

THE TWELVE-STEP REVIEW

Fr. Emmerich Vogt, O.P.



Summer 2015

Dear friends,

Here are some future missions and retreats. Please also check beforehand in case of a cancellation. If you are ever interested in sponsoring a mission at your own parish, you can call Rebecca at Western Dominican Preaching and request she send a pamphlet explaining the mission either to you or your pastor. She can be reached at:

510-593-1800 or emailed at: preaching@opwest.org.

Here are some future retreats and parish missions:

✦ June 19 - 21, 2015, weekend conferences at Paul Inside the Walls, Madison, WI, www.insidethewalls.org.

✦ June 26 - 28, 2015, retreat for laity at Westminster Abbey, Mission, British Columbia.

✦ September 25 - 27, weekend retreat at Casa Maria, Irondale, AL. www.sisterservants.org.

✦ October 5 - 8, 2015. St. Joseph Mareello parish mission, Granite Bay, CA.

All who told it added something new. And all who heard it made enlargements, too. In every ear it spread, on every tongue it grew.
A. Pope: *The Temple of Fame*

What you hear here, stays here ...

At many twelve-step meetings the following warning is given:

What you see here, what you hear here, when you leave here, let it stay here.

This is to remind members not to repeat anything they have heard in the meetings. Those who speak or share at the meetings will disclose personal information spoken in confidence. If such information were to be divulged outside of the rooms it could embarrass them or even have legal ramifications.

WHO AM I?

I have no respect for justice. I maim without killing.

I break hearts and ruin lives.

I am cunning and malicious and gather strength with age.

The more I am quoted, the more I am believed.

I flourish at every level of society.

My victims are helpless; they cannot protect themselves against me because I have no name and no face.

To track me down is impossible.

The harder you try, the more elusive I become.

I am nobody's friend.

Once I tarnish a reputation, it is never the same.

I topple governments and ruin marriages.

I end ministries set up by God.

I ruin careers and cause sleepless nights, heartache and indigestion.

I spawn suspicion and generate grief.

I make headlines, headaches and heartaches.

I make innocent people cry in their pillows.

Even my name hisses.

I AM GOSSIP.

In addition, it can produce an atmosphere that isn't safe, thus defeating the need to talk in order to be healed. And the Christian knows it is sinful not to keep confidences confidential. The founders of the 12-step movement knew the damage of gossip. We would do well to follow the wisdom of this Gospel warning:

I tell you, on the day of judgment people will give an account for every careless word they speak (Matt. 12:36).

Continued on the last page

INSPIRATION FROM THE SAINTS

FRANCISCO, JACINTA, AND SISTER LUCIA. The beauty of faith can be seen in the lives of these three children of Fatima to whom the Virgin Mary entrusted an important message for the good of Christians and therefore the good of the world, for as St. Augustine once said regarding the Roman Empire, “Take to yourselves good Christians, and you will have good Citizens.” Christians who live their baptismal promises make for good moral people and thus good citizens.



Evil is destructive of human life; goodness is constructive. Christ has taught us the values that make us free people. Living those values frees us from our enemies: the world, the flesh and the devil, and only a free, moral people constitute good citizens. The Fatima event stresses the need for Christians to return to their baptismal promises in renouncing evil in all its forms.

When Lucia and her two cousins were shepherding their sheep, an angel appeared to them in the form of a young man. [Now angels as spirits have no eyes, no tongues, no brains, etc., and yet this angel could manifest himself to the children and speak their language, which perhaps gives us a notion of what life will be like for us after death and until the resurrection of our glorified bodies.] The children were greeted with, “Do not be afraid. I am the angel of peace. Pray with me.” He knelt, bending his forehead to the ground. “With a supernatural impulse,” Lucia recalled, “we did the same, repeating the words we heard him say:

‘My God, I believe, I adore, I hope, and I love You. I ask forgiveness for those who do not believe, nor adore, nor hope, nor love You.’

After repeating this prayer three times the angel rose and said to us: ‘Pray in this way. The hearts of Jesus and Mary are ready to listen to you.’ And he disappeared.” We sense here the famous words of Blaise Pascal,

“The heart has its reasons, which reason does not know. We feel it in a thousand things. It is the heart which experiences God, and not reason. This, then, is faith: God felt by the heart, not by reason.”

This quote gives us insight into the prevalence of the Sacred and Immaculate Hearts in Catholic devotion, for the heart speaks to us of love, a love that transcends the power of reason, things that reason itself cannot penetrate—not irrationality, not being contrary to reason, but beyond reason’s grasp, for those Hearts speak to us of love. But love demands sacrifice.

In the second appearance of the angel, the importance of sacrifice was impressed upon the children. He told them, “You must offer your prayers and sacrifices to God, the Most High.”

“But how are we to sacrifice?” Lucia asked him.

“In every way you can, offer sacrifice to God in reparation for the sins by which He is offended, and in supplication for sinners. In this way you will bring peace to your country, for I am its guardian angel, the Angel of Portugal. Above all, bear and accept with patience the sufferings God will send you.”

There is great suffering in the world because of sin. If man had not sinned, suffering and death would not be our lot in what has become a Valley of Tears. God allows the suffering because, as St. Augustine put it, “God deemed it better to bring evil out of good than that the evil never occur.” Without the eyes of faith, it’s difficult for us to see the good that God can bring about in and through the evil, good that would never have occurred had the evil not occurred. For example, my grandmother, a Catholic woman, when pregnant with her fourth child, lost her husband to an unfortunate accident. One could ask, “Where was God?” We often see this theme in movies which consciously portray religious people as becoming bitter against a God who apparently, because of the evil, is said not to exist. But such reasoning fails to understand that we owe our existence to suffering. Thus my grandmother, having lost her husband, ended up marrying again and having two daughters with the second husband. The youngest lived to be a great grandmother. Now those two women, their children, grandchildren, and great grandchildren are alive because their mother lost her first husband in an accident. It is owing to that loss that they lived. Nowhere does Christ say, “Believe in me and your troubles are over.” Rather, He supplies us with the grace to bring great good out of evil, as in His own crucifixion.

Fatima is a call to offer in union with and out of love for Christ all the troubles that come our way, repairing the damages of sin. This the alcoholic and codependent do when they embrace the spirituality of the 12 steps, admitting their powerlessness in Step One, and then in the rest of the Steps appropriating the graces won for us by the sacrifice of Christ. ❀

HOLY CHILDREN OF FATIMA, PRAY FOR US

RECOMMENDATIONS:

FATHER EMMERICH'S NEW CONFERENCES:

RECOVERY AND THE MESSAGE OF FATIMA

In this series of lectures, given at Casa Maria, Fr. Emmerich looks at how the message of Fatima, one of moral transformation and spiritual renewal, and the aims of 12-step recovery programs are both oriented toward finding true, lasting peace in our broken, sinful world. He shows that a man or woman of prayer must make an effort to grow in virtue if he or she wishes to recover from the effects of sin.



Preaching in Fatima in 1965, Cardinal Ferdinand Cento reminded pilgrims:

“We come to Fatima to be purified. We come to be changed from listless, lukewarm Catholics into fervent apostles. From Fatima we should depart by another way, renewed and transformed.”

This is what the message of Fatima is about: our true renewal and transformation by living Gospel principles. These are the principles that change the world for the better. And this is what recovery is about. It is about deep inner conversion. 12-Step recovery is the message of the Gospel put into concrete steps for every Christian. 12-Step wisdom comes from 2,000 years of lived Christian experience.

The first Step is about that powerlessness of which St. Paul speaks in Romans 7. We get caught up in an unmanageable lifestyle, as St. Paul expresses it: “The good I want to do, I don’t do. The evil I do not want to do, that I do. I can will what’s right, but I cannot do it.” Thus the first step in recovery: accepting that we’re powerless. All of us are powerless against the assaults of sin. We have a wounded nature. We’re born with it. It needs care, grace, guidance. We need to build up moral and spiritual antibodies if we are to resist the assaults of sin successfully.

Regarding the message of Fatima, Pope Benedict remarked, “I would like [finally] to mention another key expression of the ‘secret’ which has become justly famous: ‘My Immaculate Heart will triumph.’ What does this mean? The heart open to God, purified by contemplation of God, is stronger than guns and weapons of every kind. The fiat of Mary [Step 11], the word of her heart, has changed the history of the world, because it brought the Savior into the world—because, thanks to her ‘Yes,’ God could become man in our world and remains so for all time. The Evil One has power in this world, as we see and experience continually; he has power because our freedom continually lets itself be led away from God. But since God himself took a human heart and has thus steered human freedom towards what is good, the freedom to choose evil no longer has the last word. From that time forth, the word that prevails is this: ‘In the world you will have tribulation, but take heart; I have overcome the world’ (Jn 16:33).”

The message of Fatima invites us to trust in this promise as we seek to live out the concrete principles of the Twelve Steps.

The series comes on 5 CDs for a donation of \$35.00, plus shipping and handling.

PRAYER CARDS AVAILABLE. Father Emmerich has a set of eight recovery prayer cards. 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.

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In addition to renouncing gossip, the individual Christian is urged to “speak evil of no one” (Titus 2:3-4). This is lost upon modern media where not only does gossip reign supreme, but false stories are constantly put forward by the tabloids. All of us are familiar with the tabloid headlines that affront us as we’re waiting to check out at the grocery store. The prevalence of this evil has had a devastating impact on those who have grown up in a culture of gossip and slander, causing young people whose shameful behavior was broadcast on the internet to commit suicide. What grave evil is being promoted and tolerated!

Calumny and Detraction:

And withal they learn to be idle, wandering about from house to house; and not only idle, but tattlers also and busybodies, speaking things which they ought not (1 Timothy 5:13).

Sacred Scripture warns against the evil, not simply of revealing private and confidential matters, but even of discussing matters that could otherwise be known, if there is no good purpose for the revelation. We must sincerely seek to be sure our accusations are true. But even when we have the truth, that does not mean we are right in spreading the information. Some people think they can say anything about anyone as long as they feel sure it is true. But there is also the question of motive: there must be good reasons for telling bad things about others.

Sometimes people spread stories because they want to hurt people’s reputation, and this is a grave sin of detraction. Detraction is the sin of revealing another person’s faults to a third person without a valid reason. This differs from the sin of calumny and the civil wrong of defamation, which generally involve false accusations rather than unflattering truths. It is possible to injure another’s good name either by telling lies about that person or by revealing hidden faults which should not be revealed. To tell lies about another person is called calumny or slander. To reveal the hidden faults or sins of another without sufficient cause, in such wise that the person’s reputation or good name is seriously damaged, is called the sin of detraction, a sin against the Eighth Commandment. The Catechism (#2464) tells us:

Let us then join with those to whom grace is given from God; let us put on concord in meekness of spirit and in self-control, keeping ourselves far from all gossip and evil speaking, being justified by works and not by words.

Pope St. Clement I

The eighth commandment forbids misrepresenting the truth in our relations with others. This moral prescription flows from the vocation of the holy people to bear witness to their God who is the truth and wills the truth. Offenses against the truth express by word or deed a refusal to commit oneself to moral uprightness: they are fundamental infidelities to God and, in this sense, they undermine the foundations of the covenant.

However, just because we have spoken about someone who is not present — even saying bad things about them — does not in itself constitute a sin. And so we read in Sacred Scripture [Matthew 15:12-14] that after Jesus had finished rebuking the Pharisees, His disciples told Him that He had offended them. Though the Pharisees obviously were no longer present, Jesus proceeded to warn His disciples about the evils of the Pharisees.

And see Galatians 2:11-14, where St. Paul told Christians in Galatia about a sin Peter had committed in Antioch. In certain circumstances we are obliged to tell others of someone’s wrongdoing as we see in Matthew 18:17.

But the purpose is not to ruin someone’s reputation or to spread gossip about them, but to rectify a serious wrong that needs to

Circumcise the lips of my mouth and the lips of my mind of all rash speech.

St. Augustine

be addressed. We can see that it is not necessarily wrong to sincerely ask someone about what they did, but it is slander to accuse someone without substantial evidence that they are guilty. And regarding rash judgments, St. Thomas Aquinas cautions us, for in our judgment we would say the Apostle is going to Heaven whereas the murderer will be condemned. As it turned out, the Apostle Judas despaired and killed himself, whereas the murderer, called Dismas, stole heaven and is a Saint! ❁

THE 12-STEP REVIEW

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