



Of Seeds and Flowers



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SWEET SUCCESS ! - THE TRUE OR FALSE SELF REVEALED!!

Mother Theresa often said, "We are not called to success but to faithfulness." Every time I pray over these words of Mother Theresa I am forced to examine the motives for my actions. Too often, I find that pride, ego, the need for praise, glory, the need to be seen, the pleasure in being noticed have motivated my actions.

How many times I have **faced or built** a mountain (different challenges) to climb. The mountain can be teaching, counseling, service to others, marriage, Mary's Field, being husband, father, friend, prayer, etc.. I then climb the mountain, achieve "success", re-name the mountain "Mount Bill Pfeiffer" and plant my flag on top, SUCCESS!! And I swim in the pride, the affirmation, the "rare air" and separation from others that comes with it.

Thomas Merton, Trappist Monk, spiritual giant, surprised, shocked me by penning the following lines: ***"If I had a message to my contemporaries it is surely this: Be anything you like, be madmen, drunks, and bastards of every shape and form, but at all costs avoid one thing: SUCCESS (emphasis mine)....If you are too obsessed with success, you will forget to live. If you have learned only how to be a success, your life has probably been wasted."*** Was this holy, holy man "out of touch"? Too much monastery? Not psychologically astute? **Or does he know something we don't know?**



Thomas Merton, the person Pope Francis praised in his speech to the joint session of Congress, knew that ego, pride, greed, the lust to be seen and praised would inflate the **FALSE SELF**, and build the **illusory you**, to the point it would **keep you from a solid spiritual life for the rest of your life**. Too much success, or rather, the pride, the ego, the need to be known, etc. will keep you from ever discovering your **TRUE SELF** which is critical in order to grow in honesty, truth, humility, with God -to become a truly holy, whole, truthful, spiritual person you were MEANT TO BE.

At another time Merton wrote: "I believe there aren't five people on the planet that see reality as it is." -ONLY five, CAN YOU IMAGINE? Do you, do I see reality as it is? Remember Mother Theresa's words: **"We are not called to SUCCESS but to FAITHFULNESS."** Did she miss reality too? -"out of touch"? Or, so much in touch with the TRUE SELF that WE CAN'T OR DON'T UNDERSTAND? How about Jesus? Would He have been one of the 5 in touch with reality?

The lust for personal glory and praise is so very strong! Why do you think Hollywood and T.V. personalities have so many award programs to praise themselves? They live and breathe constantly in the promotion of the **false self**. **They live with, and promote a life program that is designed for perpetual unhappiness.** -a very weak group of people! So too, almost all politicians since Julius Caesar, rock stars, CEO's, Mayors, Superintendents, Pastors, Bishops, Principals, Doctors, PhD's, Lawyers, Judges, the head janitor or secretary, the head of the PTA etc.. The list is endless, and the pride that isolates is relentless. The **FALSE SELF WINS MOST OF THE TIME!**

Success must be controlled and managed with humility. Failure must be controlled and managed with humility. Not to do this is to feed the False Self and lock yourself into the **pain of the ILLUSORY YOU**. Like St. Paul we all need to fall off or be knocked off our high horse. In 2019 more people will die from success than from cancer.

"Spiritually, success is the most dangerous of all human experiences." Thomas Keating, another VERY HOLY Trappist monk. Thomas Keating is one of the top five spiritual writers of the 20th century. In another place he wrote, "Perfection does not consist in feeling perfect or being perfect, but **in doing what we are supposed to do without noticing it; loving people without taking any credit. Just doing it.**" -ah, unconditional love!!

Maybe it comes down to **SERVICE and LEADERSHIP WITH LOVE?** Something like Jesus washing the feet of the

apostles at the Last Supper and then saying, "No servant is greater than his master; no messenger outranks the one who sent him and then, AND THEN, HAPPINESS, HAPPINESS will be yours if you go and act IN LIKE MANNER."

We are not encouraging failure, but to have success and to have it praise God who is the **initiator of all things**, and to have success while maintaining the TRUE SELF.

"You are **not judging by God's standards** but by man's." Mt.16:23. "Your light must shine before men so that they may see the goodness in your acts **AND GIVE PRAISE TO YOUR HEAVENLY FATHER.**" Mt.5:16. "Whoever speaks (works) **on his own is bent on self glorification.** The man who **seeks glory for him who sent him** is truthful; there is **no dishonesty in his heart.**" John7: 18. "Be on guard against performing religious acts *for people to see.*" Mt.6:1. "They preferred the praise of men to the glory of God." John 12:43.

AFTERWORD: And then, too often, I build some more beautiful mountains called humility, compassion, love etc.; climb them and plant my "Bill Pfeiffer Flag" of success on the top of these mountains. More pride, ego, self congratulations, but now the success is **spiritual success** and the pride is **religious pride** and the false self wins again. **Motivation!** VERY, VERY subtle this FALSE SELF. "You will have one foot in the grave and you will still be in need of more humility." St. Teresa of Avila to her nuns.

The following WORDS on how honors and prestige can easily lead one into pride is taken from a marvelous book, "The Power of Silence" written by Robert Cardinal Sarah from Guinea, West Africa. Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI wrote the Afterword in the book. The Pope quoted these same words as most true and significant. He knew well that it applied to many clerics he dealt with over the years. WE KNOW that it can apply to **EVERYONE** on the planet.

"The more we are clothed in glory and honors, the more we are raised in dignity, the more we are invested with public responsibilities, prestige, and temporal offices, whether as laymen, priests, or bishops, the more we need to advance in humility and to cultivate carefully the sacred dimension of our interior life by constantly seeking to the face of God in prayer, meditation, contemplation, and asceticism. It can happen that a good, pious priest, once he is raised to the episcopal dignity, quickly falls into mediocrity and a concern for worldly success.(Pope Benedict saw this more than a few times). Overwhelmed by the weight of the duties that are placed on him, worried about his power, his authority, and the material needs of his office, he gradually runs out of steam. He manifests in his being and in his works a desire for promotion, a longing for prestige, and spiritual degradation follows. He becomes harmful to himself and to the people over which the Holy Spirit set him as pastor and guardian. We all run the danger of being preoccupied with worldly business and concerns if we neglect the interior life, prayer, the daily face-to-face encounter with God and the ascetical practices necessary for a vibrant, happy, spiritual life." Page 28.

Prayer, serious prayer, centering prayer, contemplative prayer is the only real solution to the human dilemma of the false self. EVERY OTHER PROGRAM OR APPROACH GIVES ONLY PARTIAL SOLUTIONS!!! GO FOR THE REAL THING! Love is a four letter word; it is spelled TIME. If you are too busy to pray you are too busy. "Laziness is the enemy". M. Scott Peck

Is it really this simple? We are all creatures; created, limited beings. God is the Creator. The Creator, sent his only Son to show us and teach us (His life and the Scriptures) how to fully handle the false self and be happy, fulfilled, TRUE SELF creatures. So where should we look to find the full solution for the human condition into which we are born and live? **TRANSFORMED PEOPLE, TRANSFORM PEOPLE!!**

My daughter, Anne Marie, has just returned from a seven day retreat on Centering Prayer. -a monastery in New York. -A marvelous experience! I know I have to devote a whole issue of "Of Seeds and Flowers" to Centering prayer and that will be the most important issue in 37 years. WHY? Because anyone who decides to take Centering prayer seriously will begin the journey of independent spiritual growth. Nothing is more important than taking serious **personal responsibility for you own spiritual growth.** In the meantime, check everything you can find on Thomas Keating and Centering Prayers on YouTube. -or read "Open Mind, Open Heart" or "Intimacy With God" by Keating.

Check on line: "Contemplative Outreach", founded by Keating. Your beautiful heart and soul will never be the same. God will jump deeper and deeper into your "Center" and the peace and joy you are looking for will happen. YOU WILL REJOICE!! I PROMISE!!



Fisherman and the Businessman: There was once a businessman who was sitting by the beach in a small Brazilian village. As he sat, he saw a Brazilian fisherman rowing a small boat towards the shore having caught quite few big fish. The businessman was impressed and asked the fisherman, *"How long does it take you to catch so many fish?"* The fisherman replied, *"Oh, just a short while."* The businessman was astonished. *"Then why don't you stay longer at sea and catch even more?"* *"This is enough to feed my whole family,"* the fisherman said. The businessman then asked, *"So, what do you do for the rest of the day?"* The fisherman replied, *"Well, I usually wake up early in the morning, go out to sea and catch a few fish, then go back and play with my kids. In the afternoon, I take a nap with my wife, and evening comes, I join my buddies in the village for a drink — we play guitar, sing and dance throughout the night."*

The businessman offered a suggestion to the fisherman. *"I am a PhD in business management. I could help you to become a more successful person. From now on, you should spend more time at sea and try to*

catch as many fish as possible. When you have saved enough money, you could buy a bigger boat and catch even more fish. Soon you will be able to afford to buy more boats, set up your own company, your own production plant for canned food and distribution network. By then, you will have moved out of this village and to Sao Paulo, where you can set up HQ to manage your other branches."

The fisherman continues, *"And after that?"* The businessman laughs heartily, *"After that, you can live like a king in your own house, and when the time is right, you can go public and float your shares in the Stock Exchange, and you will be rich."* The fisherman asks, *"And after that?"* The businessman says, *"After that, you can finally retire, you can move to a house by the fishing village, wake up early in the morning, catch a few fish, then return home to play with kids, have a nice afternoon nap with your wife, and when evening comes, you can join your buddies for a drink, play the guitar, sing and dance throughout the night!"* The fisherman was puzzled, *"Isn't that what I am doing now?"*

The Businessman: FALSE SELF.

The Fisherman: TRUE SELF.

TRUE HUMILITY IS STAYING TEACHABLE NO MATTER HOW MUCH YOU KNOW. WOULDN'T IT BE NICE IF PH.D. DEGREES WOULD ALSO COME WITH A DEGREE IN WISDOM. TODAY, MOST COLLEGE CAMPUSES ARE IN DEEP NEED OF PHD'S WITH WISDOM. *WHERE THERE IS NO VISION THE PEOPLE PERISH."*
PROVERBS

There is a story- I do not know its source-of an old man and a young man on the same platform before a vast audience of people. A special program was being presented. As a part of the program each was to repeat from memory the words of



the Twenty-third Psalm. The young man, trained in the best speech technique and drama, gave, in the language of the ancient silver-tongued orator, the words of the Psalm.

"*The Lord is my shepherd ...* " When he had finished, the audience clapped their hands and cheered. asking him for an encore so that they might hear again his wonderful voice.

Then the old gentleman, leaning heavily on his cane, stepped to the front of the same platform, and in feeble, shaking voice, repeated the same words- "*The Lord is my shepherd ...* " But when he was seated no sound came from the listeners. Folks seemed to pray. In the silence the young man stood to make the following statement: "Friends," he said, "I wish to make an explanation. You asked me to come back and repeat the Psalm, but you remained silent when my friend here was seated. The difference? I shall tell you. I know the Psalm, **but he knows the Shepherd!**"

THE YOUNG MAN: FALSE SELF. THE OLD MAN: TRUE SELF.

"**I**" IS THE SMALLEST WORD IN THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE. How many people travel to the center of the universe and are shocked not to find themselves there?

"God is preparing you for greater things. He's going to take you further than you thought possible, so don't be surprised when He asks you to think better of yourself and to act accordingly." Joel Osteen

REFLECT, PRAY, AND "DO WHATEVER HE TELLS YOU". The Blessed Mother at Cana.

DEFINITIONS: TRUE SELF: The image of God in which **every human being** is created; and our participation in the divine life that shows forth our *true uniqueness*. **FALSE SELF:** The self that developed in *our own likeness* rather than in the likeness of God; the self image developed, using false solutions, to cope with the emotional trauma of early childhood. It seeks happiness in satisfying the instinctual needs of survival/security, affection/esteem, and power/control, and bases its self worth on social, cultural or group identification. -begs the question: "Is there anything essential, authentic "me" here?"



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