

# THE TWELVE-STEP REVIEW

Fr. Emmerich Vogt, O.P.



## Summer 2013

Dear friends,

This season's newsletter presents for your meditation something about the life of a murderer who, while not a canonized Saint, is a marvelous example of the power of faith over anger, fear, and resentment. These passions are major issues in our life and we need to learn how to deal with them if we are to be loving disciples of Christ. In this issue we'll look at resentment, and fear and anger in the next.

I write this the day before my departure for missions in Australia. We have

had many supportive followers there and for many years. Monica informs me that our little twelve-step apostolate is now in 30 countries, with the recent addition of the Ukraine.

Here are some future retreats and parish missions:

- ✦ 7 - 12 September: Mission, St. Joseph Church, Sandpoint, ID.
- ✦ 5 - 10 October: Mission, Nativity Parish, East Dubuque, IL.
- ✦ 12 - 17 October: Mission, Our Lady of the Mountain, Ashland, OR.
- ✦ 19 - 24 October: Mission, St. Luke Parish, Geneseo, New York.

- ✦ 26 - 31 October: Mission, St. Joseph's, Baltic, CT.
- ✦ 2 - 7 November: Mission, St. Patrick's, East Hampton, CT.
- ✦ 8 - 10 November: Retreat, Sorrowful Mother Ministry, Vandalia, IL ([sorrowfulmothersministry.org/](http://sorrowfulmothersministry.org/)).
- ✦ 16 - 21 November: Mission, St. Michael, Stillwater, MN.
- ✦ 7 - 11 December: Mission, Christ the King, Seattle, WA.
- ✦ 14 - 19 December: Mission, St. James, Vancouver, WA.
- ✦ 11 - 16 January, 2014. Mission, Our Lady of Mt. Carmel, Carmel, IN.

## Anger Re-sent

There are only two individuals in Sacred Scripture who are called Jesus' friends: Lazarus and Judas. We can certainly understand Lazarus. Jesus spent many a Sunday at the home of Lazarus and his sisters, Mary and Martha, watching the game while enjoying pizza. But Judas? When Judas comes to betray Jesus, he is not greeted as "You filthy betrayer, may you rot in Hell!" Rather, Jesus greets him as "friend" (Matthew 26:49). This manifests the profound mercy of God. God will never cut us off from the possibility of reconciliation and friendship with Himself, no matter how we've betrayed Him. With true repentance, we can reestablish our relationship with Him. This, of course, is our calling as His followers—to imitate His mercy and the call to friendship.

Why did Judas betray Jesus? This is an important question to ask, because betrayal is something we might all be capable of, and the more we understand our sinful nature, the more we can learn from other people's mistakes, even Judas'.

It would seem that Judas, having his



own agenda, was trying to force Jesus into something that would play into those plans, trying to force Jesus' hand, so to speak, insofar as this would be useful for his own purposes. Judas wanted something that wasn't a part of Jesus' mission from the Father. By handing Jesus over to the authorities, Jesus would be forced to act, or so Judas thought. But things didn't turn out as Judas had planned, and instead Jesus is condemned to death. Despairing of the outcome, Judas hanged himself.

Meditating on the role of Judas, some of us can see ourselves in his behavior. How?—when we try to force the outcome of events, when we

complain against God when things don't go according to our plan. For this reason the person seeking to recover from the effects of sin in his life is taught by Step Eleven to put aside all self-serving motives in his relationship with God. The focus of our prayers should be seeking God's will. This is what Jesus shows us in teaching us the Our Father. I heard a person once say: anger is not getting my way in the present; resentment is not getting my way in

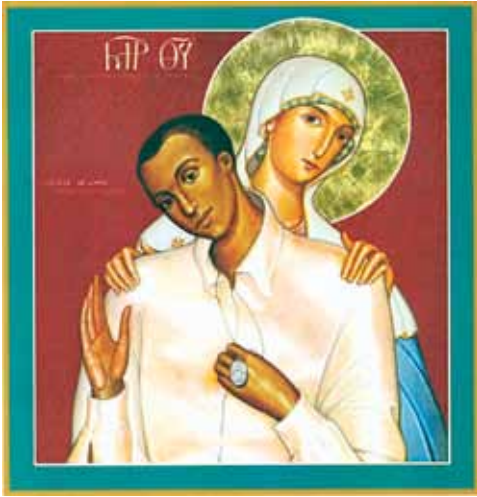
the past, and fear is not getting my way in the future. Jesus teaches us in the Our Father to place the present, the past, and the future into the hands of God. Only then can we hope to attain the inner peace that Christ promises. But we need to deal with the issues of anger, resentment, and fear. In this issue we discuss resentment, an emotion that, when unresolved, contributes to our problem behavior and deeply influences our lives.

### Resentment....

Among feelings of unexpressed anger, resentment is regarded  
*Continued on page four.*

## INSPIRATION FROM THE SAINTS

**CLAUDE NEWMAN.** The following true story of Claude Newman took place in Mississippi in 1944. The account was told by Father O'Leary, a prison chaplain from Mississippi, who was directly involved with the events.



*Mary the Teacher*  
© Copyright 2004  
Brother Claude, OSB, Mount Angel Abbey.

Claude Newman was an African-American who worked the fields for a wealthy landowner. One day, Claude killed a man who was attacking a friend. The man he killed turned out to be a favorite employee of the landowner. Claude was arrested and sentenced to die in the electric chair.

One of the prisoners incarcerated with Claude wore a miraculous medal on a chain around his neck. The prisoner wasn't interested in the medal and gave it to Claude, who with permission from the prison attendant, placed it on a string around his own neck. To him it was simply a pretty trinket. During the night, he was awakened with a touch on his wrist, and there stood, as Claude later told Fr. O'Leary, the most beautiful woman that God ever created. At first he was very frightened. The Lady calmed him down and then said to him, "If you would like me to be your Mother, and you would like to be my child, send for a priest of the Catholic Church." With that she disappeared. Father O'Leary came first thing the next morning. Claude told him of what had happened the night before. Then Claude, along with the other four men in his cell block, asked for religious instruction. At first Father O'Leary had difficulty believing the story. The other inmates believed what Claude related was true; but of course, they themselves neither saw nor heard the vision. Father O'Leary returned to the prison the next day to

begin instructions in the Faith for all five men in that cell block. He then learned that Claude could neither read nor write at all. Claude had never been to school. And he had very little knowledge about religion. He didn't know any prayers. He did not know who Jesus was. He did not know anything except that there was a God.

After a few days, two of the religious Sisters from Father O'Leary's parish school obtained permission from the warden to come to the prison. They wanted to meet Claude. The Sisters began to teach some of the women-prisoners catechism as well. Several weeks passed, and it came time for Father O'Leary to give instructions about the Sacrament of Confession. The Sisters too sat in on the class. The priest said to the prisoners, "Okay, guys, today I'm going to teach you about the Sacrament of Confession." Claude said, "Oh, I know about that! The Lady told me that when we go to confession we are kneeling down not before a priest, but we're kneeling down by the Cross of Her Son. And that when we are truly sorry for our sins, and we confess our sins, the Blood He shed flows down over us and washes us free from all sins." Father O'Leary was astonished and asked, "You have seen her again?" Asking the priest to talk to him in private, Claude said to the priest, "She told me that if you doubted me or showed hesitancy, I was to remind you that lying in a ditch in Holland, in 1940, you made a vow to her which she's still waiting for you to keep." And, Father O'Leary recalls, "Claude told me exactly what the vow was." This convinced Father O'Leary that Claude was telling the truth. There were many other things revealed to Claude by the vision that he related to Fr. O'Leary.

When time came for his execution, just fifteen minutes beforehand, the sheriff came running into the cell block shouting, "Reprieve, reprieve, the governor has given a two-week reprieve!" Claude had not been aware that the sheriff and the district attorney were trying to get a stay of execution to save his life. When Claude found out, he started to cry. The priest and the sheriff thought it was a reaction of joy because he was not going to be executed. But Claude said, "Oh, you men don't understand. If you ever looked into Her face, and looked into Her eyes, you wouldn't want to live another day." He was puzzled and said, "What have I done wrong these past weeks that God would refuse me my going home?" And the priest said that Claude sobbed as one who was brokenhearted. The sheriff left the room. The priest remained and gave Claude Holy Communion. Claude eventually quieted down. Then Claude asked, "Why? Why must I still remain here for two weeks?" The priest had a sudden idea. He reminded Claude about a prisoner in the jail who hated Claude intensely. This prisoner had led a horribly immoral life, and he, too, was sentenced to be executed. The priest said, "Maybe Our Blessed Mother wants you to offer this for his conversion. Why don't you offer to God every moment you are separated from Our Lady for this prisoner so that he will not be separated from God for all eternity?" Claude agreed, and asked the priest to teach him the words to make a proper offering. And so the priest did. At the time, the only two people who knew about this offering were Claude and Father O'Leary.

The next day, Claude said to the priest, "That prisoner hated me before, but oh! Father, how he hates me now!" His hatred increased when he saw that Claude had received a stay of execution. The priest said, "Well, that's a good sign." Two weeks later, Claude was executed. Father O'Leary remarked, "I've never seen anyone go to his death as joyfully and happily. Even the official witnesses and the newspaper reporters were amazed. They said they couldn't understand how anyone could

go and sit in the electric chair actually beaming with happiness. His last words to Father O'Leary were, "Father, I will remember you. And whenever you have a request, ask me, and I will ask Her."

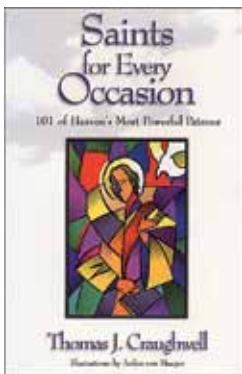
Two months later, the guy who hated Claude was to be executed. Father O'Leary said, "This man was the filthiest, most immoral person I had ever come across. His hatred for God and for everything spiritual defied description." Just before his execution, the county doctor pleaded with this man to at least kneel down and say the Our Father before the sheriff would come for him. The prisoner spat in the doctor's face. When he was strapped into the electric chair, the sheriff said to him, "If you have something to say, say it now." The condemned man started to blaspheme. All of a sudden the condemned man stopped, and his eyes became fixed on the corner of the room, and his face turned to one of absolute horror. He screamed. Turning to the sheriff, he then said, "Sheriff, get me a priest!" Now, because the law required a clergyman to be present at executions, Fr. O'Leary was already in the room. He had hidden himself behind some reporters because the condemned man had threatened to curse God if he saw a clergyman in the room. Father O'Leary immediately went to him. The room was cleared of everyone else, and the priest heard the man's confession. The man said he had been a Catholic, but turned away from his religion when he was 18 because of his immoral life. When everyone returned to the room, the sheriff asked the priest, "What made him change his mind?" "I don't know," said Father O'Leary, "I didn't ask him." The sheriff said, "Well, I'll never sleep if I don't." The sheriff went to the condemned man and asked, "Son, what changed your mind?" The prisoner responded, "Remember that black man Claude — the guy I hated so much? I saw him standing over in the corner, and behind him, with one hand on each shoulder, was the Blessed Mother. And Claude said to me, 'I offered my death in union with Christ on the Cross for your salvation. She has obtained for you this gift, to see your place in Hell if you do not repent.' I was shown my place in Hell, and that's when I screamed." The icon on the opposite page (done by Brother Claude of Mt. Angel Abbey) depicts the vision the condemned man saw.

This true story manifests to us believers that if we truly understood the beauty of God and His Blessed Mother, we would not fear being with them, we would not fear death. Claude Newman was anxious to die. This was the sentiment of many of our Saints who, in deep love with God, no longer desired to remain on earth. I remember going to the hospital some years back to anoint a beautiful and sweet gal who was dying; and she was afraid to die, which is understandable. But I told her that if Mother Teresa were in the next room, she would be the first one in line. Now it's hard to believe, but God and our Blessed Mother are actually nicer than Mother Teresa. Let's not let the devil control our lives through fear. And let us make efforts to resolve our resentments. ❀

There is enough heartache and sorrow in this life without our adding to it by acting out of fear, anger, and resentment.

Fr. Emmerich, O.P.

## RECOMMENDATIONS:



**SAINTS FOR EVERY OCCASION: 101 of Heaven's Most Powerful Patrons** by Thomas Craughwell. A wonderful gift given to us by the Lord is the "communion of saints"—the influence of our brothers and sisters in heaven who live with Jesus ever to make intercession for us. It's good to have friends in high places! These friends are the Saints—men, women, and children who have faced the same troubles and challenges that you face now. Befriend them. In *Saints for Every Occasion* you will meet 101 Saints, each of whom triumphed over immense obstacles in their lives and stand ready to help you do the same. Hardcover, 412 pp., \$19.95.

**SISTER IGNATIA: Angel of Alcoholics Anonymous** by Mary Darrah is the true story of a Sister of Charity of St. Augustine who, driven by a strong need for perfection and unable to recognize her deep fear of failure, eventually had a total physical and mental breakdown. After her own recovery, she began to help the founders of AA with treating alcoholics. A wonderful, inspiring, and true story that gives insights into the beginnings of the 12-step movement. Softcover, 300 pp., \$18.95.

**THE FREEDOM TO LOVE: Recovery and the Seven Deadly Sins** by Father Emmerich explores the need for virtue in the life of the Christian. It examines not only the seven deadly sins, but since virtue is the mean between extremes, it also studies their opposite extremes. The book takes a look at the capital sins, their opposing virtues and opposite extremes, all in the context of recovery. \$19.95. A Kindle edition (or e-book) is available through the internet at both Barnes & Noble and Amazon.

**THE RULE OF OUR WARFARE: Recovery Continues** is Father Emmerich's new sequel to his "Detaching with Love" series. Fr. Emmerich's 12-step approach to life and trials will give you encouragement to continue the hard work of overcoming self on the path to our ultimate fulfillment. 6 CDs, \$35.00. Brand new!

as the source of many mental and even physical illnesses. It has been defined as *anger-re-sent*. It's reliving the bitter hurts of our lives. Going through life with deep resentments leads only to unhappiness and futility in our efforts to get along. Resentment shuts us off from the sunlight of the Spirit, thereby preventing a genuine spiritual experience. Although our feelings and emotions have no moral component (sin lies in the will and not in how we feel), giving in to them rather than evangelizing them through virtue sets us up for addictive behavior. Fr. Fred, a recovering alcoholic and one of the characters in the book *The Anonymous Disciple*, in being honest about himself, noted:

*God, please help me to be free of anger and to see that the world and its people have dominated me. Show me that the wrong-doing of others, fancied or real, has the power to actually kill me. Help me to master my resentments by understanding that the people who wrong me were perhaps spiritually sick. Please help me show those I resent the same Tolerance, Pity and Patience that I would cheerfully grant a sick friend. Help me to see that this is a sick man. Father, please show me how I can be helpful to him and save me from being angry. Lord, help me to avoid retaliation or argument. I know I can't be helpful to all people, but at least show me how to take a kindly and tolerant view of each and every one. Thy will be done.*

AA Big Book

I was one of those people ... who wouldn't allow myself to have any feelings before AA. I ignored them to the best of my ability, but they didn't ignore me. I began to learn from the warnings in the [AA] 'Big Book' about resentment and self-pity. Those are feelings. They won't get me physically drunk but they'll set me up.

AA regards resentment as the number one offender. "It destroys more alcoholics than anything else." And so the person in recovery has to learn how to deal with resentment, otherwise he is tempted to seek some comfort in a drink or a drug of some sort. When something negative happens to us, the only thing in our power is our attitude toward it. We can either accept it or resent it. It can be a sacred wound or a bitter wound. Having come to a deep love for the Mother of God, the murderer Claude Newman repented of his past and let go of his resentment towards his powerful landowner and a fellow inmate who hated him, and he discovered deep peace. Any wrong done him was accepted as a participation in the redemptive love of Christ. With this attitude, Claude was even able to offer his execution for an enemy—the inmate who hated him and uttered all kinds of calumny against him. As a result of Claude's prayerful and loving intercession on his behalf, the enemy repented and found redemption before his death. This is the evidential power of faith. Harboring resentment, on the other hand, evokes anger and frustration, and when unresolved results in depression. I heard someone say that harboring a resentment is like taking a little bit of poison and expecting the other person to die. It only harms and sours us. We need to inventory the resentments to find healing.

### The Way Out....

The AA Big Book gives a lesson in Step Four on how to resolve resentments. It advises prayer for those we resent:

If you have a resentment you want to be free of, if you will pray for the person or the thing that you resent, you will be free. If you will ask in prayer for everything you want for yourself to be given to them, you will be free... Even when you don't really want it for them, and your prayers are only words and you don't mean it, go ahead and do it anyway. Do it every day for two weeks and you will find you have come to mean it and to want it for them, and you will realize that where you used to feel bitterness and resentment and hatred, you now feel compassionate understanding and love [p. 552].

The first step is to recognize that we have resentments and the second is to be willing to resolve them. It is meaningless to continue a life of prayer, attending church, while our resentments remain unresolved (as Jesus cautions in Matthew 5:23). Our entire self-concept has been molded by the opinions and actions

of others in our dependencies, and we get easily hurt when things don't go our way. As Fr. Fred expresses it: "There is a social part. I can't get along with people. I want to have my own way. I'm self-centered. I'm demanding things be done my way. I can't cooperate with people... I get isolated." And resentment builds up, as with Judas.

The Big Book suggests we write down our resentments and look for where we were wrong. It says:

Putting out of our minds the wrongs others had done, we resolutely looked for our own mistakes. Where had we been selfish, dishonest, self-seeking and frightened? Though a situation had not been entirely our fault, we tried to disregard the other person involved entirely. Where were we to blame? The inventory was ours, not the other man's.

[Big Book, page 67, line 11]

### Resentment Exercise

1. Pray, asking God to help undo the resentment as He wills.
2. Write it down: I resent ... because ...
3. Say a prayer forgiving the person.
4. Say a prayer asking God to show you the truth about yourself in the resentment. Regarding the situation: how was I

- A. Selfish
- B. Dishonest
- C. Self-seeking
- D. Frightened?

#### 5. Identify three demands:

- A. The demand to control
- B. The demand to be right
- C. The demand to be a victim

#### 6. Say a prayer asking God to show you the truth and the lie.

#### 7. Do something nice for the person and if not possible in the physical sense, then do it spiritually, as Claude Newman did.

The way out of a painful situation is to recognize the part we played in it. ❁

To show resentment at a reproach is to acknowledge that one may have deserved it.

Tacitus

### THE 12-STEP REVIEW

2001 NW 94th Street  
Vancouver, WA 98665  
1-800-556-6177

[www.12-step-review.org](http://www.12-step-review.org)

