

Of Seeds and Flowers

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"IN HIS WILL IS OUR PEACE." - Dante

March, Spring, Lent, flowers, beginnings, reminded me of this true story from the time Mary's Field spent 12 years as a retreat center. We had to stop the retreat ministry and sell the retreat center in 2001 when our children, on whom we depended on to do so much of the work, began to go to college. Cindy and I just couldn't "keep up".

Mary's Field is 42 years old. THE STORY: In 1990, before we got the Mary's Field Retreat Center our 6 young children came to Cindy, and said they wanted a pool and not only a pool but an indoor pool. And further they said, "If God gives us a pool, we will give up T.V.. Time passed and nothing happened. Cindy then suggested they try giving up T.V. first and then pray for the pool. So, our 6 children gave up T.V. cold turkey. We pulled the cable. We spent over 10 years without network T.V.. We used a VCR for selected movies. The kids continued to pray for the indoor pool. Bill, our oldest son, then decided that the pool should have one of those robotic pool cleaners so mom and dad wouldn't have to spend so much time vacuuming the pool. Cindy responded, "Add it to your list". They prayed and continued not to watch T.V.. Then they came back with another request. "We can really use a juke box so we can entertain when our friends come to the pool. "Add it to your list". -and they did and continued to pray.

In late October after seeing an article in a local newspaper about a piece of property the local bank was trying to sell at auction, Cindy said, "Let's see if we can take a look at it."

We toured the property and sure enough it had an indoor pool, a robotic pool cleaner and a juke box. Our hearts jumped and we laughed at /with our funny God and we stood in astonishment. After looking at the house, the carriage house, the storage building, 22 acres etc., Cindy, Kevin and Patti Dunne who accompanied us, knew at that moment it was right and therefore able to be done, even though we had no money. That's another story, but, FOR SURE, God was in action. We did get the whole package.



Berthold Brecht's play "Galileo" has a wonderful, line that says, "You can't make a person unsee what he has seen." Indeed, the property was a wonderful sight, and we learned that you CAN walk on water if you are holding the correct hand. Lent is for walking on water. Each time we pray we are walking on water. Each time we give ourselves completely to HIM we walk on water but always remember with Dante, "In His will is our peace." Mary's Field continues to touch 1000's of people each month through our ministry, newsletter, podcasts etc..

"There is only one sadness in life; and that is not to be a saint."
- Simone Weil



"Give yourself completely to God and you won't have another single moment of worry in your life. "All of your efforts to do good must be unpretentious (NO PRETENDING) only then can you avoid being deceived." Wisdom from "The Book of Privy Council" written by an anonymous 14th century spiritual giant monk.



Once you are AWAKE, it is difficult to go back to sleep. Can't un-ring a bell!



Prophets are people who don't care whether you are ready to hear their message. They say it because it must be said and because it is true. Most prophetic and wise people and "ALL EARLY ADOPTERS, AND ADAPTERS ARE ALMOST ALWAYS TORN TO PIECES, often by people close to them. Often wisdom sounds like dangerous foolishness like the Sermon on the Mount, Ghandi to Great Britain, or MLK to America. -or just ask Jesus about someone who comes with a different message. -and if you read His words lately and correctly, you should be SHOCKED! I love the words of Ezekiel in 12: 7. "***I did what I was told.***". WOW!



Eighteen hundred years after St. Paul, John Henry Newman, one of the most perceptive theological minds in Christian history, made this rather startling and sweeping observation: "*The whole course of Christianity... is but one series of troubles and disorders. Every century is like every other, and to those who live in it, it seems worse than all times before it. The church is ever ailing.... Religion seems ever to be expiring, schisms dominant, the light of truth dim, its adherents scattered. The cause of Christ is ever in its last agony.*"

So that we don't think we are in unique times, we should recall one of the wittiest and perceptive rejoinders of all times. The emperor Napoleon is said to have confronted Cardinal Consalvi, the secretary of state to Pope Pius VII saying that he, Napoleon, would destroy the Catholic church, - to which the cardinal deftly responded, "*O my little man, you think you are going to succeed in accomplishing what centuries of priests and bishops have tried and failed to do?*" In a similar vein, the Catholic writer, Hilaire Belloc, made this rather acid observation in reference to the moral and intellectual quality of the Church's leadership: "*The Catholic Church, is an institution I am bound to hold divine- but for unbelievers a proof of its divinity might be found in the fact that no merely human institution conducted with such knavish imbecility would have lasted a fortnight.*" These quotes are from a very perceptive current booklet "Letter to a Suffering Church" by Bishop Robert Barron. Pretty much true of all churches.

"It is difficult to suffer for the Church but almost impossible to suffer from the church." Georges Bernanos



"Never act out of rivalry or deceit: rather all parties think humbly of others as superior to themselves." (Phil. 2:3) "In everything you do act without grumbling or arguing; prove yourselves innocent and straightforward, children of God beyond reproach in the midst of a twisted and depraved generation- among whom you shine like the stars in the sky while holding fast to the word of life." (Phil 2:15)
We win in the end.

Just think of all the meetings and conventions, and convocations you have attended that produced so LITTLE REAL CHANGE. Words, words, words. -on and on and on, while the people listening are saying inside, "***YOU WILL NEVER CHANGE WHAT I THINK OR FEEL.***" Ken Wilbur, the Social Scholar, says that most of us are only willing to call 5 % of our present knowledge and information into question AT ANY POINT, -and that is **ON A GOOD DAY!!** -very sad!!

The **Most Important** books:

1. Bible
2. "*The Cloud of Unknowing*", translation by Butcher.
3. "*Open mind, Open Heart*", and "*Invitation To Love*", both by Thomas Keating
4. Anything by Richard Rohr especially "*The Divine Dance*" and "*The Universal Christ*".

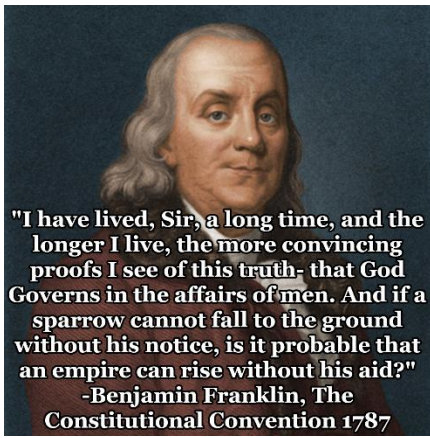
If you don't touch your Bible, your Bible won't touch you!!!

Even in the middle of problems and little crosses, the Holy Spirit makes life be seen not as a road "out" but simply as a "Road" CLOSED FOR REPAIRS. - especially marriage bumps!!

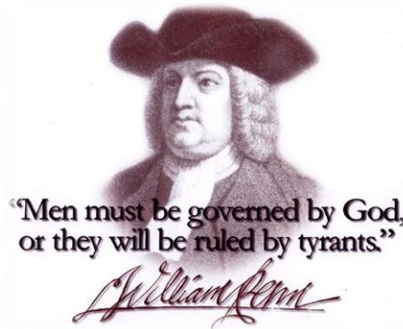
"Turning back to God is the only hope for a nation that has turned its back on God." -

Billy Graham





Thomas Jefferson said, *"The God who gave us life, gave us liberty."* Jefferson then asked, *"Can the liberties of a nation be secure when we have removed a conviction that these liberties are the gift of God?"* What have we done to our kids!



There is a story about a young monk who one day made a request of his novice master. Full of fervor, he said to the older monk, *"Teach me the right way to pray!"* The novice master looked him in the eyes and said, *"It is not an easy thing, my son, but I will tell you what you must do. He leaned forward and carefully said, 'Go back to your room, kneel down and close your eyes. Clear your mind of all distractions and focus your attention completely on the Lord. Then, very slowly, begin to count from one to ten. However, any time a distraction enters your mind, go back to one and start over. When you have counted to ten, come and talk to me.'"*

The novice eagerly rose and ran back to his room. He did exactly as his director had instructed him. He closed the door, knelt, cleared his mind and slowly began to count. *"One...one...one...."* The young monk struggled all morning but never made it past one! Frustrated, he knocked on the director's door. *"I have tried all morning but have not made it to ten!"* "Try again after lunch," he was advised.

That afternoon, the novice again dedicated himself to his prayer but again made little progress. Once more he marched to the master's room and pleaded, *"I have tried all afternoon, and not made it to ten."* "Try again after dinner," was the reply. And so the novice stayed up all night practicing the master's direction. No sooner had the first bells rung the next morning than the novice master heard a quiet knock on his door. He opens it to find a bleary-eyed young man staring back at him. *"I have tried all night to do what you have told me to do, and I think I have learned what I needed to learn, he sighed. 'THE GOAL IS NOT TO MAKE IT TO TEN, IS IT? The goal is to learn how to keep going back to one.'"*

Sounds like you and me. After a year, or a decade or a quarter of a century, we still struggle to maintain some semblance of a prayer life, to be motivated to read the Bible, and to deal with all of those temptations. We feel like that young monk saying over and over again, *one...one... one...."* Maybe this is why the experts at prayer call it WORK. A SOLUTION FOR DISTRACTIONS: Choose a special prayer word like LOVE or GOD or JESUS to bring you back from distractions. Choosing a special "Prayer word" can keep you from going back to "ONE" and help to get lost in God. Serious Centering Prayer and/ contemplation will do just that!!! Worth a Lenten try!! We ALL are called to be contemplatives!



A story told by St. John Vianney, the Cure of Ars. "A few years ago, there died a man of this parish who, entering the church in the morning to pray before setting out for the fields, left his hoe at the door and then became wholly lost in God. A neighbor who worked not far from him, and thus used to see him in the fields, wondered at his absence. On his way home, he bethought himself of looking into the church, thinking that the man might be there. As a matter of fact, he did find him in the church. "What are you doing here all this time?", he asked. And the other made reply, *"I look up at the good God in the tabernacle and He down looks at me."* This is a fine example of contemplative prayer. **God can't be thought but ONLY LOVED.**



Never, NEVER let your VOCATION as husband, wife, mother, father, brother, sister etc. become more important than YOUR CAREER. I have been at the deathbed of over 400 people. NOONE ever said I wish I spent more time on the job.1. The three wishes are: I wish I spent more time with my GOD/PRAYING. 2. I wish I spent more time with my SPOUSE. 3, I wish I spent more time with my KIDS. Nothing ABOUT THE JOB!!

We have given our children everyTHING except God who is in everything and is not limited by anything. Terrible parenting! College campuses are killing our young people.

LENT- A TIME FOR PRAYERFUL BEGINNINGS!! GIVE IT A TRY.

Was it a waste of ink and paper for the authors of the Catechism of the Catholic Church to include the following section titled THE USE OF THE SOCIAL COMMUNICATIONS MEDIA?

Section 2494: The information provided by the media is at the service of the common good. Society has a right to information based on TRUTH, FREEDOM, JUSTICE, AND SOLIDARITY: The proper exercise of this right demands that the content of the communication be true and – within the limits set by justice and charity- complete. Further, it should be communicated HONESTLY AND PROPERLY. This means that in the gathering and in the publication of news, the moral law and the legitimate rights and dignity of people should be upheld.

Section 2497 By the very nature of their profession, journalists have an obligation to serve the truth and not

offend against charity in disseminating information. They should strive to respect, with equal care, the nature of the FACTS and the limits of critical judgment concerning individuals. They should not stoop to defamation. -AND THERE IS MORE!

Never let your political views or the mis-informing media (We used to call it lying or the 8th Commandment) or present American and world chaos get in the way of your FAMILY, FRIENDS OR COLLEAGUES.

"By obedience to the truth you have purified yourselves for a genuine love of your brothers; therefore, love one another constantly from the heart." 1 Peter 22.

"For this I was born and for this I came into the world, to testify to the TRUTH. Everyone WHO BELONGS TO THE TRUTH (not ½ truth, ¾ truth or my truth but THE FULL TRUTH, LISTENS TO MY VOICE. John :18.) Not the media, government, social protesters, those far left who call themselves Progressives, socialists or communists etc.. Hug the truth, hold on to the truth, IT FREES. Often when we lie to others or ourselves, we "double down" to protect our egos. The media and false programmers do this. *'DO NOT CONFORM YOURSELF TO THIS GENERATION.'* Billy Graham TRANSFORMED PEOPLE, TRANSFORM PEOPLE and are often killed by someone from their own group.


Government is not reason;
it is not eloquent; it is force.
Like fire, it is a dangerous servant
and a fearful master.
George Washington
1732-1799

According to the people who keep such esoteric statistics there are now 45,000 registered Christian churches. Does ANYONE believe that Jesus intended this? What did Jesus mean when He prayed at the Last Supper, "I pray that all may be ONE as you, Father, are in me, and I in you' How much "oneness" did He want? There was no serious "twoness" until the 16th century. - 1517 to be exact, when Martin Luther tacked his theses to the door at Wittenberg demanding a much need reform of the Catholic Church. – and then, Henry VIII created his Church of England.

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"Without God there can be no American form of government, nor an American way of life. **Recognition of the Supreme Being is the first-and most basic-expression of Americanism."** President Dwight D. Eisenhower

As American Christians we want to be examples and mid-wives to a deeper Christian life and a new America based on love, understanding, forgiveness, peace, justice, security, happiness etc..

Jesus always asked questions not to look for answers but **TO STUN**. His questions aren't intended to enlighten; they are intended to AWAKEN. They aren't intended to stir the mind; they intended to bend the knees. To deny this you need a scissors and cut out the sections of the Bible you don't like!!

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