

Fr. Thomas M. Pastorius

November 6, 2016

Spiritual Ponderings

Power of Stories

I have a three step plan for world peace. Step one of my plan is for everyone to read Ernest Kurtz and Katherine Ketcham's book called *The Spirituality of Imperfection: Storytelling and the Search for Meaning*. In this book Ernest Kurtz and Katherine Ketcham provide a sort of spiritual history of Alcoholics Anonymous and by doing so elicit some from the experiences of those participating in Alcoholics Anonymous some powerful and literally life changing spiritual insights. The most important being the power of stories. Step two of my plan for world peace is for everyone to sit down and compose their own personal story about their lives. This needs to be done honestly accepting one's past and embracing the possibility of change in the future and it has to be done by the individual and no one else. I cannot write your story and you cannot write mine. We can assist but we cannot be the primary author of someone else story. Finally step three, share our stories with one another. From there I believe human compassion and mercy would take over. We would see that there is more that unites us than divides us. We would see that we all desire the same thing: love. We would see that we all fear the same thing: being declared unlovable. Seeing the joy on the other's face as they tell you their story and feeling the joy that builds up within you as you tell someone your story would bring joy to the world. "Listen! Listen to stories! For spirituality itself is conveyed by stories, which uses words in ways that go beyond words to speak the language of the heart. Especially in a spirituality of imperfection, a spirituality of not having all the answers, stories convey the mystery and the miracle—the adventure—of being alive."

For the month of November I am going to share with you some stories that I have collected over the years and explore some of the spiritual insights that I have gained from these stories.

### **The King and His Dogs**

*There was a king who had ten wild dogs. He used them to torture and kill any of his servants who made a mistake. One of the servants gave an opinion which was wrong, and the king didn't like it at all. So he ordered that the servant be thrown to the dogs.*

*The servant said, "I served you for ten years, and you do this to me? Please give me ten days before throwing me to those dogs!"*

*The king agreed. In those ten days, the servant went to the guard who looks after the dogs and told him he would like to serve the dogs for the next ten days. The guard was baffled but agreed, and the servant started feeding the dogs, cleaning them, bathing them and providing all sorts of comfort for them.*

*When the ten days were over, the king ordered that the servant be thrown to the dogs for his punishment. When he was thrown in, all were amazed to see the ravenous dogs only licking the feet of the servant! The king, baffled at what he was seeing, said, "What has happened to my dogs?"*

*The servant replied, "I served the dogs for only ten days, and they didn't forget my service. Yet I served you for a whole ten years and you forgot all, at my first mistake!"*

*The king realized his mistake and ordered the servant to be set free.*

Our world would be a more peaceful place, if we only learned to focus on the positive as much as we focus on the negative. Many of us are so slow in offering a compliment but at the same time we are quick to pounce on someone else's mistakes. When I am honest with myself, I realize that most of the time, I am gossiping about another, it is because I want the attention to remain on them so that people do not start looking at me. My hope is that by highlighting other's mistakes, people will not take the time to notice mine. Instead of focusing on other's mistakes, I should be looking for ways to help them be reconciled with the community.

We are also not very good at accepting the fact that others make mistakes and therefore we assume that what they did was with malicious intent and in reality most of the time it was an accident or thoughtlessness that caused us to get hurt and not any well thought out plan on the part of the person who hurt us.

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Fr. Thomas M. Pastorius  
November 13, 2016  
Spiritual Ponderings  
Power of Stories

For the month of November, I am looking at different stories and some the spiritual insights expressed in them.

**This School Has A Bench For Kids To Sit On When They Don't Have Anyone To Play With  
"Somebody will come find you and they'll include you in their game."**

*When you're a kid, finding someone to play with can be hard. That's why the Willowgrove School in Saskatoon, Canada, just installed a new bench in their playground called the "buddy bench." Kids can sit on the bench when they'd like to be invited to play.*

*When 7-year-old student, Matthew Henkelman, was asked by CBCNews if he had used the buddy-bench before, he said he had. He said only took about "a minute" for other kids to ask him to join them on the playground.*

*The kids at Willowgrove seem to love the buddy bench, as it provides them with a subtle way to let other kids know they need a friend.*

*Once again, Canadians got this whole "friendly" thing down.*

The above story came from Buzzfeed.com which I had discovered to be a website that suffers from attention deficit disorder. The website covers a wide arrange of topics. The above story of how one school community is helping those who are having problems fitting in at recess reminds me that sometimes the solution to our problems are much simpler than we think. The bench provides an opportunity for children to ask for help in being included without have to look weak in front of his or her peers. Secondly it allows those who are a part of a group to know that others are in need. I truly believe that most problems like this are a result of neglect and not malice. The children, knowing that there is a special bench, now know when a classmate wants to be included in their games. This teaches the children to seek out those who are in need also which is another great lesson.

I can personally testify what Mother Teresa says about loneliness is true: "The most terrible poverty is loneliness, and the feeling of being unloved." I would have benefited greatly from a bench like this. I know most of the time when I was left out of recess games it, I also had with me a fear of being rejected. The bench would have given me a place to go and ask for help even if no one came, at least I would not have been reject to my face.

Growing up as an outcast has made it easier for me to dedicate my life to making others feel included. When I am a gathering, I try to find those who are hanging out by themselves and I try to encourage others to make sure no one feels unwanted. Jesus was probably pretty good at noticing those who felt alone or that they did not belong. He was able to see Zaccheus up in a tree and know that the woman who touched his cloak needed more than physical healing.

"Let us always meet each other with smile, for the smile is the beginning of love." — Mother Teresa

**Who Is the King of the Jungle?**

*There was a young lion who wandered from his father to test whether or not he would get the same respect from the other animals as his father did. As the young lion approached some monkeys, he roared and asked, "WHO IS THE KING OF THE JUNGLE?"*

*The monkeys, being afraid, responded, "YOU are!"*

*The lion replied, "And don't you forget it!"*

*The lion repeated this to each animal in the jungle and got the same response until he came across a herd of elephants.*

*The little lion roared and asked, "WHO IS THE KING OF THE JUNGLE?" The big bull elephant walked closer to the lion, swooped him up in his trunk, swung him around and around and finally threw him in the river. Battered and wet, the little lion replied, "Just because you didn't know the answer to the question didn't mean you had to get nasty about it!"*

Who is the king of your life? God or you?

Why do we feel the need to impress people in order to make a name for ourselves? Why can we spend more time trying to impress people by being loving individuals?

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**Fr. Thomas M. Pastorius**  
**November 20, 2016**  
**Spiritual Ponderings**  
**Power of Stories**

Here are some more spiritual truths through the language of spirituality.

### **The mouse trap by Stephen**

*A mouse looked through the crack in the wall to see the farmer and his wife open a package. "What food might this contain?" the mouse wondered. He was devastated to discover it was a mousetrap. Retreating to the farmyard, the mouse proclaimed the warning: "There is a mousetrap in the house! There is a mousetrap in the house!"*

*The chicken clucked and scratched, raised her head and said, "Mr. Mouse, I can tell this is a grave concern to you, but it is of no consequence to me. I cannot be bothered by it."*

*The mouse turned to the pig and told him, "There is a mousetrap in the house! There is a mousetrap in the house!" The pig sympathized, but said, "I am so very sorry, Mr. Mouse, but there is nothing I can do about it but pray. Be assured you are in my prayers."*

*The mouse turned to the cow and said, "There is a mousetrap in the house! There is a mousetrap in the house!" The cow said, "Wow, Mr. Mouse. I'm sorry for you, but it's no skin off my nose."*

*So, the mouse returned to the house, head down and dejected, to face the farmer's mousetrap alone.*

*That very night a sound was heard throughout the house – like the sound of a mousetrap catching its prey. The farmer's wife rushed to see what was caught. In the darkness, she did not see it was a venomous snake whose tail the trap had caught.*

*The snake bit the farmer's wife. The farmer rushed her to the hospital and she returned home with a fever. Everyone knows you treat a fever with fresh chicken soup, so the farmer took his hatchet to the farmyard for the soup's main ingredient. But his wife's sickness continued, so friends and neighbors came to sit with her around the clock. To feed them, the farmer butchered the pig. The farmer's wife did not get well; she died. So many people came for her funeral; the farmer had the cow slaughtered to provide enough meat for all of them.*

*The mouse looked upon it all from his crack in the wall with great sadness. So, the next time you hear someone is facing a problem and think it doesn't concern you, remember, when one of us is threatened, we are all at risk.*

*We are all involved in this journey called life. We must keep an eye out for one another and make an extra effort to encourage one another. Each of us is a vital thread in another person's tapestry.*

For Catholics there is no such thing as a "private" sin or a sin that only affects you. For when of us sins we become less the person that others need us to be. Our Catholic faith teaches us that we are all in this together. If you do not want to stop sinning for your own sake do it for someone else.

### **One World Verses Two World**

*A story is told about Rabbi Joseph Schneerson, a Hasidic leader during the early days of Russian Communism. The rabbi spent much time in jail, persecuted for his faith.*

*One morning in 1927, as he prayed in a Leningrad synagogue, secret police rushed in and arrested him. They took him to a police station and worked him over, demanding that he give up his religious activities. He refused. The interrogator brandished a gun in his face and said, "This little toy has made many a man change his mind."*

*Rabbi Schneerson answered, "This little toy can intimidate only that kind of man who has many gods and but one world. Because I have only one God and two worlds, I am not impressed by this little toy."*

When you find yourself far from God ask yourself what fears drove you there? Was it the fear of the lost of money, popularity, etc. Then ask yourself are any things worth having if you do not have God and His gift of Eternal life?

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**Fr. Thomas M. Pastorius**  
**November 27, 2016**  
**Spiritual Ponderings**  
**“Power of Stories”**

Here are some more spiritual truths through the language of spirituality – STORIES!!!.

### **The Seed**

*A successful business man was growing old and knew it was time to choose a successor to take over the business. Instead of choosing one of his directors or his children, he decided to do something different. He called all the young executives in his company together. He said, 'It is time for me to step down and choose the next CEO. I have decided to choose one of you. 'The young executives were shocked, but the boss continued.' I am going to give each one of you a SEED today - One very special SEED. I want you to plant the seed, water it, and come back here one year from today with what you have grown from the seed I have given you. I will then judge the plants that you bring, and the one I choose will be the next CEO'*

*One man, named Jim, was there that day and he, like the others, received a seed. He went home and excitedly, told his wife the story. She helped him get a pot, soil and compost and he planted the seed. Every day, he would water it and watch to see if it had grown. After about three weeks, some of the other executives began to talk about their seeds and the plants that were beginning to grow.*

*Jim kept checking his seed, but nothing ever grew. Three weeks, four weeks, five weeks went by, still nothing. By now, others were talking about their plants, but Jim didn't have a plant and he felt like a failure.*

*Six months went by--still nothing in Jim's pot. He just knew he had killed his seed. Everyone else had trees and tall plants, but he had nothing. Jim didn't say anything to his colleagues, however. He just kept watering and fertilizing the soil - He so wanted the seed to grow.*

*A year finally went by and all the young executives of the company brought their plants to the CEO for inspection. Jim told his wife that he wasn't going to take an empty pot. But she asked him to be honest about what happened. Jim felt sick at his stomach, it was going to be the most embarrassing moment of life, but he knew his wife was right.*

*He took his empty pot to the board room.*

*When Jim arrived, he was amazed at the variety of plants grown by the other executives. They were beautiful--in all shapes and sizes. Jim put his empty pot on the floor and many of his colleagues laughed, a few felt sorry for him!*

*When the CEO arrived, he surveyed the room and greeted his young executives. Jim just tried to hide in the back. "My, what great plants, trees, and flowers you have grown," said the CEO. "Today one of you will be appointed the next CEO!"*

*All of a sudden, the CEO spotted Jim at the back of the room with his empty pot. He ordered the financial director to bring him to the front. Jim was terrified. He thought, "The CEO knows I'm a failure! Maybe he will have me fired!"*

*When Jim got to the front, the CEO asked him what had happened to his seed. Jim told him the story. The CEO asked everyone to sit down except Jim. He looked at Jim, and then announced to the young executives, "Behold your next Chief Executive! His name is Jim!"*

*Jim couldn't believe it. Jim couldn't even grow his seed. How could he be the new CEO the others said? Then the CEO said, "One year ago today, I gave everyone in this room a seed. I told you to take the seed, plant it, water it, and bring it back to me today. But I gave you all boiled seeds; they were dead - It was not possible for them to grow. All of you, except Jim, have brought me trees and plants and flowers. When you found that the seed would not grow, you substituted another seed for the one I gave you. Jim was the only one with the courage and honesty to bring me a pot with my seed in it. Therefore, he is the one who will be the new Chief Executive!"*

*If you plant honesty, you will reap trust.*

*If you plant goodness, you will reap friends.*

*If you plant humility, you will reap greatness.*

*If you plant perseverance, you will reap contentment.*

*If you plant consideration, you will reap perspective.*

*If you plant hard work, you will reap success.*

*If you plant forgiveness, you will reap reconciliation. So, be careful what you plant now, it will determine what you will reap later.*

Sometimes, I think we Christians give up too easily instead of realizing that we are on the right path and that God is teaching us an important lesson that we will only learn through perseverance in our prayers and good works.

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