



# THE TWELVE-STEP REVIEW

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## FALL 2019

Dear friends,

Many people ask for my schedule for missions and conferences, so here is a list, but always check first, as changes do occur.

- Dec. 2-5 Mission, St. Stephen, Renton, WA.
- Dec. 9-12 Retreat, Star of the Sea, Bremerton, WA.
- Dec. 16-19 Mission, Holy Spirit and St. Lawrence, Carrol, IA.
- Jan. 6-9 Mission, St. Thomas, Redmond, OR.
- Jan. 27-30 Mission, St. Elizabeth Ann Seton, Crystal Lake, IL.
- Feb. 14-16 Marian Conference, St. Louis, MO.
- March 2-5 Mission, Our Lady of Good Counsel, San Leandro, CA.
- March 9-12 Mission, St. Monica, Mercer Island, WA.
- March 16-19 Mission, Basilica of St. Mary, Arlington, VA.
- March 21-24 Mission, St. Michael, Woodstock, GA.
- March 30-April 2 Mission, St. Patrick, Columbus, OH.



## Blessed are the Merciful

The daily news makes it only too evident that our world is inhabited by truly unbearable wickedness, and that this wickedness is out of our control. How many young people are aware that the 20th century was the most murderous in all of human history? Will the 21st century be any better? The journalist John Allen has written a book entitled *The Global War on Christians*, where he reports that already in the early years of the 21st century, martyrdom remains a stunning common fact of Christian life. *The low end* estimate he gives for the number of Christians murdered each year for their faith is one martyr every hour. There are more new martyrs today than in the early Church. It is a statistical fact, he reports, that

today the greatest danger zones for Christians are also places where the Church is growing rapidly.

The sad fact is that we as Christians contribute to this situation by refusing to live the fullness of our faith by supporting behavior that is antithetical to being followers of Christ. Many movies of late — and even songs — condone or even glorify revenge. For example, there was a movie a few years back starring Halle Berry entitled *The Call*. It was an intriguing mystery, but it ends glorifying revenge. Carrie Underwood, who considers herself a Gospel Christian, had a hit song called *Blown Away*. It, too, ends with the theme of revenge, “sweet revenge,” she calls it, sweet revenge against the

character in her song’s alcoholic father. Her father is a sick alcoholic and needs healing. Yes, he needs to be held responsible for any misdeeds that occurred because of his alcoholism. In recovery he would need to practice Steps 8 and 9 which concern making amends for wrongs done. Jesus didn’t come to condemn but to save what was lost. As His followers we should want the same thing.

Saint Thomas Aquinas notes that nothing makes us more God-like than merciful forgiveness. He explains mercy as having a pain in our heart over the pain of another and to take pains to relieve their pain. This is what God did for us in becoming man. He

“I love the Lord, for he heard my voice; he heard my cry for mercy. Because he turned his ear to me, I will call on him as long as I live.”  
Psalms 116:1-2

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## INSPIRATION FROM THE SAINTS

One of the greatest problems in the Christian faith is the reality of suffering. Every day in the news we can see a dark agency operating in the world. The 20th century saw more murderous behavior than in any other period in the history of mankind, and yet God is portrayed in Christ as unrestricted, merciful, self-giving LOVE. Now if God cares for us so that He was willing to be executed as a criminal to overcome the power of evil and of death, why does He allow such evil in the first place? Father Emmerich considers this in his new CD set of retreat conferences — *A Promise Lives Within You* — and gives his take on the problem of evil. In that context, here are some saints who would not have accomplished much if suffering had not been an integral part of their earthly lives. Keep in mind that God would never allow anything to interfere with our salvation and freedom and other peoples' salvation and freedom.

### **Saints who followed the path they perceived God had chosen for them:**

- **T**here was a child whose mother died of a heart attack when he was eight years old. His only sister Olga died before he was born. His only brother, Edmund, to whom he was very close, died of scarlet fever. This left a profound wound in his young heart. When he was twenty his father died of a heart attack. Suffering these losses, years later he remarked, "I was not at my mother's death, I was not at my brother's death, I was not at my father's death. At twenty, I had already lost all the people I loved." Realizing that all things in this world are passing, he decided to turn his whole life over to the unchanging God of love and entered the underground seminary in Nazi-controlled Poland. He became a priest, a bishop, a cardinal, a Pope, and a canonized saint. Do you think that St. John Paul would have achieved all this — and not just for himself but for the Church and for the world — without the grace of the Cross?
- **T**here was a young girl — the youngest of three children — whose father was murdered when she was about eight years old. She grew up in a country ruled by the Ottoman Empire, with Muslims, Orthodox Christians, and Catholics. After the death of her father, and inspired by missionaries, she felt called by God to give herself completely over to His will. And so she left home at eighteen with the blessing of her mother to join the Loreto Sisters in Calcutta. With the permission of Rome she left the Loreto Sisters to found her own religious order to serve the poorest of the poor. Do you think there would have been a Saint Teresa of Calcutta if she had grown up in an intact family that had not descended into poverty with the loss of her father? She said of herself, "By blood, I am Albanian. By citizenship, an Indian. By faith, I am a Catholic nun. As to my calling, I belong to the world. As to my heart, I belong entirely to the Heart of Jesus."
- **T**here was a young girl named Margaret born to a farming family. When she was seven her mother died and her father remarried. Margaret did not get along with her stepmother and at seventeen she ran off with a young guy from a well-to-do family, became his mistress and bore him a son. The man was eventually murdered. She tried to return home, but her stepmother wouldn't permit it, so she took her son and went to the Franciscan friars at Cortona, Italy, where she became a Third Order member and lived a life of poverty, begging for her food. She eventually established a hospice for the sick poor and established a religious order devoted to Our Lady of Mercy to help in her ministry to the poor. Saint Margaret of Cortona was canonized in 1728, and her incorrupt body is preserved in a silver casket in Cortona, in a church named after her. Think of all the sick poor who would not have had any care given them had it not been for the crosses Margaret had to bear throughout her life.

I end here with a quote from Saint Thomas More to his daughter Margaret just before his martyrdom:

*I shall not mistrust Him, Meg, though I shall feel myself weakening and on the verge of being overcome with fear. I shall remember how Saint Peter at a blast of wind began to sink because of his lack of faith, and I shall do as he did: call upon Christ and pray to Him for help. And then I trust He shall place His holy hand on me and in the stormy seas hold me up from drowning.*

## FATHER EMMERICH'S NEW RETREAT CONFERENCES

**A Promise Lives Within You.** In this latest retreat given at Casa Maria Retreat House in Irondale, Alabama, Fr. Emmerich explores the questions, "What is our purpose in life, what is our goal, what were we created for? Is there something in our nature as persons created in the image and likeness of God that might reveal this to us?" He uses C. S. Lewis as a guide in pursuing the answers where Lewis notes, "Creatures are not born with desires unless satisfaction for those desires exists. A baby feels hunger: well, there is such a thing as food. A duckling wants to swim: well, there is such a thing as water. Men feel sexual desire: well, there is such a thing as sex. If I find in myself a desire which no experience in this world can satisfy, the most probable explanation is that I was made for another world." Fr. Emmerich explores this in the context of the Mysteries of the Rosary and ends with the problem of suffering. A 4-CD set. Available for a donation of \$35.00 + S & H.

### Boundaries: Where You End and I Begin

There are some very insightful books that can help a person understand the need for appropriate boundaries. Having clear boundaries is essential to a healthy, balanced lifestyle. A boundary is a personal property line that marks those things for which we are responsible. In other words, boundaries define who we are and who we are not. Boundaries impact all areas of our lives: Physical boundaries help us determine who may touch us and under what circumstances—Mental boundaries give us the freedom to have our own thoughts and opinions—Emotional boundaries help us to deal with our own emotions and disengage from the harmful, manipulative emotions of others—Spiritual boundaries help us to distinguish God's will from our own and give us renewed awe for our Creator. Often, Christians focus so much on being loving and unselfish that they forget their own limits and limitations. When confronted with their lack of boundaries, they ask:—Can I set limits and still be a loving person?—What are legitimate boundaries?—What if someone is upset or hurt by my boundaries?—How do I answer someone who wants my time, love, energy, or money?—Aren't boundaries selfish?—Why do I feel guilty or afraid when I consider setting boundaries? In the books listed below, Dr. Henry Cloud and Dr. John Townsend offer biblically-based answers to these and other tough questions, showing us how to set healthy boundaries with our parents, spouses, children, friends, co-workers, and even ourselves. For over two decades, these best-selling authors have devoted themselves to helping people discover solutions to life's most difficult personal and relational challenges. The books below are recommendations and can be purchased from Amazon or Barnes & Noble.

**Boundaries: When to say YES, When to say NO, to Take Control of Your Life.** The authors give you the biblical basis for setting boundaries, explain how you can construct your own, and show how boundaries can be damaged. They also give you methods for dealing with abusive or controlling people and keys for gaining control of your life.

Setting boundaries with children is another topic of interest to our readers, and so we recommend **Boundaries with Kids.** Drawing from numerous case studies, Drs. Cloud and Townsend explain how to implement the "preventative medicine" of character development in your household. They'll show you how to define legitimate family boundaries, bring control to chaotic family life, help your children develop their own healthy boundaries, and more.

Between single life and marriage lies the journey of dating. **Boundaries in Dating** helps you to learn how to make your road as smooth as possible by setting and maintaining healthy boundaries—boundaries that will help you grow in freedom, honesty, and self-control.

Only when you and your spouse know and respect each other's needs, choices, and freedom can you give yourselves freely and lovingly to one another. **Boundaries in Marriage** gives you the tools you need. The authors show how to apply the principles of boundaries to your marriage.

Holy Cards available: *Serenity Prayer, Prayer of St. Bernard, and Prayer to Our Lady of Recovery.* Give us a call.

created us in His image and likeness for eternal happiness, but sin entered the world. 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. And revenge is one of those evils we should never be a part of.

One of the major themes of the Bible is reconciliation. Jesus came, not to condemn, but to reconcile what was lost; to restore lost innocence, to bring healing. Recently you heard in the news about a white female officer in Dallas—Amber Guyger—who shot and killed an African American. Coming home one evening, she thought she was entering her own apartment but she had the wrong floor, the wrong apartment, and thought the black guy was an intruder, and so in fear she shot him—and he died from those wounds. She was sentenced to prison for second-degree murder.

At the trial, the African American's 18-year-old brother forgave the killer. Not only that, but he asked the judge if he could give Amber a hug, which he did as she sobbed and sobbed and sobbed. He told the woman who killed his brother:

*I'm not going to say I hope you rot and die. . . . I personally want the best for you. . . . I don't even want you to go to jail. I want the best for you, because I know that is what [my brother] would want.*

The 18-year-old brother then encouraged the killer to give her life to Christ. The district attorney was overwhelmed by the young man's compassion and remarked, "That man is 18, and he's a leader. He should guide us to healing."

After the verdict, the judge, Tammy Kemp, also an African American, gave the killer a Bible and embraced her as well. People in the courtroom were in tears at such mercy. This is the mercy that Christ manifested in His life and called us to do the same.

*Mercy: to have a pain in our hearts over the pain of another, and to take pains to relieve their pain.*

The world needs mercy, not revenge. It's important to point out, however, that mercy does not prescind from justice. Justice had to be rendered but—as with the murdered man's brother—we want justice that is restorative, not retributive. This is Christian: we want salvation for the one who has done wrong, and justice, but restorative justice. Jesus came to heal us sinners, and we are all sinners.

But District Judge Tammy Kemp has come under fire for the compassion she showed to police officer Amber Guyger. There was an outcry in the media over Judge Kemp's actions which occurred after the sentencing. The judge said regarding the killer, "And she asked me if I thought her life could still have purpose. And I said, 'Absolutely.'"

Judge Tammy Kemp then said she went to get her Bible and encouraged Amber to read Bible verses after the former officer said she wouldn't know where to begin to change her life.

"And then she requested of me a hug. And, I'm embarrassed to say, I didn't say yes right away," Kemp said. "She asked me a second time and between those asks I was reminded about my responsibility to show love and compassion. I could not refuse that woman a hug. I would not," said Judge Tammy Kemp. "I'm surprised that people think that hug was somehow detrimental," she told the Associated Press. "Had you witnessed the person who was hurting as Miss Guyger was, I don't know a person who would have denied her that human contact."

Unfortunately, there are self-righteous people who would deny compassion. Protests came from civil liberty advocates, like The Freedom From Religion Foundation, a watchdog for the separation of church and state, who were outraged that the judge would encourage Amber to find meaning in the Bible.

Most pathetic of all are those who relish every opportunity to condemn people who hold Gospel values, the very values that have given them the freedoms they enjoy but which because of neo-paganism are eroding in the West. A culture without God becomes a culture of death. We see it every day in the news.

They do not want mercy and forgiveness but revenge.

*There is no hope of the human race improving itself in any definitive way except by the mercy of God and the acceptance of His grace.*

May we all pray for the merciful brother of the man killed, for Amber who killed him, and for the merciful judge. ❀

## THE 12-STEP REVIEW

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