



Of Seeds and Flowers



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William R. Pfeiffer – Director

Mary's Field, Ltd. - PO Box 99 - Hebron, CT 06248 - 860.530.1253 - wisdom@marysfield.org

HOW DO I BECOME THE PERSON GOD CALLED ME TO BE? OR The Four "S's" - A 2022 Spiritual Survival Kit

In 2022 more people will die of fear, anxiety, worry, anger, disillusionment, loneliness than from Covid. Americans all need a survival kit. And not just a survival kit but a way of regaining our center, our hearts, our peace, our lives. There are four actions that can rescue us from spiritual pain and disaster. Each involves a **DECISION** and a **DISCIPLINE**.

1. In the 1st Action, the *DECISION* is to *RE-ORDER* one's private world, and the discipline is *SIMPLICITY*.

Everything around us works against reordering and simplifying our lives. Our lives are cluttered. *"God made us plain and simple, but we have made ourselves complicated."* (Ecc. 7:29) More, more, more! Enough is never enough. Size is never sufficient. Quotas are never enough. Acquire! Not only do we acquire but we **KEEP**, we **ACCUMULATE**. And we don't simply compete, we are driven to **WIN**, always win. Not only do we want more, but we get stuck spending more time **MAINTAINING** the pile of things we acquired. In some way everything you own, owns you. Even if you win the rat race, you end up still being a rat. To survive we need to **SIMPLIFY**.

2. The *2ND DECISION* is to be *STILL* and the discipline is *SILENCE*.

SILENCE - If simplicity is difficult, silence is more so. It is an almost insurmountable challenge to find silence, to **MAKE** silence in this world of restlessness, noise, words, relentless activity. Noise siphons our energy, dulls our senses and numbs our inner life. Think of our poor children who are constantly "connected". **NOISE**, **NOISE**, **NOISE**. God says, "Be still and know that I am God". (Ps. 46:10). ~ and "DESIST, and confess that I am God, exalted among the nations, exalted upon the earth." (Ps.46). "Give in" He cries, "admit that I am God." - and **YOU** are not. We are being commanded to stop, slow down, let go, and make time for Him. We need to learn how to "waste time" with God. To steal

time for Him (Holy Thievery). God deserves it. We, at the very center of our being, need it. Silence is indispensable if we hope to add depth to our spiritual life. "Silence is God's **FIRST LANGUAGE** and all others are a bad translation" - Thomas Keating

The health of a marriage can be judged by the amount of quiet time that spouses spend together. The intimacy of our relationship with God can be determined by the hours of silence we spend with God.

Prayer with words and liturgical prayer are good but **NOT ENOUGH**. Centering prayer. Contemplative prayer is essential to discover who we are and the obstacles in our lives to deepen our union with God and to judge clearly what is happening in our world. Check YouTube Keating or Cynthia Brougault. Your spiritual life may depend on it.

PRAYER IS POWER. PRAYER CHANGES EVERYTHING! Your enemy will limit your prayer because he knows that your prayer will limit him. Half an hour a day! - Mostly silence!

If you want to know the **TRUE SELF**, talk to God. He will tell you. Prayer changes things; mainly **YOU/ME**. Prayer helps you to recognize the reality I which **YOU ARE SWIMMING**

If you only pray when you're in trouble...you're in trouble.

Quantum Physics tells us that a single thought changes the universe! How about a single prayer?? "If you think you're too small to make a difference, try sleeping with a mosquito." Dalai Lama

Louis T. Grant in an incisive article called "Fast Folk" which appeared in "Harpers" details the life style of one working mother that was presented as a model of sorts. "She rushes from home to work in the morning, eating yogurt in the car for breakfast; has lunch at the gym where she works out; leaves child care to her husband, who also has a managerial position 40 miles

on the other side of home; pilots a small plane in her leisure time for pleasure; teaches, on the side, a class at a local women's college; leaves the kids with Grandma; leaves the kids with sitters; leaves the kids..." Grant likens this life-style, which he calls "fast folk", to keeping up with the gerbils. There is no time for family, for husband, for intimacy, for communication, for listening. That's for slowpokes. And, he points out our, "Children are slowpokes". America, the country that pretends to care for its children.

No time for silence in this woman's life and so her inner life is fragmented. She has no real power and so she is nurturing no one including herself. In 2022 more people will die from success than from cancer. "Study to be quiet," writes St. James. God does not speak to the hurried, worried mind. To survive in the year 2022, SILENCE must be in your tool kit.

3. The 3RD DECISION that we need to manage our lives today is to cultivate SERENITY and the discipline that provides for serenity is SOLITUDE.

Henri Nouwen calls solitude "the furnace of transformation. An oasis of the soul where we see ourselves, others and especially our God in new ways. It is the place where much of the clutter and clatter is identified and eliminated thanks to the heat of the "furnace". Nouwen says further, "In solitude I get rid of my scaffolding; no friends to talk with, no telephone calls to make, no meetings to attend, no music to entertain, no books to distract me, just ME - naked, vulnerable, weak, sinful, deprived, broken, nothing. It is this nothingness that I have to face in my solitude, a nothingness so dreadful that everything in me wants to run to my friends, my work, my distractions." And if I have the will to stay in my solitude, confusing ideas, disturbing images, wild fantasies jump about in my mind like monkeys in a banana tree. Anger and greed and pride and lust and envy and laziness show their ugly faces... The task is to persevere in solitude until my seductive visitors get tired of pounding at my door

and leave me alone."

This all seems too severe, too radical. Who needs this kind of self-analysis? But truly, unless you persevere in solitude the superficial "show", the inner dysfunction will go on. Tough stuff!

4. The 4TH DECISION is to TRUST THE LORD completely and the Discipline is SURRENDER.

In Proverbs we read, "Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight."

- Surrender? Get serious!
- Surrender your rights. "Are you kidding? I'll sue!"
- Surrender your future. "No way. I've got a plan."
- Surrender your will. "Not me. I give in to no one!"
- Surrender your dreams. "Never. I've worked too hard!"
- Surrender to your mate. "Not me. I'm my own person!"
- Surrender your finances. "Hold on. Money is security and I'm planning to retire."

Surrender is not a comfortable word in most people's vocabulary. Sad, because it is the key that unlocks the vault of God's best and deepest treasures. Dante, the great poet, wisely wrote, "In His will is our peace." And Augustine, "We have been made for you, O Lord, and our hearts are restless until they rest in YOU." Everything, everyone I need, God knows about in detail. He is able to supply, to guide, to sustain, to change, to correct, all at the perfect time. God not only orders our STEPS but our STOPS as well. "Unless the Lord build the house, they labor in vain who build it."

Surrender. Give up. Give in. Give Him total control and you will find true control and peace in your life.

The four "S's"- **Simplicity, Silence, Solitude** and **Surrender** are the basis for a vibrant spiritual life in an age of confusion and pain.

Some ideas adapted from a wonderful little book by Charles Swindoll entitled, Intimacy with The Almighty.

I WISH I WAS 84 WHEN I WAS 40 YEARS OLD. IT IS AMAZING HOW DIFFERENTLY LIFE, GOD, FAMILY, CHURCH, SOCIETY LOOK LIKE FROM THE MOUNTAIN TOP OF 84. SOME THINGS HAVE BECOME VERY IMPORTANT AND OTHERS, THAT SEEMED SO IMPORTANT YEARS AGO, ARE NOW SO UNIMPORTANT.

"God is a waterwheel of outpouring love that never stops!! God cannot not love, because love is the nature of God's very being."

Always pray to have EYES that see the best in people, a MIND that forgets the bad, a HEART that forgives the worst, and a SOUL that radiates kindness.

LENT is March 2nd to April 16th. We will not do our regular podcasts during Lent or have a new issue of "Of Seeds and Flowers". Jesus went into the desert for 40 days; Moses spent 40 days on Mt. Sinai. If they needed it, can we do any less? "One does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes forth from the mouth of God." (Matthew 4)

Our ultimate goal should be to integrate the active and contemplative life within and around us. Holy people call this new life "ever-present awareness, enlightenment, or just waking up". To handle all of the crazy details of our daily lives without being distracted from OUR PRIMARY VISION is not gained by THINKING, but through what might be called JUST BEING. Lent, well observed, can integrate the active and spiritual life. "BE, BE still and know that I am God". BEING BEFORE DOING!!!

VISION AND REALITY Recently, as I was searching to re-look at a Richard Rohr teaching on the Trinity on YouTube and I saw the ad-page of Ralph Martin's podcast that read, "**Startling Warning Coming from a Surprising Source**". Curious, because I have been a part of Ralph's wonderful ministry since 1969, I tuned in. Ralph is the current, first in the United States, Lay spiritual director for the seminary of the Diocese of Detroit.

Ralph said, "On Oct. 22nd President Vladimir Putin slammed the American far-left woke ideology that he said is causing societal ills throughout the Western world and it is no different than what happened in Russia in the 1917 revolution. Vladimir Putin is no saint but the one thing on which he is certainly an expert is socialism/communism. "

Putin said, and too bad that the American bishops (some are) and the Pope did not say something similar: *"We see with bemusement the paralysis unfolding in countries that have grown accustomed to viewing themselves as the flagships of progress. ... The social and cultural shocks that are happening in the Western countries is surprising. Some believe that aggressive blotting out of whole pages of your own history, special treatment of classes, and the requirement to renounce the traditional interpretation of such basics values as mother, father, family, and the distinction between sexes are a milestone...a renewal of society. The overwhelming majority of Russian society rejects these new ways of thinking. The Western countries believe that this so-called social progress is bringing a new conscience, a new consciousness to humanity, something better,"* Putin said. *"But there is one thing I would like to say: The plans they come up with are nothing new, paradoxical as it may seem. This is what we saw in Russia. It happened in our country before and after the 1917 revolution; the Bolsheviks (only 10,000) followed the dogmas of Marx and Engels. They declared that they were going to change the traditional lifestyle, the political, the economic lifestyle, as well as the very notion of morality, the basic principles for a healthy society. They were trying to destroy old and century long values, revisiting the relationships between people. They encouraged informing on one's own beloved and families. It was hailed as the march of progress. And it was very popular across the world and it was supported by many nations and, as we see now, it is happening at this very moment."*



**TIME WILL TELL WHERE WISDOM LIES, IN THE MEANTIME, LOVE AND HUG
EVERYBODY, EVEN THOSE WHO THINK YOU ARE NUTS.**



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Almost all Contemporary Spiritual Teachers, say that most of our problems are psychological in manifestation, but spiritual in their solution. Look around; observe; our society is swimming in psychological problems, but refuses to believe that the solution is spiritual – and the pain goes on and on and is shared liberally with the whole culture – often as esoteric, avant-garde thinking. The pain that is not transformed is transmitted. TRANSFORMED PEOPLE,

TRANSFORM PEOPLE. Transformed people are the TRUE SOCIAL REFORMERS. -just ask Jesus! PRAYER makes it happen!! 'If you are not hungry for God you are probably full of yourself. "I forgot myself and henceforth I was happy". St. Therese of Lisieux. Your ego is not your amigo!



SPEAKING SOFTLY Japanese Guru: There is a story of a Japanese businessman who had been incredibly successful commercially. He had everything he needed materially and now he decides that he needs to achieve spiritual enlightenment. He goes to visit one of the oldest and most respected gurus in Japan and asks if he may be taught spiritual insight and truth. The old man said that before they could discuss this further, they needed to have tea. As custom demanded tea was brought with much care and ceremony and the guru began to pour the tea into the businessman's cup. He filled it to the brim and then continued to pour with the tea overflowing onto the table and then the floor. The businessman, concerned, asks what the guru is doing. "The cup is overflowing; it cannot take anymore," he says. The old man, pausing, looks at the businessman carefully saying, "You are full; when you are EMPTY, come back, and I will teach you the ways of the spirit."



EMPTY = Four "S's" SIMPLICITY, SILENCE, SOLITUDE AND SURRENDER.

January 17: Martin Luther King day! *"COURAGE IS AN INNER RESOLUTION TO GO FORWARD DESPITE OBSTACLES; COWARDICE IS SUBMISSIVE SURRENDER TO CIRCUMSTANCES. COURAGE BREEDS CREATIVE SELF-AFFIRMATION; COWARDICE PRODUCES DESTRUCTIVE SELF-ABNEGATION. COURAGE FACES FEAR AND MASTERS IT; COWARDICE REPRESSES FEAR AND IS MASTERED BY IT; COWARDICE ASKS THE QUESTION, IS IT SAFE? EXPEDIENCY ASKS THE QUESTION, IS IT POLITIC? VANITY ASKS THE QUESTION, IS IT POPULAR? BUT CONSCIENCE ASKS THE QUESTION, IS IT, RIGHT? AND THERE COMES A TIME WHEN ONE MUST TAKE A POSITION THAT IS NEITHER SAFE, NOT POLITIC, NOR POPULAR, BUT ONE MUST TAKE IT BECAUSE IT IS RIGHT."* - Martin Luther King, Jr.

M.L.K, where are you when we need you? Ghandi, Romero, Tutu, Walensa, Mandela, King, St. John Paul II. What did they know that we don't? Why were they able to make real change happen and today's leaders can't?

"Take, O lord and receive all my liberty, my memory, my understanding, my emotions, and my entire will. All I have and all I possess are yours, Lord. You have given it all to me. Dispense of it according your will. Give me only your love and your grace, and I want nothing more."
- Pedro Arrupe, Jesuits, Superior General.

"Know where you stand and STAND THERE." Daniel Berrigan, S.J. These words are the full text of a graduation speech given by Daniel Berigan at Xavier Highs School, N. Y.



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