



THE TWELVE STEP REVIEW

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Winter 2020

Dear friends,

We decided to start the Newsletter year with Winter, then the other seasons follow. So this newsletter (which would have been “Winter 2019” and since 2019 is gone) we are labeling it “Winter 2020.” The next newsletter will then be “Spring 2020.”

Here are some up and coming Parish Missions and

Retreats:

- * 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, Alexandria, VA.
- * March 21-24 Mission St. Michael, Woodstock, GA.
- * March 30 - April 2 Mission, St.

Patrick, Columbus, OH.

- * June 5 - 7 Serenity Retreat, Immaculate Heart Retreat Center, Spokane, WA.
- * September 25 - 27 Serenity Retreat, Casa Maria Retreat House, Irondale, Alabama.

Please always confirm as sometimes events change.



The Power of Addiction and the Power of Grace

What we do to our bodies affects our moral and spiritual well-being. For example, a person can work themselves up into a rage and this causes a chemical reaction in the body. There is lots of chemistry going on while becoming angry. Chemicals are very much involved in human actions.

How anger is controlled or expressed depends on the individual. You can either handle it in a very healthy way or in a not so healthy way. Behavior is how you express the way you are going to handle problems. To be in control of our feelings and emotions takes virtue. Virtue is freedom. It guards us from addiction. To acquire virtue is the purpose of our spiritual exercises.

The most complex body organ,

the brain, is impacted by substances in different ways. Drugs of abuse, whose chemical structures mimic natural neurotransmitters, interfere with normal neuronal processing, releasing neurotransmitters in excessive amounts, providing greater pleasure than naturally pleasing survival activities. A person becomes addicted because of this.

Addiction is often called a “disease” (which has its opponents). The disease concept of addiction is helpful in that it fosters our understanding that addiction is not simply a lack of willpower. Rather, the addict is swallowed up by a power beyond his control. This was the insight of Sister Ignatia back in 1939 when she was the first to admit an alcoholic into a hospital (St. Thomas Hospital in Ak-

ron Ohio). St. Augustine, himself having been addicted to lust, calls all the seven deadly sins diseases - diseases of the soul. When a person becomes an addict he is swallowed up by a power he cannot control.

The Devil and Addiction

Cormac McCarthy wrote a book, *No Country for Old Men* — which was made into a movie and was nominated for four academy awards, winning for Best Picture. It deals with a drug deal gone wrong. The character Sheriff Bell describes the figure of **Satan**: “I think if you were Satan and you were settin’ around tryin’ to think up somethin’ that would just bring the human race to its knees, what you would probably come up with is narcotics.” A

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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 feeling 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.
6. *Christian Roots of 12-step spirituality* This pamphlet reviews the history of the Twelve-Step Movement, from its earliest days in the 1920's Oxford Groups. Many of the major influences in its development and the people involved were devout Christians and used their faith as the foundation for the success of the movement, whose principles came from 2,000 years of lived Christian experience.

OUR MORE RECENT 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 a large request 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 Ford. 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 who 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.

See other recommendations on-line at www.12-step-review.org. Or call us toll free at: 800-556-6177.

The Power of Addiction, continued.

great insight.

The devil wants to bring us under his power, and what a better way to do it than with addiction. We see many wonderfully talented people in Hollywood whose lives were destroyed by addiction. You think of the beautiful and talented Whitney Houston — not just a great singer, but a great actress, and filthy rich — dead in her forties from addiction. And then her daughter Bobby Kristina Brown, in her twenties, whose fiancé also died from an overdose at the age of 30. Michael Jackson, extremely talented, dead at 50 from drugs. His beautiful rich, and popular daughter, Paris, has tried now three times to kill herself. Adele's friend and classmate Amy Winehouse, dead from addiction at 27. Joaquin Phoenix recently won an award for his role as the Joker. In his acceptance speech he paid tribute to his "favorite actor" Heath Ledger, who had played the Joker before him. Heath died from addiction at 38, as did Joaquin's talented brother River Phoenix at 23. Prince was 57. The singer Chris Cross was 34. Robert Kennedy's granddaughter Saoirse Kennedy was found dead at her family's Massachusetts compound last year. The 22 year old died of an overdose. Philip Seymour Hoffman, another very talented actor nominated for two academy awards (he won for playing Truman Capote) dead at 46 with a needle in his arm, leaving behind three children.

Why would such talented and gifted people allow themselves to fall into addiction? My answer comes from something uttered by Viktor Frankl, who wrote a famous book entitled, *Man's Search for Meaning*. As a Jew, he was arrested by the Nazi's and imprisoned in a concentration camp. As a psychiatrist he noted that it was those people who lost their hold over moral and spiritual values who were the ones who fell victim to the dehumanizing influences of the camps. This, I would argue, is the problem with the gifted, talented people mentioned above.

Because they do not have the moral and spiritual

antibodies built up in their system, so to speak, they cannot resist the temptation of drugs as a means to dealing with their problems. They are indeed powerless. The first step in any twelve step program is to admit that powerlessness, and then proceed to find the power that is needed to overcome addiction. **Man can be liberated only by a power greater than himself.**

It was a relief to see Demi Lovato return to performing at this year's Grammy Awards and the Super Bowl, having at the age of 26 survived an overdose. She

almost died. But what is deeply saddening is that people like her and those other talented people take no responsibility for the slaughter by a drug cartel of those American women and their children last year. Why did they slaughter those innocent women and children? Because Americans — such as Demi Lovato, Chris Cross, River Phoenix. Saoirse

Kennedy, Philip Seymour Hoffman, etc. — spend over 100 billion dollars on illegal drugs every year, and anyone who gets in the way of those drug cartels will not survive. Wealthy Hollywood types are supporting the drug cartels and take no responsibility for it. It probably never even enters their minds.

Jesus explains that the devil "was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies" (John 8:44). Satan is first a liar and then a murderer. So Cormac McCarthy was very insightful on the role the devil plays in addiction. People buy into the lie and he's got control of their lives through addiction. Every day in the News we see that our world is inhabited by unbearable evil. Drugs turn people into demoniacs who, once under the influence, can do outrageous evil (like a drug-addicted woman who recently smothered her three small children while under the influence).

Not only do Americans spend billions each year on illegal drugs, but the U.S. porn industry rakes in ap-

The devil comes and tempts all the servants of God. Those who are strong in the faith resist him and he goes away from them, because he cannot find entrance. So, he goes then to what is empty and, finding an entrance, he goes into them. Thus he accomplishes in them whatever he pleases and makes them his slaves.

Shepherd of Hermas (2nd century)

proximately \$11 billion annually, according to CNBC and figures calculated by California's state legislature. The societal costs of pornography are staggering. The financial cost to business productivity in the U.S. alone is estimated at \$16.9 billion annually; but the human toll, particularly among our youth and in our families, is far greater.

Pornography hurts adults, children, couples, families, and society. Among adolescents, pornography hinders the development of a healthy sexuality, and among adults, it distorts sexual attitudes and social realities. In families, pornography use leads to marital dissatisfaction, infidelity, separation, and divorce.

Now lest we look down upon addicts, we have to remind ourselves, "But for the grace of God, there go I." The purpose of having a practical spiritual program as is found in 12-Steps is the building up of moral and spiritual antibodies to protect us sinners from addictive behavior that destroys the life of grace. We may not be drug addicts or porn addicts but we are (to use a term coined by Peter Kreeft) *sinaholics*. We are not addicted to patience, nor humility, nor charity, but sin. A wise person recognizes his need for the healing graces offered by Gospel living.

Alexsandr Solzhenitsyn, in his book *Gulag Archipelago* where he reflects on the life of the prisoners in the gulag, the Soviet forced labor camp, notes:

"If only it were all so simple! If only there were evil people somewhere insidiously committing evil deeds, and it were necessary only to separate them from the rest of us and destroy them. But the line dividing good and evil cuts through the heart of every human being."

There is a civil war going on in each of our hearts, a war against pride, lust, greed, envy, anger, sloth, and gluttony. And only the Power of grace can give us the victory.

Those most in need of evangelization—as Paul VI and John Paul II often noted—are Catholics. We must always be evangelized, for as Paul VI stated forty years ago, "The Church is an evangelizer, but she begins by being evangelized herself. She is the community of believers, the community of hope lived and communicated, the community of brotherly love, and she needs to listen unceasingly to what she must believe, to her reasons for hoping, to the new commandment of love."

There is much about Gospel living that is difficult. No pain, no gain, as AA expresses it. What Christ calls us to is true conversion, the transformation of our hearts and our minds with the help of His grace. Man can be liberated only by a power greater than himself. St. Paul notes in Romans 3:9 that no one is righteous in and of themselves. All are in need of redemption This is the spirit of Step One in any 12-step group: I am powerless. 12-step spirituality lived in an authentic Christian context deepens the capacity of the human heart to face all troubles with hope and train us in genuine love. Without the build up of moral and spiritual values one cannot love truly. It is why people like Brad Pitt and Angelina Jolie are divorcing; why Adele is divorcing after such a short time (she explained, "That feeling when you first fall for someone is the best feeling on earth, and I am addicted to that feeling. . ."). Larry King is divorcing his 8th wife!

"Love" for many celebrities is merely a feeling, an emotion, which doesn't last. As with Adele, Brad Pitt, and the rest, the feelings die and they move on to the next relationship. And they raise children with this superficial experience of "love" which will only draw them to addictive behavior. The journey of sanctification that love entails begins when a person recognizes his need for grace. Our Lady at Fatima stressed the praying of the Rosary because in it are contained the mysteries of our faith that when lived sanctify our daily lives. Allowing the Divine Mysteries to pervade our minds and hearts capacitates us for the vocation of genuine love whereby we sanctify our relationships and redeem time. This world and its history are irredeemable through sheer will or reason. The world has been corrupted and is inhabited by unbearable evil. The Devil seeks to get us to join in his rebellion against the God of Love. As Cormac McCarthy noted, addiction is a powerful tool of Satan.

To defeat evil a Power had to be introduced from outside this world. We celebrate that at Christmas, when Christ came to reclaim His creation. Through Baptismal grace and the living out of our baptismal promises, we have joined Christ in His battle against Evil. And from that war against addiction, blessings flow. ✿

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