

The Passionists COMPASSION

Fall 2009

No. 90



Listening

Listening to God through the Pain

A Letter from the Pope

Listening to Young Adult Catholics

Hearing the Call Today

Driving Miss Doris





THE PASSIONISTS

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Published
Quarterly
Fall, 2009
No. 90

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Editor's Corner

Listening with God's Heart

We read in Psalm 34:18, "When the just cry out, the Lord hears, and rescues them from all their distress." In God's providence, the "just," the "poor of the Lord" know best that God has heard when another human being listens to their burdens and responds with help.

The voices of suffering people fill the airwaves as well as our private conversations. But who is listening? The Passionists are!

In a Haitian hospital where where priest-doctor Father Rick Frechette offers struggling families physical healing and encouragement for the spirit...

In parishes and retreat house workshops on contemporary Catholic issues where faithful Catholic men and women seek to transform Church teachings into positive action...

In a quiet Monastery parlor where a recovering alcoholic finds solace in taking the "fifth step" so helpful in moving toward sobriety and the healing of past relationships...

In Internet conversations with young adults seeking to channel their talents and energy into a positive force through Church ministry...

In rural villages where laywomen and laymen dedicate precious years of their young lives to accompany Caribbean and Honduran citizens in moving ahead in life right where they live...

In prayerful communion with God after seventy decades of generous service in religious life.

Passionists listen first of all to the loving wisdom of God shown in Jesus Crucified. Inspired by this "memory of the Passion," Passionists listen to people today who are "crucified" by injustice, by a loss of respect for human life, by a yearning for peace, truth and the fullness of human existence. Then Passionists are prepared to speak a word of God's comfort to those in distress. Come, meet some Passionists now!

Paul Zilonka, C.P.

Listening to God through the Pain

Compassion interviews Frs. Timothy Fitzgerald, William Maguire, John McMillan and Dan Sullivan, four Passionist priests helping scores of people to navigate life's stormy seas by means of the traditional Passionist "front parlor" and retreat house ministry at St. Paul's Monastery and Retreat House in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

Q: *In your effort to assist people who come to the Monastery and Retreat House for spiritual counsel for a variety of challenging issues, what basic advice do you find most helpful?*

Fr. John: The basic spiritual counsel I give is prayer. .First of all, besides encountering needy Catholics in confession—many of whom have serious problems of anger and resentment, I also meet a variety of faiths in those coming to step-five in twelve-step spirituality programs.

After hearing their stories, I do a meditation on the Passion of Jesus with them if they are Christians or have the faith to recognize God's presence in Jesus on the cross. I ask them to accept God's forgiveness, forgive themselves and forgive others in their stories who have hurt them and whose memory may still be hurting them.

I run into chronic anger, very deep at times, which makes it difficult really to forgive something they feel. I ask them if they pray or have prayed for those who have hurt them. Sometimes they say, "Yes." Often they say, "No, I don't want to pray for them. I want to kill them." I tell them to pray for those who hurt them even when they don't feel like it, citing our Lord's words: "Pray for those who persecute you."

Father John McMillan, C.P.



I also tell them that Jesus sometimes heals slowly to keep them constantly close to himself and so learn patience. I remind them of Jesus' words "Ask and you shall receive."

Fr. Tim: I stress a fundamental faith and trust in God, based on a genuine friendship with Christ. Even for staunch Catholics this is not easy. Patience and scripture readings are helpful.

The Gospel of John 6 and 15, prayerfully pondered, open risky but rewarding results.

Philippians 3 is also a challenge to surrender to a Lord who invades a life, investing it with new meaning and cementing a relationship which puts all else in true perspective. This text's strong emphasis on knowing Christ, being seized by him, feeling the power of the resurrection so as to enter into his Passion, is especially meaningful to those who are suffering in any way.

Moving gently from this highly personal life with Jesus, I open the door to the Lord's greatest revelation: living always a Trinitarian life. Here, John's last supper discourse is very effective. Of course, not everything follows completely this trajectory. The spirit moves where he wills.



Father Timothy Fitzgerald, C.P.



Father Dan Sullivan, C.P.

Fr. Dan: Give God more room in the thinking, feeling and doing of your life. Pray that you may come to know and trust God, our Father. Jesus reveals the Father by his life, death and resurrection.

Quiet yourself to listen for God's signals in your life. Make peace with your flawed humanity and so turn to God for insight and strength.

Forgive yourself and others as God forgives you. Be grateful for who you are to God, for this present time of life, for hope in fullness of life with God in the future. Persevere. Stay the course. God is with you.

Fr. William: Often I will suggest a Scripture passage. So many times people want a quick solution. When I invite them to stay the course with God through prayer, I suggest that the greater part of prayer is listening. God already knows what we need. We need to give God the opportunity to respond to our situation by listening to him. Prayer is a dialogue, not a monologue.

When a person lacks control over a situation through no personal fault, I suggest reflecting on how Jesus experienced something similar on the cross, and looking at his reaction.

Sometimes people really beat themselves up, even after they have confessed certain deeds. In those situations, I invite them to ask for the grace to forgive themselves, to accept God's forgiveness and to also learn what led them to that particular deed.

Q: *In your many years of priestly ministry, how have you seen the grace of God at work in the people you have served, and what have you learned?*

Fr. Tim: I have seen heroic virtue in so many of the people whom I have listened to and learned from. What a humbling and healing experience it is to witness the tenacious faith of those hit hard over and over again by sickness, death of loved ones, betrayal (esp. of a spouse), injustice (esp. from the church), unemployment, unrelenting darkness in prayer, loss of faith by loved ones. The list is long.

But people's faith response to horrific life experiences is more than exemplary. It is a constant reminder that all vocations are a call to the cross. People who come to the monastery live their faith. They keep alive the memory of the Passion. They teach me.

Fr. Dan: Many people have only a hint of how much they are loved by God as revealed in Jesus' life, death and resurrection, and of God's desire to be intimately involved in their lives.

People are fundamentally good and desire to be "right" with God and with other people.

People have generous hearts, "survivors" in the presence of hardships, and by-and-large, trust God.

Fr. William: Sometimes people have been away from the sacrament of reconciliation for nearly fifty years and something they hear on retreat touches them and they return to God.

I have seen people healed physically and witnessed people being reconciled with one another in spite of some difficult situations. Marriages and friendships have been restored.



Father William Maguire, C.P.

I have seen people endure tremendous suffering physically, emotionally and spiritually. And yet they take it in stride without any bitterness or anger toward God.

I am always amazed and humbled at how the Spirit moves in people's lives. The people really teach me about God as I witness God's movement in their lives.

Fr. John: I have learned never to give up on anyone either in confession or in 12-step spirituality. I have come to know AA and NA victims. It's something rare to hear their whole life story with its traumatic (or even prosaic) events that have led them to their addiction. I have been amazed at the working of God's grace in those with addictions lasting for decades. Without their lived conversion and sincerity before me, I would have said as many of their friends did' "You're hopeless." But then comes the bottom in their story which opens them up to God's grace and recovery.

Difficult as it may be to apply, never give up hope though tough love may have to intervene.

Q: *How does your life-long commitment to preach the Passion of Jesus nourish your ministry of spiritual counsel?*

Fr. William: Preaching and meditating on the Passion keeps reminding me not to give up on situations, and encourage others to do the same. In Jesus' darkest hour on the cross, no one could have imagined that God would be able to pull goodness out of that situation.

The Passion also shows me how we are called to surrender our lives to God, not just in the big moments but also in the everyday moments.

Fr. John: I know where the graces come from, nourishing my faith and understanding of the mystery of the cross—telling me that every grace in my own life and the instrumental grace I am for others was merited by a personal, loving Jesus on the cross—suffering, dying and rising so that I might take my place in the resurrection.

In the Passion of Jesus I have a constant sign for my faith which says “This is how much I love you. This is how much I really care.” This faith gives me courage in the darkness and helps me to be a Christian optimist despite my limitations and failures.

Fr. Dan: What I preach is the fruit of prayer, my ongoing education, life experiences and reflection. What I preach is what I try to live, and that influences my spiritual counsel.

Fr. Tim: As a Passionist I have that special vow to promote devotion to the Passion and to keep its memory alive in my own heart and in the hearts of others.

When I was first professed the wording of the vow formula stressed promoting devotion to the passion. This was not just a devotion, but the primary devotion, a willed (votum) act to enter the Lord’s will, to put on the mind of Christ who emptied himself for us.

In the 1970s and in our new Rule, the emphasis became caught up in the powerful scriptural and theological reflection on the memory of the Passion, a “dangerous memory,” to be kept alive.

Both emphases insist on a preaching (praying, acting, listening, counseling) that enlivens all Passionist ministries.

Spiritual direction or counsel, a treasured legacy from St. Paul of the Cross, pervades every aspect of the graced communication between the wayfarers on the road to Jerusalem with Christ, under the guidance of the director, the Holy Spirit. Faithful companions listen to the voice of the Father, who tells them to “Listen to my Son.” ❖

A Letter from the Pope: “Caritas in Veritate”

by Victor Hoagland, C.P.

One of the best known images of St. Peter is his statue in St. Peter’s Basilica in Rome. The apostle, seated on a chair, has his hand raised, not just in blessing, but making a point. He’s the teacher of the church.



Father Victor Hoagland, C.P. with Paul of the Cross (upper left) and Peter

I passed that statue in November, 2008, and someone snapped my picture as I was doing what pilgrims have been doing for centuries—touching the apostle’s foot to ask his blessing.

When I looked at the photo later, I was in for a surprise. In the picture’s upper left hand corner was the statue of St. Paul of the Cross, founder of my community, the Passionists, high in a prominent niche among the founders of religious orders.

St. Paul of the Cross strongly supported the popes in the 18th century and urged his followers to do the same. By slipping

into that picture, was he reminding me, I wondered, to listen carefully to those who follow Peter today?

A major encyclical

On June 29, 2009, the feast of Saints Peter and Paul, Pope Benedict XVI issued *Caritas in Veritate*, a major encyclical on social issues affecting our world today. The present pope was continuing the ministry of Peter through a letter sent to bishops and people throughout the world.

It took me a week to read through the encyclical after it was released and I can’t say I’ve grasped it all, even though I’ve returned to it a number of times since, but let me tell you a few things I’ve taken away from it.

As you read this extensive, densely packaged work, remember that the word “encyclical” is close to the word “encyclopedia.” The pope is speaking about a world that’s big and complex. It can’t be dealt with in “sound bites,” as our news media tend to do, nor can its problems be solved through shouting matches or screaming television ads.

No, our world doesn’t respond to a quick fix. It’s not a world of one issue, either. *Caritas in Veritate* doesn’t oversimplify life and the problems our world faces, and neither should we.

The name Pope Benedict chose for his encyclical “Charity in truth” says something in itself. We tend to reduce love to a personal dimension—loving our neighbor next door, our family, our circle of friends. That’s part of the truth of love we may know best.

Beyond a personal dimension

But the pope says that love calls us beyond that. We’re called to love a larger world and work at building—and repairing—our earthly city.

That’s not an easy job as our world struggles with a new globalism, advancing technology and, today especially, economic and political strife. We are living in a world where science offers promises, but it isn’t our sole answer. Love—patient love, hopeful love, sacrificing love, love that calls for all our talents and gifts—is needed. That love Christ begets in us.

Caritas in Veritate calls for Christ’s love, a love that serves not just me or my loved ones, or my country, or my church, but the development of the human being, the whole human being and all human beings who belong to the wide universe of creation.

It calls for a love that, respecting the reality of things and God’s plan for them, brings all its gifts of mind and heart to the cause of human development in our world.

The pope’s encyclical is many-faceted. *The New York Times* columnist, Ross Douthout, remarked on its “left-right fusionism.” “It links the dignity of labor to the sanctity of marriage. It praises the redistribution of wealth while emphasizing the importance of decentralized governance. It connects the despoiling of the environment to the mass destruction of human embryos.” (*NY Times*, July 13, 2009)

The pope obviously believes that Christians should be involved in a broad range of inter-connected social issues and not a single social problem.

I wondered after reading the encyclical how the 82-year-old pope felt after putting his signature to this massive, complex document. Tired out?

Surely he was. The encyclical and the big issues it deals with would tire out anyone who looks at it. But instead of exhaustion, the pope in his letter promises something else to those who involve themselves in the large issues that face our world—the surprising gratuitousness of God.

We often think it's all up to us, the pope says. "Sometimes modern man is wrongly convinced that he is the sole author of himself, his life and society." (34)

But surprising, life-giving gifts await those who build our earthly city, "gifts beyond our merit...in many different forms" that awaken us to the presence of God.

"Charity in truth places us before the astonishing experience of gift." That's something to think about as we face our world today. We may tend to shun the massive problems that confront us in our own communities as well as the world community. Too much, we say.

But the pope says that love is at its best when life seems too much. Jesus Christ showed that when he faced with love the challenge of the Cross. ❖

Fr. Victor Hoagland, C.P. is former editor of Compassion.

"Development needs Christians with their arms raised towards God in prayer, Christians moved by the knowledge that truth-filled love, caritas in veritate, from which authentic development proceeds, is not produced by us, but given to us. For this reason, even in the most difficult and complex times, besides recognizing what is happening, we must above all else turn to God's love. Development requires attention to the spiritual life, a serious consideration of the experiences of trust in God, spiritual fellowship in Christ, reliance upon God's providence and mercy, love and forgiveness, self-denial, acceptance of others, justice and peace." (79)



Listening to Young Catholic Adults

by Robin Ryan, C.P.

During the summer of 2009, eighty-eight men and women in their twenties and thirties from all parts of the United States participated in young adult conferences offered by Catholics on Call. “Catholics on Call” is a national vocation discovery program at Catholic Theological Union (Chicago) which reaches out to young adult Catholics who are considering a life of service in the Church as a member of a religious community, priest or lay ecclesial minister. What are young adult Catholics saying to us today?

Quarter-life crisis

Studies of young adults show that their social situation is different from that of young adults thirty or forty years ago. In 2007 Robert Wuthnow, a distinguished sociologist of religion at Princeton University, published an illuminating study of the religious practice of young adults entitled “After the Baby Boomers.” Wuthnow points out that there is a longer period of vocational and career exploration for most young adults today. Men and women get married today on average about four years later than they did in 1965. They also have greater job mobility, with many exploring not only different positions but distinct lines of work.

Thus there is an extended period of single life and vocational exploration that can be a confusing and unsettling experience for some young adults. Some speak of the phenomenon of “quarter-life crisis” – an experience of feeling adrift and alone for men and women in their middle to later twenties, many of whom have finished college but have not settled down into a definite vocation or a particular community.

More financial pressures

Wuthnow and others also describe the financial pressures felt by men and women in their twenties and thirties. Recent statistics show that today’s young adults are experiencing lower wage growth and greater economic inequality than young adults of a generation earlier. The responsibility to pay off student loans presents a further challenge. Married young adults often comprise dual-income families – a situation that imposes pressures on time and energy. While

living in an affluent society, young adults do face significant financial pressures which impact upon the choices they make.

Fewer supports

Wuthnow observes that while there are many institutional supports in Church and society for young people through their college years, there are few such supports for young adults after college. There is, for example, a need for good mentoring in the professional and spiritual realms, which young adults often struggle to find.



Wuthnow concludes, “We cannot hope to be a strong society if we invest resources in young people until they are eighteen or twenty and then turn them out to find their way entirely on their own.”

Core beliefs

Most young adult Catholics, even those who participate in the life of the church infrequently, like being Catholic and readily identify themselves as such. There seems to be a Catholic sensibility that endures with most young adults even when their practice of faith is sporadic. There are core Catholic beliefs that most young adults readily espouse, including belief in the resurrection and divinity of Jesus, affirmation of the real presence of Jesus in the Eucharist,

devotion to Mary as the Mother of God, and the obligation to show active concern for the poor. Many young adults struggle with the Church's teachings on sexual morality, the role of women in the Church, and ecclesial requirements for marriage.



Inadequate education

Many young adults express a desire for a deeper knowledge of the Catholic tradition. In a recent study of active young adult Catholics, the late Dean Hoge and Marti Jewell concluded, "Whether self-identified as traditional or liberal, young adults want to know more about their faith." Young adult Catholics often say that the religious education which they received was inadequate. They claim that it was long on process and short on content. These sentiments are confirmed by researchers who investigate the knowledge of the faith that young adult Catholics actually have. In many cases, it reflects a minimal familiarity with the Catholic tradition. They genuinely appreciate programs like "Catholics on Call" and "Theology on Tap," where they can learn more about their faith in a welcoming environment.

Young adults tend to be disheartened by the polarization they perceive among middle-aged and older Catholics. Categorizations of Catholic positions as “pre-Vatican II / post-Vatican II” or “conservative / liberal” do not have much relevance to them. In his book “Seeds of Hope: Young Adults and the Catholic Church in the United States,” Tim Muldoon observes that young adults easily become disillusioned by protracted battles among Catholics of differing perspectives. They are more interested in building a church community founded in love seeking justice.



Devotion-attraction

Some of the young adult Catholics who are most active in the Church are attracted to traditional practices like Eucharistic adoration, the rosary and other forms of devotional prayer. This is puzzling to some pastoral ministers, who wonder whether these inclinations represent a “throwback” to practices of yesteryear. It seems, however, that these practices reflect a discovery of aspects of the Catholic tradition with which they were previously unfamiliar and which they find helpful in their relationship with God. For example, my experience of Eucharistic adoration with young adults suggests to me that this form of prayer provides a respite in a noisy world, communicates a sense of the mystery of God, and offers an opportunity for communal prayer in a form that is non-threatening.

Invitation hopefuls

Young adults want to be invited into active participation in the Church. They often feel isolated and anonymous in parish communities, where they sometimes have few friends. If they have been actively involved in college campus ministry programs and then move to a parish that has little outreach to young adults, it is easy for them to get lost or simply drift away. It is very important for all Catholics to make a special effort to welcome young adults to the parish community and to invite them to become more deeply involved in the life of the parish.

Vocation thoughts

Most Catholics are painfully aware that vocations to religious life and priesthood have declined significantly in recent years. While that is certainly the case, it is wrong to conclude that young adults are not interested in service in the Church. The recent study by Hoge and Jewell mentioned above indicated that most young adult Catholics had positive attitudes about religious life, priesthood and lay ecclesial ministry. For example, about half of the men who were surveyed said that they had seriously considered becoming a priest, and about a third of the men and women reported that they had seriously considered a vocation as a religious sister or brother. At Catholics on Call, we have found that when young adults are offered cogent presentations on vocations to ministry in the Church in a pressure-free atmosphere, they come to a deeper appreciation of these possibilities and are willing to give them serious consideration. They even feel a certain excitement about the ministerial opportunities that are open to them.

Those of us who are “older” Catholics need to make the effort to listen seriously to the concerns and aspirations of Catholics in their twenties and thirties. As a Church we need to do a better job in reaching out to this age group and inviting them into the life of the community. If we do that, we will encounter men and women with great energy who inspire us in our own faith. ❖

Fr. Robin Ryan, C.P. Ph.D. teaches ecclesiology at Catholic Theological Union and is Director of Catholics on Call. More helpful information is available at www.catholicsoncall.org.

The Jamaican Ties That Bind

By Paul Zilonka, C.P.

On August 15, in a section of Queens, New York, called Jamaica, Passionist Fathers Angelo Iacovone, Gerard Orlando, Richard Leary and Malachy Mc Gill renewed the religious vows they had first professed seventy years earlier in 1939. Their strong voices that day echoed the voice of a much younger Jamaican-born Passionist Michael Rowe who professed those same vows for the rest of his life on August 9 in Kingston, Jamaica. But the “ties that bind” these five Passionists to God and to one another are far more significant than the coincidence of the place name “Jamaica” which they share in these ceremonies of religious profession.

Fathers Angelo and Richard ministered as priests for decades in Jamaica, building up communities of Catholics, while also sharing in many ecumenical endeavors with dozens of Christian denominations throughout the country. Though the distance from Jamaica New York to the island-nation of Jamaica in the Caribbean is substantial, the two places have long been connected in the minds and hearts of Passionists.

Since 1955, Passionist bishops, priests, brothers, sisters and lay missionaries have ministered faithfully throughout the country. They have devoted themselves to apostolic ministry, working alongside Jamaican clergy, religious and laity through parochial ministry, in Mt. Calvary Retreat House and other forms of evangelical preaching, as well as assisting in many social needs of health and education.

As we recall the religious profession of these five men, we cherish the memory of the scores of other Passionist men and women they represent both here and abroad.



Fathers Angelo Iacovone, Gerard Orlando, Richard Leary, Malachy McGill on occasion of 50th anniversary of priesthood in 1996.



Hearing the Call Today

By Sr. Ann Stango, S.C.

Bible history records the fact that each prophet heard a call from God, and seemed to know what he must do. Some of them, like Jonah, for instance, didn't like the task he was given. And others, like Jeremiah, knowing exactly what God wanted from them, tried to back out. But in the end they did their job and God rewarded them with immortality through these many centuries. Jesus also heard God's call and began His ministry. Then Jesus called his friends to follow Him. No one was forced; each had his own gifts, and responsibilities. Many said "yes," and some said "no."

The important thing here is that the prophets, Jesus, and his apostles heard the call. Maybe it was easier for them than with us. The call seemed to be clear, and neither Jesus nor the prophets or apostles took long to answer. It seems to me that over the years, many people heard the call, but took longer and longer to make up their minds to begin looking into following Jesus more closely. This is true even today for the basic call to Baptism. Parents take longer to baptize their babies, and older adults think long and hard before entering the Church.

Full-time workers needed

Since Vatican II the Church has called lay people to take their rightful roles in many aspects of Church life, and many have responded with enthusiasm and generosity. But today the Catholic Church needs more people to dedicate themselves fully to doing the work of the ministry. Traditionally, these people have been the bishops, priests, religious brothers and sisters. In today's language, we might say they found a life-long career in the Church.

The Catholic Church has grown through the grace of the Spirit dwelling within each of its members. From that perspective, why aren't more of our members looking for full-time ministries as priests, brothers or sisters? Where is the call? Is it possible that Jesus through His Spirit is not calling many to follow Him full-time in Church ministry? I don't think so.

The call comes at any time. One needs to hear it, pay attention to it, not be afraid of it and take the next step. Responding to a call takes some courage, even to begin to think about what it means to

be a priest, brother or sister. A person can become fearful because it involves change, and change entails leaving the familiar and embracing a new way of living.

But it can't be any scarier than thinking about getting married for life, can it? Don't people always seem to be trying to "fix-up" men and women they think are good for each other and for marriage? We even see television ads offering to match up people! Where are the "fixer-uppers" in the Church who can identify those who would fit well as a priest, brother or sister?

Support people needed

The call needs encouragement. That's true for successful people both in and out of religious life. Shortly before he died, the late Tim Russert wrote about his still-living fifth grade teacher, a Sister of St. Joseph, who started him out in his vocation to be the admirable political commentator and author that he became. More recently, New York Archbishop Timothy Dolan, mentioned another religious sister, able to be present at his installation, who had wonderfully influenced his life.

Who are the supports that Divine Providence puts in the life of each of us to guide us through our development stages? Who are those who encourage a vocation in Ministry? Parents, teachers, relatives, priests, sisters, brothers, friends, even acquaintances can say to someone, "I think you'd make a good priest," or religious sister or brother, as the case may be. There's no harm putting that good thought into the consciousness of a person, and the younger, the better! Placing another option for a life's ministry might be exactly what that person needed. But age need not be a factor.

"I came when called!"

We know that today many people have second and sometimes third careers. Why not think of the priesthood or religious life? Saint Elizabeth Ann Seton was a widow, and look what she accomplished, -- taking five kids with her!

I remember being with a group of well-wishers with a newly ordained priest who was as middle-aged as I was at the time. Someone in the group remarked that he was a "delayed vocation" (a term meant for men over thirty who had decided to study for the priest-

hood). To which the priest quickly responded: he hadn't delayed! "I came when I was called!"

So, back to my original question, "Where is the call today?"

I think it's where it always has been – within each of us. In the quiet of reflection on the Spirit of God within us through Baptism and the Eucharist, God does make known to us his call --- first to perfection, to lead a holy life. Then, through a series of attractions and qualities and experiences and urgings from others, we find ourselves looking at possibilities for a married, single, priestly, or vowed religious life. Many Catholics, even those not in Church ministry, but still feel they have a vocation, a call to their life's work, a career, can usually remember fairly well when they recognized this call, and how long it took them to respond!

Wanted—and Needed?

We all want to feel needed and wanted. But I am convinced that some people are going where they are wanted, though not necessarily needed. This damages the desire to contribute to a cause greater than ourselves, and tempts us to adjust to mediocrity because challenges to overcome odds are not available.

I am also convinced, however, that people who have a genuine religious vocation need to be attached to something greater than themselves. They need the challenges that working for the Lord provides. They not only want to be wanted. They want to be needed, too. And the Church wants and needs these generous people. Priesthood wants and needs them. Religious Life wants and needs them. You know who they are. (You may be one of them!) Tell them you think they'd make a good priest or sister or brother. Ask them to think and pray about it. You make the call. Pray that they hear it. If they do, fix them up with us! ❖

Sr. Ann Stango, SC is a member of the Sisters of Charity of Saint Elizabeth, New Jersey. She currently serves as an education specialist in ethics and spirituality in Catholic hospital ministry.

Driving Miss Doris

By Betsy Rouleau



Miss Doris

Passionist Volunteers International

As my year of volunteer mission starts coming to a close, memories of joyful times in Jamaica become more poignant, more treasured. And, some memories that I feel should be shared are those in which I drove Miss Doris.

Miss Doris is 79 years old and Mount Friendship's resident church boss. She keeps tabs on the sick and shut-ins of the community, 'hip-checks' me out of the way when it's time to distribute food bags, and manages to keep the altar linens snowy fresh and immaculately folded. She has a high-pitched voice that she's not afraid to use, either to praise her Jesus or to scold a naughty child.

My first interaction with Miss Doris came when she told me to 'collect' her at her home so that we could hand out the food bags together. As we drove along in the van she criticized my driving, warning me to "mind de gully." When it was time to abandon the van and walk, I found myself following her like a meek puppy as she forged ahead on arthritic knees to feed Mount Friendship's neediest. It was on that day of driving (and walking!) that I first learned Mount Friendship the Miss Doris way.

I quickly found that Miss Doris was never afraid to demand a ride, either to visit a shut-in or to pick up her mail from the village post office. And so I gradually became accustomed to driving Miss Doris because, frankly, she's not the type of person who takes 'no' for an answer.

But as the weeks passed, I stopped seeing Miss Doris as simply 'a lady I drove' and began seeing her for what she is—a really good time! She's crazy. She pouts if I don't come see her in my free time, but hugs and kisses me with joy when I show up unexpectedly. She

regales me with stories of her girlhood and spans me if she thinks I'm misbehaving.

Not only does she have a remarkable *joi de vivre*, but Miss Doris has helped me to find my own inner crazy. When I visit her, I stand and dance in her doorway until she notices me and starts giggling. I made a paper crown for her on her 79th birthday and the two of us laughed hysterically together when she wore it for an entire day and attracted stares galore.

But it's in the quiet times that we share that I find myself realizing just how extraordinary she is. At first glance, she's a lonely widow with arthritic knees and lots of money troubles. But I've grown to see her as a deeply devout woman who keeps a faltering church community together. She's a mother, grandmother and great-grandmother who thinks constantly of her family—and her adopted family. She has a sharp intellect and a soft heart.

Something is driving this woman that keeps her trekking the mountain paths, saying the rosary on her knees, putting down her washing to dance with me around her yard, to be everything for everyone.

Most likely, it's her faith that keeps her eyes clear, her smile bright, her heart buoyant, and keeps her going in the face of her adversities.

I adore Miss Doris! She's my Jamaican grandmother, my inspiration, and my partner in crime (no one else will make absurd faces with me at solemn moments). She is the force that drives me, everyday, to be a better missionary, a better volunteer, (a better driver), and a better friend.

And there I was thinking that I was the one driving her. ❖

Betsy Rouleau has served as a member of Passionist Volunteers International for the past year in rural districts outside Kingston in Jamaica. For information see: www.passionistvolunteers.org.



Listening with Understanding Hearts

By Kenneth O'Malley, C.P.

Since the Second Vatican Council, there has been a renewed interest in the theology of the Trinity. One aspect of these studies is that God is described as a Listening God. The First Person of the Trinity is described as the Great Listener, while the Second Person is portrayed as the Obedient Listener. The Third Person of the Trinity is described as the Obedient Inspirer.

The words used to present God as Listener may be new, but this divine reality has its roots throughout Sacred Scripture. In Exodus 2:23-24, we read: "Still the Israelites groaned and cried out because of their slavery. As their cry for release went up to God, He heard their groaning and was mindful of His covenant with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob." A little further along the Lord said, "I have witnessed the affliction of my people in Egypt and have heard their cry of complaint against their slave drivers." (Exodus 3:7) Even before God reveals his name to Moses as "I am who I am," God's real name seems to be "I am the one who *listens* to the cry of my people." Could this be part of the reason we also instinctively strive to be the best listeners we can be!

In 1989, while doing an internship in spiritual direction, I had to attend three major workshops related to spiritual direction. Fortunately, James Campbell and Edwin McMahon offered a "Focusing" program in Chicago. Later, they would write *Bio-Spirituality: Focusing as a Way to Grow* (1997). Their method is rooted in Jungian psychology which highlights that we are both body and soul, spiritual and physical. If we listen to both aspects of our reality, God speaks to us.

Therapeutic exchange

A Listening Workshop offered valuable lessons as well. When talking to a stranger, or someone who is upset or angry, whether an adult or a child, certain methods prove to be very important. A person might say, "I have never been so angry in all my life!" My instinct before the Listening Workshop would have been to say, "Oh, that's perfectly understandable," or "I know exactly how you feel." But it is much more helpful for the listener to say, "You have never been so angry in all your life?" By using the same words, we give the person permission to share what or who has caused this anger. Thus it becomes a therapeutic exchange rather than the end of the discussion because the listener has all the answers.



Sometimes, a person will make a statement that is apparently contradictory. For instance, someone might say, "This is the happiest day of my life, but I have never been so upset in all my life!" We might want to avoid the negative so we say, "I am so happy for you that today is the happiest day of your life!" We pay no attention to the fact that at the same time the person has "never been so upset!" Again, repeating the person's original words allows them to explain the ambivalent feelings. You have not decided for them that only part of the conversation is worth discussing.

Listening hearts

Recent studies about counseling have shown that the most certified or credentialed person is not always the most successful counselor. Rather, it is the person who is capable of the most empathy. In other words, the best counselors are the ones who are able to "listen" to others with an "understanding heart." They are able to hear what others are feeling beyond their words. In most religious traditions, the great wisdom teachers, shamans, gurus, sages, and spiritual directors are those who have "listening hearts."

In conducting retreats, parish renewal programs, counseling or spiritual direction, pastoral ministers find that people are always searching to get closer to God in their lives. Karl Jung worked with people from all different cultures, religious traditions and ages. Jung said that in the "second part of life," that is after thirty-five, all the questions people have are religious questions. Bernard McGinn in his multi-volume work on the history of mysticism entitled *The Presence of God* writes that, there are two things which motivated the great mystics in their lives. First, they were made in the image of God, and second they were seeking the will of God in their lives.

Isn't this what we are all about? We need to remember that we are made in the image of God, and that the one truth which will make us happy is to know and do the Will of God in our lives. That is why we seek out people who are good listeners. That is why we try to be the best listeners of God and God's will for us.

“Insight”

Jung said that the greatest achievements of the human spirit cannot be taught. They are gifts. These gifts are faith, hope, love and insight. We are not surprised that he mentions the first three, the great theological virtues. But “insight” is perhaps “new.” I understand insight to be the ability to make sense out of life. It is what really touches my heart, gives meaning to my life, and makes me tick. Insight is what ties up the tangled, loose ends in my life and puts them together into a beautiful mosaic. That is why we need to listen to what is happening in our lives, and to hear how and where God is present to us. It is what we do when we seek out spiritual directors to help us. What we are saying to these “listeners” is, “Here is the story of my life. Help me turn it into a prayer.”

“Summary moments”

Sometimes, when accompanying someone in spiritual direction, it is good to stop and “listen” to what is happening in the conversation. After listening intently to the person speaking, the director might say, “Let’s just stop for a moment here and listen to what the Holy Spirit might be saying to us.” It is amazing what can happen. Often, all of a sudden, the presence of the Spirit is most tangible.

I once heard Dr. David Cronin of the University of Chicago Medical School tell his students at their “white coat” commissioning ceremony that they would experience “Summary Moments.” He went on to describe these moments as a time when “you will see more clearly than you ever saw before, hear more keenly than you ever heard before, and feel more intensely than you ever felt before. You will realize that something happened in that operating room that was bigger than you, or the patient, or the support staff.” He continued, “You can call it God, or Ground of Being, or Higher Power, but you will feel it and know something extraordinary happened.”

He gave examples of men and women who unexpectedly survived surgery. He also spoke of a child only a few months old whom the doctor could not save. He laid the child in the arms of her parents for them to be parents to her for the last time. Something like these “Summary Moments” can happen to us also when we least expect it. But we will recognize them only if we are attentive, only if we are good “listeners.” ❖

Fr. Kenneth O’Malley, C.P. is a writer, preacher, and currently serves as Archivist for Catholic Theological Union in Chicago.



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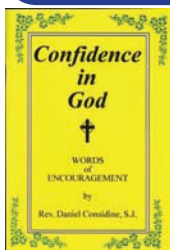
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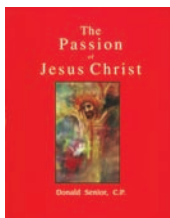


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