

**Fr. Thomas M. Pastorius**

**August 4, 2019**

**Spiritual Ponderings**

**Spiritual Randomness**

Someone shared with me the following story called the "Deck of Cards Prayer Book".

Upon finding that the *War To End All Wars* was actually at an end, a soldier wandered away from his barracks and into town. As he passed a small church, he stopped and looked in and saw that the townsfolk had gathered for worship. The soldier wandered in, down the aisle and slid into a pew. He took his seat next to some worshipers who were at that moment sitting with their heads bowed in prayer. The soldier having no prayer book took out a time-worn deck of playing cards. He fanned the cards before him and started to mumble to himself. His fellow worshipers, amazed at the soldier for displaying a deck of cards, the "Devil's Tickets," in the house of the Lord, nudged him and whispered, "Put those away, you can't do that here!"

The soldier paid little attention to them and carried on with his cards and mumblings. Soon the fellow worshipers became alarmed and sent out for the constable and the poor man was arrested. He was placed in the jail for the night and the next morning was brought before the town magistrate, charged with disorderly conduct for displaying a deck of cards in a place of worship. The Magistrate asked what he had to say for himself, "Guilty or not guilty?" The soldier standing before the bar of justice replied, "Not guilty, Your Honor, and with your kind permission, I would like to present this defense for my actions."

With that, he took out his old time-worn deck of cards, fanned them out before him, and then he began:

- "Your Honor, to me this deck of cards is my prayer book and Bible. When I look into these cards and see an Ace, it reminds me that there is only one God.
- When I see the Deuce, it reminds me that the Bible is divided into two parts, the Old and the New Testaments.
- When I see the Trey, it represents the three persons of the Blessed Trinity - the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost.
- When I see the Four, it reminds me of the four great Evangelists, who wrote the Gospels - Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.
- When I see the Five, Your Honor, I think of the five virgins who kept their lamps trimmed in waiting for the coming of the Lord.
- When I see the Six, it reminds me that in six days God made this great Heaven and Earth.
- When I see the Seven, it represents the Sabbath, a day of rest and worship.
- When I see the Eight, it reminds me of the eight righteous persons who were saved from the Flood—Noah, his wife, their three sons and their wives
- When I see the Nine, I'm reminded of the nine lepers who were cleansed of their sins, but did not give thanks, such was their ingratitude.
- When I see the Ten, I think, not only of the tenth leper, who did give thanks, but of the Ten Commandments handed down by Moses on the stone tablets, each spot for one Commandment.
- Now, Your Honor, the Jack reminds me of the Knave of the Devil and to shun his temptation.
- When I see the Queen, I think of the blessed Virgin Mary, who is Queen of Heaven.
- The King is, of course, the King of Heaven and Earth and All Things, to whom we should all bow down and give thanks."

He folded up the deck of card, shuffled them once, and fanned them out before him. Then he continued:

- "Your Honor, when I look into this deck of cards, I see that there are 365 spots, as there are 365 days in the year.
- The Joker stands for Leap Year, 366 days.
- There are fifty-two cards in the deck, there are fifty-two weeks in a year.
- There are twelve face cards in the deck representing the twelve months of the year.
- Actually, there are thirteen lunar months in the year represented by the thirteen cards in each suit.
- Speaking of the suits, the deck is divided into four suits - Clubs, Diamonds, Hearts and Spades; and we know that the year is divided into four seasons - summer, winter, spring and fall.
- Lastly, Your Honor, this deck of cards has two colors, red and black; the red stands for the daylight and the black for the night.

So you see, Your Honor, not only is this deck of cards my prayer book and Bible, it is also my Almanac!"

With that, His Honor said, "Case dismissed!"

I now invite you to find different ways to see God in your life today through the ordinary things you encounter each and every day—especially the people you will meet.



**Fr. Thomas M. Pastorius**

**August 11, 2019**

**Spiritual Ponderings**

**Spiritual Randomness**

The following reflection begins with Mathew Kelly's "Prayer Process" from his book *Four Signs of A Dynamic Catholic*. Quotes from his book are in bold and my commentary will be in the normal font at the end.

**In The Prayer Process we take time – a minute, two minutes or maybe ten minutes – to spend time with Jesus every day. Pick a specific time when you will pray; for example, first thing in the morning or at night when the kids go to sleep. Find a quiet place where you can exclusively focus on God and begin.**

**The seven steps of The Prayer Process are as follows:**

- 1. Gratitude: Begin by thanking God in a personal dialogue for whatever you are most grateful for today.**
- 2. Awareness: Revisit the times of the past twenty-four hours when you were and were not the-best-version-of-yourself. Talk to God about these situations and what you learned from them.**
- 3. Significant Moments: Identify something you experienced today and explore what God might be trying to say to you through that event (or person).**
- 4. Peace: Ask God to forgive you for any wrong you have committed (against yourself, another person, or Him) and to fill you with a deep and abiding peace.**
- 5. Freedom: Speak with God about how he is inviting you to change your life, so that you can experience the freedom to be the-best-version-of-yourself.**
- 6. Others: Lift up to God anyone you feel called to pray for today, asking God to bless and guide them.**
- 7. Finish by praying the Our Father.**

**Each of the first six steps in the process should stimulate a conversation with God. It is easy to fall into the trap of merely thinking about these things. When you find yourself doing that, return to actually speaking with God about whatever it is you are thinking. The goal is to develop the ability to have intimate conversations with God during this time set aside for prayer. The more deeply rooted we become in this daily habit of prayer, the more those conversations with God will spill over into the moments of our daily lives.**

**If you are just beginning, you may want to start with just one minute of conversation with God each day, adding a minute each week until you reach ten. If that is the case, don't try to race through all seven aspects of the prayer process. Just use the first step, Gratitude. Spend your minute speaking to God about everyone and everything you are grateful for, and then close with an Our Father. As you expand your time of prayer over the coming weeks, adding minutes, I suggest you add one step at a time of the process to your daily prayer. The key is to get the conversation started.**

**But whether you start with one minute a day or ten minutes a day, I hope this chapter has left you thinking, "I can do that!" Nothing will change your life more meaningfully than developing a vibrant and sustainable prayer life."**

I believe having a specific formula to follow can help one begin to pray consistently. As I began to pray more and more, I found myself moving away from the formal rigidity of the prayer process so I would not make it a steadfast rule that you have to do all the parts all the time but I did also find it nice to go back to when I felt my prayer life was not as consistent as I would like it to be.



**Fr. Thomas M. Pastorius**  
**August 18, 2019**  
**Spiritual Ponderings**  
**Spiritual Randomness**

The following comes from a prayer that Pope Francis composed for World Communications Day (January 24, 2018). He was inspired by The Peace Prayer which is often misattributed to St. Francis of Assisi.

**Lord Make Us Instruments of Your Peace by Pope Francis**

Lord, make us instruments of your peace.

Help us to recognize the evil latent in a communication that does not build communion.

Help us to remove the venom from our judgments.

Help us to speak about others as our brothers and sisters.

You are faithful and trustworthy; May our words be seeds of goodness for the world:

Where there is shouting, let us practice listening;

Where there is confusion, let us inspire harmony;

Where there is ambiguity, let us bring clarity;

Where there is exclusion, let us offer solidarity;

Where there is sensationalism, let us use sobriety;

Where there is superficiality, let us raise real questions;

Where there is prejudice, let us awaken trust;

Where there is hostility, let us bring respect;

Where there is falsehood, let us bring truth. - Amen.

I have found the following helpful also when thinking how best to use the Internet and Social Media

**10 Commandments for the Internet Age**

Archbishop Eamon Martin, Coadjutor Archbishop of Armagh,

from 'The New Media and the Work of Evangelization' – May 20, 2014

"The internet has become like the nervous system of our culture, in which more and more people are expressing and exploring their identity, picking up and discarding their values and attitudes, expressing their feelings and prejudices, befriending and unfriending each other, measuring each other's status and importance, relevance and appearance. If our young people and people are living in this gigantic network, then we, as people of faith need to be in there, dialoguing with the inhabitants of this world, with the men and women who dwell in the web."

1. Be positive and joyful. Offer 'digital smiles' and have a sense of humor. Remember that it is the 'joy of the Gospel' that we are communicating, so, as Pope Francis says: no 'funeral faces' or 'sourpusses'!
2. Strictly avoid aggression and 'preachiness' online; try not to be judgmental or polemical – goodness knows, there is enough of this online already! Instead, try Pope Francis' approach of 'tenderness and balm'.
3. Never bear false witness on the internet.
4. Remember 'Ubi caritas et amor' (where charity and love are). Fill the internet with charity and love, always giving rather than taking. Continually seek to broaden and reframe discussions and seek to include a sense of charity and solidarity with the suffering in the world.
5. Have a broad back when criticisms and insults are made – when possible, gently correct.
6. Pray in the digital world! Establish sacred spaces, opportunities for stillness, reflection and meditation online.
7. Establish connections, relationships and build communion. Church has always been about 'gathering'. In this, it is worth considering an ecumenical presence for the Christian churches online. The internet tends to be a place of ethical and intellectual relativism, and often of aggressive secularism. The scandal of disunity among Christians can be easily exploited and exaggerated. Therefore we must seek to share resources so that we can

have a powerful Gospel witness. Wouldn't it be wonderful if people started noticing online: 'See how these Christians love one another'?

8. Educate our young to keep themselves safe and to use the internet responsibly.
9. Witness to human dignity at all times online. Seek, as Pope Benedict once said, to 'give a soul to the internet'. We are well aware of the pervasive prevalence of pornography on the internet which can 'pollute the spirit', destroy and degrade human sexuality and relationships, reduce persons to objects for gratification, draw millions into the commodification and commercialization of sex, feed the monster that is human trafficking.
10. Be missionary, be aware that with the help of the internet, a message has the potential to reach the ends of the earth in seconds. In this regard, let us foster and call forth charisms in younger committed people who understand the power and potential of the net to bear witness.

On 5 May Pope Francis tweeted: @Pontifex: What does "evangelize" mean? To give witness with joy and simplicity to what we are and what we believe in. That is our challenge and our privilege as Christians. Freely we have received the joy of the gospel now let us freely give it.



**Fr. Thomas M. Pastorius**

**August 25, 2019**

**Spiritual Ponderings**

**Spiritual Randomness**

The following was sent to me by a priest friend who knows that I do a lot of writing. It is titled Ten Pathways to Positive Speech and was written by Lori Palatnik with Bob Burg.

Gossip may be defined as any form of communication that harms another. It can ruin lives, assassinate reputations, split families, alienate friends and destroy businesses.

On the other hand, a gossip-free environment leads to peaceful lives, healthier relationships, and overall prosperity. Yes, the gift of speech is a marvelous one, depending upon how it is used. Would you like your words to soothe instead of sting? Heal instead of hurt? And build instead of burn? Following these ten pathways will help:

1. **Speak No Evil.** Say only positive statements. Let words of kindness be on your tongue. This means to respond instead of react. And, even, to edit your speech before you speak.
2. **Hear No Evil.** Refuse to listen to gossip, slander and other negative forms of speech. Hint: If avoiding the conversation is impossible, have another topic of "positive" interest you can quickly bring up in order to change the subject.
3. **Don't Rationalize Destructive Speech.** Excuses like "But it's true" or "I'm only joking" or "I can tell my spouse anything" just don't cut it. Gossip is gossip, anyway you cut it. Besides, the fact that it is true is what qualifies it as gossip. If it were not true, it would be libel or slander.
4. **See No Evil.** Judge people favorably, the way you would want them to judge you. If you've ever been accused of doing something for which you know you were innocent, then you know how it feels to be misjudged. Remember, if you weren't there, you don't know. And, even if you were, you may have missed what actually happened in context.
5. **Beware of Speaking Evil Without Saying An Evil Word.** Body language, and even positive speech, can bring tremendous destruction. Yes, telling someone you know takes advantage of others' kindness that a particular person will give you "the shirt off his back," although it seems like positive speech, is not an act of kindness.
6. **Be Humble; Avoid Arrogance.** These will be your greatest weapons against destructive speech. As Rabbi Noah Weinberg teaches, "Take pleasure in your accomplishments, not pride." This way you recognize the Ultimate Source of your accomplishments. And those who are arrogant are so filled with themselves, there is no room for their Creator in their lives.
7. **Beware Of Repeating Information.** Loose lips sink ships. Even positive information needs permission before being repeated. Telling someone who's out of a job that your mutual friend, Julie, got a raise, does not constitute proper speech.

8. Honesty Really Is The Best Policy—Most of the Time. Be careful to always tell the truth unless it will hurt others, break your own privacy or publicize your accomplishments. Strive for honesty in everything you do. But if it's between honesty and unnecessarily hurting another's feelings, it's better not to be so truthful. Those who boast about being "brutally honest" are usually more brutal than honest.
9. Learn to Say, "I'm Sorry." Everyone makes mistakes. If you've spoken badly about someone, clear it up immediately. It might be embarrassing, but get it over with quickly. Apologize, ask for forgiveness, and let him or her know it won't happen again.
10. Forgive. If you have been wronged, let it go. Forgive for your sake, if not for theirs. Those who can forgive live healthier, happier, and less stressful lives. Those who say they'll forgive but not forget are actually saying that they'll neither forgive nor forget.

Try this for the next month. The good news is, if you slip up now and then, it only means you are human. Try again. I congratulate you simply for making the effort.

