who were rejected by society due to their “loathsome diseases.” Besides this, she gave large sums to the churches and religious communities at Rome and other places in Italy. All her interests were centered on the needs of the Church and the care of the poor and suffering.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

NEW

A Tale of Two Cities: A Reflection on Scandal in the Church. The Church today finds itself in a period of extraordinary crisis. In this newly printed pamphlet, Father Emmerich explores the current sex-abuse scandal in light of the Church's history and Saint Augustine's famous work *The City of God* wherein he presents human history as a conflict between what Augustine calls the Earthly City and the City of God, a conflict that is destined to end in victory for the City of God. Augustine's thesis depicts the history of the world as universal warfare between God and the Devil. This metaphysical war between good and evil is not limited by time. It began with the rebellion of Satan and his angels. Now Satan seeks to get us to join his rebellion against the unchanging God of love. The war is not simply outside the Church but even within the Church. Indeed, this warfare goes on in each of us as we embrace the grace of Christ to overcome evil. **This pamphlet is six pages in length and a donation of \$1.50 is asked.**

Father Emmerich's CDs

The Mysteries of Faith

Father Emmerich's CD set of four conferences and three sermons in retreat format concerns the living out of the mysteries of our faith. These retreat conferences explore the classical definition of prayer: "A raising of the mind and heart to God, whereby we receive the grace to carry out His will" (which is said to come from St. John Damascene in the 8th century). Prayer whereby our hearts **and** our minds are involved capacitates us to be the loving beings God created us to be. This retreat spells out how our minds need to be illumined by grace and our wills strengthened to carry out God's will. But it also points out that the heart has equal place with the mind and the will. All three aspects of our soul—the mind, the heart, and the will—are to be part of our spiritual lives, but all three need to be baptized because of the wound of original sin, which tends to darken the intellect, as well as the wounds inflicted by our past sins. Offered for the suggested donation of at least \$35 plus shipping and handling.

Recovery and the Message of Fatima: In the 100th anniversary year of the miracle of Fatima, Fr. Emmerich — in this series of four lectures, Benediction and two homilies — expands on his *Recovery from Addiction* theme by showing how Fatima is relevant not only to today, but also to our recovery. The series consists of 5 CDs offered for the suggested donation of \$35.00 + P & H.

Browse our Books, CDs and DVDs page for this and other 12-Step favorites at:

www.12-step-review.org.

PRAYER CARDS AVAILABLE. Our series of eight recovery prayer cards is available for free. A free set is sent with each order. In addition, if you would like any of them as a series or individually, please give us a call. All we ask is a donation to cover the shipping and packaging costs.

ORDER FROM THE 12-STEP REVIEW

One phrase often heard in 12-step meetings is the advice, “Always remember to place principles above personalities.” It means we practice honesty, humility, compassion, tolerance, and patience with everyone, whether we like them or not. St. Thomas Aquinas is a great example of this. When he seeks the truth in dialogue with those who might disagree with him, he always expresses their views honestly and without any *ad hominem* attacks. He honestly states their views; he never attacks persons. After honestly presenting their position, he states his objections and expresses his view. We rarely see this now in the newsrooms of America. Rather, whether on the right or the left, people attack personalities instead of focusing on the issues at hand in all honesty. *Ad hominem* (Latin for “to the person,” short for *argumentum ad hominem*, an argument against the person) is a fallacious argumentative strategy whereby genuine discussion of the topic at hand is avoided by attacking the character, motive, or other attribute of the person making the argument, rather than dealing with the substance of the argument itself. This is contrary to Christian principles and yet unfortunately now has become commonplace, even by people claiming to be practicing Christians.

This is the result of original sin, the major effect of which is an omnipresent egocentrism. Self-centered from birth, we make ourselves judges in order to exculpate ourselves and condemn others. This is pictured in the instantaneous response of Adam and Eve, who, after eating the forbidden fruit of the knowledge of good and evil, begin blaming: Eve blames the serpent, Adam blames God and Eve. They do this in order to hang on to the illusion of innocence—an innocence now irreparably lost. That is why the aspect of Christ’s holiness that upset His contemporaries was the complete absence of this condemnatory note. He came to save what was lost. This is the purpose of evangelization. Analogously, this is what occurs in 12-step meetings when people in all honesty share their experience, strength, and hope. This is why Al-Anon, for example, advises against “cross-talk.” Crosstalk means two people talking back and forth, instead of each person getting a turn to speak uninterrupted. It means no one should interject a comment during someone else’s share. “No crosstalk” also means not criticizing what another person said, not telling someone what to do about their problems, and not analyzing anyone else’s psyche or situation. This allows the people the freedom to speak their mind freely and without fear, something they weren’t permitted in their alcoholic homes. The ones sharing at meetings keep the focus on themselves. The only thing we can do to make the world a better place is focusing on our own issues, our own growth in goodness.

As church-going Christians we need to remind ourselves of these principles. When there is no sense of mutual sinfulness in the Church, a dangerous condition exists, with one party in the Church considering itself to be the true

God, I offer myself to Thee to build with me & to do with me as Thou wilt. Relieve me of the bondage of self, that I may better do Thy will. Take away my difficulties, that victory over them may bear witness to those I would help of Thy power, Thy love & Thy way of life. May I do Thy will always.

Third Step Prayer

believers, showing contempt for the others. When we die, God is not going to judge us by what others said and did, but on our own lives.

The Apostle Paul sees the whole cosmos — the entire created order — “groaning” as it awaits redemption (Rom 8:22).

The human race does not have the Power of itself to overcome the cosmic evil we perceive in the world. This is the concern of Step One when it speaks of our powerlessness. It is the only step about being powerless. The other Steps are about a Power outside ourselves that can restore us to the image of God in

which we were created. No human power can do this. A power had to come from outside: and so God became Man. And we need to invite His Power into our lives if we want to overcome the power of evil and the power of death at work **in us**. At Christmas we celebrated the invasion of this world by God Himself, who in becoming man is retaking for Himself the world He created.

Dostoevsky (in his famous work **The Brothers Karamazov**) wrote, “The devil is struggling with God, and the battlefield is the human heart.” You might remember the famous book **Lord of the Flies** by William Golding. Golding was a school teacher in the UK who eventually won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1983. At one point, after the evil things the boys got themselves into, out of the slaughtered pig’s head we hear: “Fancy thinking the Beast was something you could hunt and kill! You knew, didn’t you? I’m part of you!” The central concern of *Lord of the Flies* is the conflict between two competing impulses that exist within all human beings: one for good, one for evil. A battle goes on within each of us. The Christian Gospel is a message of deliverance from the grip of Evil and Death that’s in us all. Being a Christian means that we are involved in this cosmic battle against the forces of evil and of death. This is the dignity that God has granted to us through baptism, that we should be part of His resistance movement against such terrible evil. But this cannot happen without our adopting a strategic plan to work against our self-centeredness. This is what the spirituality of the 12 steps offers: an organized plan of recovery from the effects of sin in our lives. Those steps come from 2,000 years of lived Christian experience. Lived in union with our Faith they offer deliverance from sin and death. **They are the essential steps we must all take to become responsible, productive and mature Christian adults.**

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