



Blessings

SACRAMENTORS®: A Process of Sanctification for Catholic Men and Women

Summer 2008: Feast of the Transfiguration

Lighten Up by Lori Misel

The boys at early morning coffee laughed hysterically when I told them we were thinking of remodeling our house. Tears rolled down their cheeks when I mentioned I was sure I could keep the project on budget. They fell on the floor kicking and whooping when I said it was only going to take us six weeks to complete the project. One of them was laughing so hard, after I told him this remodeling project might even be fun, that I had to call 911.

We are now moving into the sixth month of the remodel project. I would like to share a few observations if any of you readers are (snicker, snicker) thinking you might like to remodel.

One becomes very familiar with one's contractor. The first thing realized is that contractors do not func-

tion well in real time. They exist in "Star Trek" time. Your contractor will tell you, "The plumber will be here on Monday, the electrician on Wednesday and the dry wall crew will begin on Friday." What he really means is, "Just kidding. None of us will show up for the next two weeks. We haven't seen Sparkie the electrician since he wandered off a project a month ago. Igor the plumber might drop by and knock on your bedroom window before six o'clock any morning next month, and the dry wallers need to finish the seven important jobs before they get over to this tiny, little, insignificant project." A variable to this is, "We have no idea when we are going to get to this, but we want our draw today at 2:00 p.m. or else we come over and break your thumbs."

The positive thing about contractors is they work from a highly professional formula to estimate costs and time needed to complete your remodel. This formula is: *Agreed-to Cost (tripled) + add on's + 10% for miscellaneous stuff + city, state, federal, universal and galaxy tax = Real cost.* The time formula is, "We have no idea. Maybe this year, maybe next." Any contractor with the intelligence of soap knows that with some creative explaining of what a lousy, problematic house you have been living in, he can stretch your \$50,000 remodel into a six or seven million dollar life-long project.

The contractor's crew of Moe, Shep, Curley, Larry and Buck Wheat are great guys. We have become very close. I can sit down and

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The purpose of the SacraMentors® movement is to provide men and women with small communities of other men and women, who will support and sustain them in their efforts to live a Christian life which calls them to forgive themselves and others, bless the world, and serve the Church.

Scared, Scarred, and Sacred By Mary Anne Reynolds

My father-in-law, a former Seafair clown, used to tell me: *It's all in how you say it. You can tell a woman she is so beautiful, time stands still in her presence. Or you could say she has a face that could stop a clock.* Same idea, two meanings. It's all in how you say it.

Only a few letters can change everything. A prefix changes an image from beautiful to scarred. Transfigure becomes disfigure. Transcend becomes descend. Transformed becomes deformed. How often I vacillate between the two. How is that possible? I'm a

daily-mass-attending-rosary-praying-SacraMentor-training-cradle-Catholic. How is it possible I could choose to be spiritually disfigured when I have known the light of transfiguration in my life? Every time I take a ride with my ego, I choose. Every time I turn my back on God, I choose. Every

See "Scared," on page 4



But Jesus came
and touched them,
saying “Rise, and
do not be afraid.”

~ Matthew 17:7

The Transfiguration

(Russian Icon, 15th Century

Public Domain)



Reflections

by *Cyndie Unrich, Executive Director, SacraMentors®*

Waiting can be a difficult thing to do. For instance, I'm having a difficult time waiting for upcoming SacraMentors events, like the Point Defiance Rosary Walk.

Our brother, Frank Pease, has organized a spirit-filled walk and picnic at Tacoma's Point Defiance Park. Details are on the back page of this newsletter, and on our website, www.sacramentors.org. During this outing, we'll be blessed in many ways. The Rosary Walk will join us together for prayer, exercise, spiritual camaraderie and a picnic in the verdant setting of Point Defiance Park. What could be better?

See? I said it, didn't I? "...I can't wait to..." So many times, I'm called to trust in God by waiting for Him to act. And that's when I get really antsy. I'm so tempted to jump in and act on my own and, let's face it, for my own self interests. (Yes, a deeper understand-

ing of Book of Kindness II, Day 22 would help, right?)

Now, I've important, personal news to share. By virtue of the wonderfully apparent, long- and short-term work of the Holy Spirit, I was asked to fill the position of Director of Communications with the Coalition Against Assisted Suicide. The coalition opposes Initiative 1000, the so-called "death with dignity" initiative. I started work with the coalition on Monday, August 4th.

This campaign is state-wide, will most likely be the most media-covered initiative on the ballot and the next 95 days until the general election will be filled with very long hours and very little time for anything else. Therefore, I am taking a self-imposed temporary leave of absence from my SacraMentors Apostles' Group and as Executive Director of the SacraMentors board. This

temporary leave will last until mid-November.

I prayerfully leave it to our board members Frank Pease, Seamus O'Brien and Scott Webster to decide how the position of interim Executive Director is filled. I trust completely that with prayer and the guidance of the Holy Spirit, they will make a wise and blessed decision.

Please keep me in your prayers. I ask Our Lord for clarity, energy, wisdom and consistent awareness of the Holy Trinity in the months ahead.

Till I see you all again, may God's Blessings and His Grace be with you and yours!

Cyndie

Our prayers are certainly with Cyndie as she starts her new position and while she is on leave. She may be reached at mculrich@comcast.net.

Stewardship Campaign Update

by *Cyndie Ulrich*

Thank you to those who have graciously and generously supported SacraMentors during our 2008 Stewardship Campaign!

SacraMentors' Financial Advisor, and our brother in Christ, Seamus O'Brien reports that, to-date, membership has contributed over \$4,800.00 to the organization this year. Gratitude and blessings go to those of you who have donated, be it in the form of treasure, time,

or talent to the organization!

Please continue to offer prayers that God allows SacraMentors to touch the hearts, heal the wounds and bring great joy to Catholic men and women, and that our love of Our Lord is enthusiastically shared with everyone we know and love, as well as with the stranger to whom Christ calls us to minister.

God Bless You! ~cju

It's not too late to make a donation! No gift is too small, and every cent is used to cover the costs of retreats, trainings, and events during the year. Donations received are tax deductible, and will ensure the maintenance, and growth, of the organization. If you'd still like to make a donation this year, please mail it to:

SacraMentors
P.O. Box 64787
University Place, WA 98464

Blessed are the Peacemakers

by Jeff Virgin

“I leave you peace, my peace I give you.”

John 14:27

What is the peace of which Jesus speaks? Is it a world without war? Is it nations living in harmony and equality? Is it people of different religions treating each other with respect and love? Is it families sharing a lifetime of bonding? Is it a tranquil state of mind and spirit? If these are the components of the peace that Jesus gave us, where did we lose them? Certainly, it is difficult to see them when we look out into the world, or deep inside ourselves.

These questions have recently become paramount for me, as my faith journey has entered a new phase. After participating in the RCIA process for 18 months, I wasn't prepared to become a full member of the Roman Catholic Church, so I took a sabbatical that has lasted 3 years. That time has been spent in much study, reflection, and continued ministry in the Church. I enjoy Mass every Sunday and often during the week. The Holy Days, Lent and Easter especially, are times of intense spiritual reflection and practice. I study scripture with great motivation and interest, and regularly attend adult education. I share my love for the Church with SacraMentor brothers at our Apostles Group meetings. My ministries include transporting my wheelchair-bound friend and RCIA sponsor to Mass, and regularly visiting him at Mount St Vincent. I am also involved with shelter

and advocacy for the homeless. I have many close personal relationships in my parish at St. James Cathedral. This Catholic life I live is full of the beauty and love that is the Church.

In short, I do everything that my devout Catholic sisters and brothers are doing, and I do it with great joy in community with them. Except: receive the Eucharist.

If I continue to love and be so involved in the Church, what is holding me back from sharing what most Catholics view as the pinnacle of religious experience? Isn't it the Eucharist which defines us as a Catholic community? Why have I chosen to be so close to Catholicism for so long and not *be* a Catholic?

The answers to these questions are part of the answer to a more important question. Why have I now decided to go through confirmation and become a full member of the Church? The answer to this question has everything to do with the peace that Jesus gave us. The peace that Jesus gave us means, quite simply, tearing down walls—even when those walls make us feel secure.

We live in a relational world where all experience is based on opposites. You cannot know hot without cold. We have learned to be comfortable with opposites, even to depend on them. We apply these distinctions to our personal relationships, deriving comfort from knowing the difference

between our friends and enemies. We build walls to protect ourselves from those we consider enemies. We judge them and keep our distance. Sometimes we inflict on them emotional or physical violence. They do the same to us. This is the world with which we have become comfortable. But it is not the peace that Jesus gave us.

Jesus' peace tears down walls and asks us to love our enemies. My enemies within the Church are the rules that say certain people are not welcome at the Eucharistic table. Part of my resistance to receiving the Eucharist is an act of solidarity with those who have been excluded. My enemies are powerful men who invite women to apply all their wonderful gifts to helping the Church, but because of a gift that God gives women at the very first moment of their lives, these men continue to exclude women from the most holy endeavor of consecrating the sacraments. My enemies are priests and bishops who sexually abuse children, and bishops who knowingly allowed the abuse to continue for decades. My enemies include an institutional structure that gives bishops that power, and those who resist changing that structure. The wall that I have built between these enemies and myself is my crossed arms in the communion line.

Why have I now decided to change my crossed arms to cupped hands? Because I



“The peace that Jesus gave us means, quite simply, tearing down walls—even when those walls make us feel secure.”

~ Jeff Virgin

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“Conversations with Father Bob”

on Sacred Heart Radio

KBLE 1050 AM

Tuesdays 5-6 p.m.

Thursdays 9-10 p.m. and

on Saturday mornings on

KKNW 1150 AM from

8-9 a.m.

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time I am stuck in fear I choose. I laughed out loud when I saw a sign for a storage facility named “Superior Self Storage.” Wouldn’t it be wonderful if we could store our superior selves, put them in an ego warehouse? Then I would have to choose to bring my ego out of storage instead of always having it handy, ready to jump in and skew my perception of God’s holy work in my life.

We had a visiting priest at my parish a while ago. I was so engaged in his homily that it must have shown on my face. As I thanked him after Mass he looked at me and said: *Oh you shine*. I replied: *God is good*, thinking to myself that the shine may have more to do with walking a mile and a half uphill to church. Then he repeated: *Oh no, you shine*. To which I again replied: *Then God is good*. I felt flattered, a little embarrassed and humbled that my response to his homily was noticed. All that would have been fine until my ego jumped in a few hours later and I began to plan how I could go to this visiting priest’s parish and shine for him again sometime. I resisted that, of course, laughed at my silly ego that likes to take a compliment and make it all about me. If we were able to always live in the dignity of knowing we are God’s beloved children, God’s love would always shine through us. We can be transfigured or disfigured.

It is our egos that entrap us in fear and fear is disfig-

uring. It’s tempting to reside there lately, considering the state of the world. I forget who I am and yoke myself to fear instead of to Jesus. Being yoked to fear is terrifying. Everything is life or death, the anxiety is paralyzing and it’s so hard to remember in that moment I am God’s beloved child. It’s exhausting. Abiding in fear is like wearing that lead apron the dentist puts on you when you have x-rays taken. You have no idea how heavy it is until it’s removed. When I am afraid all my bad habits reappear, only I pretend I’m just relaxing, I deserve this. I know what my stumbling blocks are. Why is it I feel the need to strap them on my feet and try to dance? Why should I be surprised when I trip? Jesus tells us in Matthew 11:28-30: *Come to me all you who labor and are burdened and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me for I am meek and humble of heart: and you will find rest for yourselves. For my yoke is easy, and my burden light*. Why do we resist that gentle yoke? It only makes us stronger to be yoked to Jesus. We can shrug off the lead weight of our fears and find rest! Who wouldn’t choose that?

This summer I helped my daughter move into her first post-college apartment. The trailer was piled high with her stuff and, as luck would have it, my husband had to be out of town. We assured him we could manage; after all, I had seen him hook up the trailer a hundred times.

The morning of the move, my anxiety level was so high I could hardly breathe. I shot off a favorite prayer: *Lord if this is from you, then I thank you and praise you for it. If it is not, please take it away*. Nothing. Still anxious. We struggled for 45 minutes to attach the trailer, discovering that the right rear taillight wires had been severed. OK, my goal was not to turn right, ever. Backing up? Forget it. Counter intuitive. My daughter was following me in her car and I was sure she could hear the blood pounding in my head. I was so worked up I thought I’d pass out. This isn’t like me, I’m usually calm in a crisis. I finally said to myself: *This is stupid. What do I usually do when I’m afraid? I need to pray. The first Sorrowful Mystery, the Agony in the Garden*. And I started laughing. *Lord, forgive me if this is presumptuous, but hauling this trailer without a taillight sure feels like agony to me, nothing like Yours in the garden. But still*. I shouted the rest of the Rosary and made my way to the new place, laughing and crying and alert, but not anxious. No traffic tickets. *Lord I know you made the blind see, but could you make the seeing blind just this one time?* God is good.

Everyone I know is facing challenges, has worries. Maybe it’s a health issue, caring for an elderly parent, loss of a job, a struggling child, a sick grandchild. Maybe it’s worry over the war, the election, global warming, social justice. It’s all relative. The temptation is to wallow in the worries and because the problems

are so big, do nothing. It’s suspended animation. Since I can’t fix all of it, I fix none of it. All I can do is hang onto the prayer after the Our Father at Mass: *...protect us from all anxiety as we wait in joyful hope for the coming of our Savior Jesus Christ*. Sometimes I can only focus on that protection-from-anxiety part. Sometimes my prayer is silly and makes me laugh at my littleness: *Lord I’m feeling kind of puny, like a sad deflated balloon-y. Come O Holy Spirit come. Plump me up. Thy will be done*. Whatever keeps me talking to God is good enough. My sister reminded me to praise God for all of it, and I began to praise Him for the worries and concerns, and left at the altar all that separated me from Him. Don’t think this was a pious exercise. It went something like this: *Lord I know I am called to praise you for all things but I am afraid and I really don’t want to praise you for this. I don’t see what possible good could come from this situation. This is too big and I’m too little. But I DO praise you, I don’t like these circumstances and I’d rather hide in a corner than unclasp my grubby little hands in surrender but I am willing. You’ll have to take care of the able part*. Then I began to praise God for my biggest fears. It makes me weep. But I continue to do that. I am now praising God for the anxiety. And it has dissipated. Not sure if I can muster “joyful hope” but I am willing to let God give me that gift.

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“Peacemakers” continued from page 3

believe that I finally understand the peace that Jesus gave us. In a wonderful book titled “Happiness Here and Now,” author Elizabeth West points out that Jesus gave us that peace after the resurrection, after he had left the relational world of opposites. He gave us that peace from a realm where opposites melt into unity. Does that mean that we must wait for the day of our own resurrection to finally know that peace? I believe not. The stories of Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection tell us that he knew that peace while he was in the relational world. We too can experience that peace in this world. It is not a peace that ignores or runs from tension created by opposites or enemies—it is a peace that embraces tension and finds God there.

How can we come to know that peace? As Jesus did, we must know the realm that exists deep inside each of us where opposites become unity. We can find it by following the psalm that begins each Apostles Group meeting—“Be still, and know that I am God.” (Psalm 46:10).

The peacemakers who are blessed in Jesus’ beatitude are those who accept the peace that he gives. They know the realm without opposites even while living and working in the relational world. They embrace both realms in each moment. They don’t avoid conflict, and at the same time they don’t “take sides.” They passionately advocate

for what they believe is right with an understanding of other perspectives. Most importantly, they know that whatever the outcome, God is in charge, and both they and their opponents will be loved and cared for. They are the Children of God.

I have decided to accept the call of the Holy Spirit and tear down the wall that has made me feel secure, not only the past few years, but for most of my life when I rejected participation in any form of religion. I am humbly presenting myself with cupped hands to receive the Body and Blood of Christ. I am doing this because I want to share the fullness of the Love of God with my sisters and brothers.

Shortly before he died, Blessed Pope John XXIII wrote in his encyclical “Pacem in Terris” (Peace on Earth), “the world will never be the dwelling place of peace, till peace has found a home in the heart of each and every person.” By tearing down my wall, I am preparing a home for peace in my heart, and adding to the dwelling place of peace in the world. As I embrace my new relationship with the Church, I will not stop advocating for change in places where I believe it is needed. But I will advocate as a humble peacemaker—a Child of God.

They drew a circle that shut me out,

Heretic, rebel, a thing to flout.

But love and I had the wit to win,

We drew a circle that took them in.

~ Edwin Markham

Jeff is a member of the Apostles Group at St. James Cathed-

ral, Seattle. Our prayers are with him as he prepares for Full Communion with the Church. Jeff can be reached at jvirgin@uwashington.edu.

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talk with them at any time. They shared with me, and I am not making this up, that all remodel workers in the world play a game that few homeowners know about. The game is called, “Nick And Smash.” It goes like this: The senior crew member, or anyone who has been a carpenter for more than a week, is the finder. He scouts the house, identifying expensive-looking furniture, preferably valuable family antiques. He makes a list and brings it back to the crew who is sitting down talking with each other. The crew brainstorms creative and ingenious ways they can nick, smash, mar, scratch or bash each item on the list before the project is completed. Points are given on the basis of how long it will take the homeowner to notice the damage. If an owner notices the damage right away, the crew member who damaged that particular article will lose points. If the damage goes unnoticed that crew member will earn points for each day the damage is not seen by the owner.

Confused, dazed, deaf and disoriented points are also counted. If the homeowner notices the hammer holes in his antique dining room table and screams, “What the blankety-blank

happened to my table?”, all workers snap into confused-dazed-deaf-disoriented mode and begin muttering, “I don’t know. What is my name? Are we still living in America? Is today Tuesday or March?” Crew members become so proficient at this portion of game that they have caused homeowners to shoot bullet holes in their refrigerator, go screaming into the country side, get divorced and have nervous breakdowns. Points are given each time a homeowner goes berserk. Each time a worker causes a homeowner to go bonkers, he earns a week’s paid vacation.

I had better wind up this article. It is six in the morning and Igor has had his nose pressed against the window of my office watching me since five o’clock. I need to set up the folding chairs so the crew will have some place to sit when they get here.

Lory is a psychotherapist and co-founder of SacraMentors®. He can be reached at lmsw@comcast.net.



O God,
 Who in the
 glorious
 transfiguration of
 Thine only-begotten
 Son
 didst strengthen the
 sacraments of faith
 by the testimony of
 the fathers, and Who
 didst wonderfully
 foreshow the perfect
 adoption of Thy
 children by a voice
 coming down in
 a shining cloud,
 mercifully grant that
 we be made co-heirs
 of the King of glory
 Himself, and grant us
 to be sharers in that
 very glory. Through
 the same Lord Jesus
 Christ, Thy Son, Who
 liveth and reigneth
 with Thee in the unity
 of the Holy Ghost,
 God,
 world without
 end. Amen.

~ Collect for the Feast of the
 Transfiguration (from the Mass of
 St. Pius V)

Steps from the River

by Frank Pease

I woke up to the sounds of the forest, eased out of my pickup truck camper shell, and stretched out my body and soul on that Saturday morning at Big Creek Campground. The sun shone brightly beyond the creek, beyond the backlight of the tall pines, outside the campsite on the highway. I grabbed my notebook and headed that direction, to greet the brightness of the day and the promise of nature's warmth.

The morning sunshine on that hard road was a welcome change to the cool, shady, soft, and damp place of my slumber I had left just a few moments earlier. I stopped to bask and breathe in all I could of the first light of day. Then I headed west, to the river, to do my daily meditation.

On the way, a coyote, outside a stand of pine trees on the Nisqually river, sighted me, and fixed his gaze upon my every move, as I slowly reciprocated his energy and actions. We studied each other in silence, knowing each was looking into the other's world, a glimpse that would soon evaporate into only a

memory, a story for me to tell around the campfire.

But for those 20 seconds, the curiosity was mutual, intense, and enchanted. Who lived a superior existence, I wondered? Who would now retreat into a better world? Who knew more of God's love? Were we brother creatures, just born to different forests?

We parted on cue, it seemed, he to the forest, me across the asphalt to descend to the glacial water draining to the basin below. As the sun glistened off the rushing, gray-brown river, Mount Rainier appeared between the cleavage of layered hilltops, radiant in its white cape.

I balanced myself across uprooted log roots, and dug my boots deep into mounds of glacial ash, to assure my crossing to be closer to the music of the passing water. The sound of the whistling, rushing flow became my mantra for the day. Sitting on a log and listening to the lilting liquid, I discovered a new way to meditate, as I contemplated the river.

Was I put in this special place for some reason, just a

mile down the road from camp? Or was this a personal transfiguration, an experience that no other person would witness or tell about, but only I would experience? To see Mount Rainier, and my brother coyote, my Elijah? Would I be somehow *changed* by this random walk to the river? Had God planned to meet me there? Was Moses nearby, or floating down the Nisqually?

I headed back to camp along the road, deciding to continue my meditation by counting my steps, and savoring each one as another precious sparkle in the bright sunshine of my Maker. One, two, three, four, one, two, three, four... Each step a chance to stay in touch with the Transcendent, while the Light still shone on my path.

I turned right into the shaded campground, crossed the creek, and disappeared into the dark forest where I had begun.

Frank is a Board member, a Series Trainer, and a regular contributor to "Blessings." He can be reached at frank_pease@hotmail.com.

The Feast of the Transfiguration was not among the earliest of the Christian feasts. It was celebrated in Asia starting in the 4th or 5th century and spread throughout the Christian East in the centuries following. The Catholic Encyclopedia notes that it wasn't commonly celebrated in the West until the 10th century. To celebrate the great Christian victory at the Siege of Belgrade in 1456, during which the Muslim Turks were routed and the Islamic advance into Europe was halted, Pope Callixtus III elevated the Transfiguration to a feast of the universal Church and established August 6 as the date of its celebration. (from *About.com: Catholicism*)

"Sacred,"

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We are either transformed by life, or deformed. We choose. My then 4 year-old grandson Jack reminded me of that as he was coming back into church from Sunday school, clutching a handful of papers. I asked him to tell me about his drawings. I knew the lesson was on Jesus, the Bread of Life and so I expected a loaf of bread or a host. Instead he simply said: *Transformers*. (his current favorite toy). I laughed because of course Jesus IS the best Transformer there is. The theme song goes: *Transformers, more than meets the eye*. When we limit ourselves to what we see instead of seeing it through the lens of God's love, then of course we always will be afraid. We are so much more than we know. More than meets the eye. We don't have to be scared or scarred by life. Change a few letters and we can be sacred.

Change me Lord.

Mary Anne is a SacraMentors Trainer, a former Board member, and a regular contributor to "Blessings." She can be reached at mareynolds@comcast.net.



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Blessings

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CHRISTMAS 2008

Editor

Scott Webster

Rosary Walk at Point Defiance Park

Bring a rosary and join us in a walking version of this traditional Catholic devotion. SacraMentors, family and friends are all welcome to attend this summer event.

The walk should last about 45 minutes. Afterwards, let's plan to share a mid-afternoon picnic potluck. Please bring a salad and main dish to feed 5 people (desserts optional). SacraMentors will provide drinks, plates, napkins, cups, and utensils.

Please RSVP to Frank Pease at frank_pease@hotmail.com or at 425-562-8744. Frank is always glad to answer any questions.

Sunday, August 17th, 2:00 pm to 5:00 pm

Point Defiance Park

Once you arrive at the front gate of the park, proceed to the Fort Nisqually Picnic Shelter.

The park is located at:

5400 N. Pearl St.

Ruston, WA (near Tacoma)

Looking forward to sharing with you at the event!

Place
Postage
Here

SacraMentors® is an United States IRC Section 501(c)(3) tax exempt, charitable non-profit organization, and was co-developed by Fr. Bob Camuso and Lory Misel, MSW.