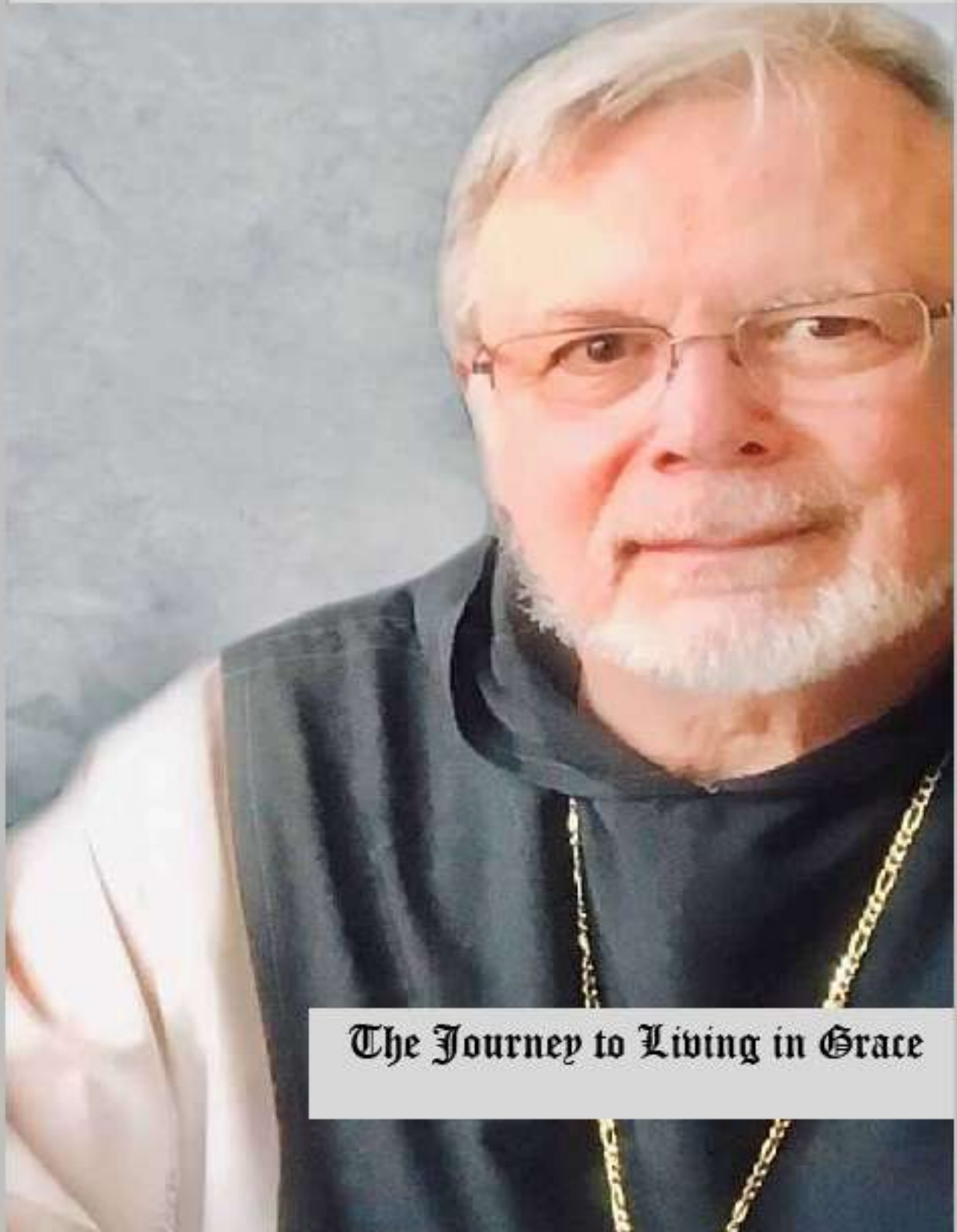


The Abbot Speaks Out



The Journey to Living in Grace

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The Abbot Speaks Out--Hang on to your hat!!!

Christianity is a 100% religion. You have to be 100% committed. Most of us are not 100% toward anything, never mind 100% into a faith effort. What can the church do?

All too frequently, an alternative is sugar candy sola scriptura preaching filled with platitudes and false promises. This approach eliminates personal responsibility for our misdoings and misplaces guilt onto God. Thus the church/preacher creates a god that manipulates its followers and consequently is not trustworthy. The preacher shifts the light onto himself as the true and certain God.

I believe that this ploy for power is not intentional; however, slothful stupidity and living in narcissistic human weakness are deliberate. Churches, pastors, church leaders of every sort have been, for a long time, led to believe that pop psychology, new age euphemisms, and political correctness are biblically/traditionally supported.

I hate false platitudes and have fought my way to oblivion as I have attempted to straighten out the Face Book religious liars. Today I will discuss just one of the lies but if you want more examples, read my up-and-coming book, ***Listen With The Ear Of Your Heart, Your Pilgrimage Toward Intimacy With God.***

An all too popular and so easily misunderstood phrase is, "Surrender to God, and He will do everything for you." The 20% Christian says, "Cool." I will surrender, and all will be well. Of course, he has never surrendered to anything, but that doesn't matter. It gets him off the responsibility hook. You might hear him say such things as, "I need a job. I am waiting on God." I am looking for a holy mate, so I will sit here, and God will bring one to me." "Our country is in a mess; all I can do is turn it over to God." We have all either heard or said such trash.

Let's get something straight. The Bible is not a book about attitudes. It is an action book. Love is an action word. Salvation is an action word. Peace is an action word. Surrender to God is an action word.

Psalm 37 and Tradition provide a list of surrendering actions.

do not fret

trust in the Lord

do good

dwelt in the land and enjoy safe pasture

take delight in the Lord

commit your way to the Lord

be still before the Lord

be patient

refrain from anger

turn from wrath

be meek

be upright

be blameless

Dear clerical brothers, understand that sola scriptura is the vehicle toward power-driven church/clerical abuse. We need to have balance by knowing and teaching what the church has always taught everywhere to everyone.

Moral Reflection

I have a rather profound and vital question for us.

But first, let me tell you a sad story.

A few years ago, I was helping a local church build its community. I asked them to describe what makes their church so different that others would be persuaded to join. None of them were able to do that.

I then asked what the church's founder believed regarding the permanence of salvation.

They were all quick to answer, "Once saved, always saved."

That was the wrong answer. The church's founder believed in the possibility of losing your salvation.

When I told them, they all freaked out!

The purpose of my story is to encourage you to get to know what your church believes.

What does your church believe regarding culpability through participation?

For example, if your church believes that abortion is a grave sin and you were to drive someone to the abortion clinic, do you share the same sin as they do?

What if you were to vote a political or religious official into office would you be guilty of their sinful legislations?

To what degree and what are your subsequent moral obligations if you are culpable?

The above is a moral conscience developmental question.

What does your church teach?

God's Love and Our Lack of Trust

God's names are points of reference for us to contact His love for us, Healer, Almighty, Protector, Provider, Faithful, Father, Merciful, Love, Peace, and so on.

God is always the initiator. We are always the responders.

God loves us first so we can return His love to Him.

He loves us regardless of our sinfulness, lack of faith, or trust in Him.

We live in, with, through, Him even if we are not aware of this.

We fail to respond to His love because 1. Our lives are full of distractions. 2. Everywhere we turn, we are being lied to.

Distractions: We are easily self-absorbed, full of noise. We create as many as 3000 negative thoughts per hour. Consequently, we become fearful. Fearful people do not trust.

The problem is not that we do not love God. The problem is that we do not trust God.

We reject God because we do not trust Him.

St. Benedict says that "murmuring" can destroy our communities and us.

Pop psychology gives the illusion of thought control by the lie of thinking positively. When that soon fails, we then negatively believe that we are failures. Thinking is the illusion of action.

Scripture says Solution: 1. Repent (not only stop "murmuring" but mature to the state that you no longer care to be negative). 2. Do (action) things: noble, right, pure, lovely, admirable, excellent, praiseworthy, and charitable.

Lies: Lies surround us, and we believe them.

Our culture, Church, government, neighbors, family all lie to us.

The purpose of lies is to get us to doubt. When we doubt, we do not trust. Lies lead us not to trust God.

Religious euphemisms and purposeful manipulation of Scripture have invaded the Church.

Examples of lies: "God gives us no more than we can handle," "God tests us with difficult situations." "We have to forgive ourselves." The focus of worship is on us. We have to be entertained to feel good about ourselves.

Examples of truth: Our sins produce difficult times. We need to take responsibility for the consequences of our sinfulness. God can help us during difficult times. God's forgiveness is more than sufficient. What we worship, we become. Worship a Good Holy God, and we will become good and holy. Worship ourselves, and we become fearful and unwilling to trust.

Solution: God has always known that we would be troubled by fear and lack of trust, so He has given us His Son, Jesus the Christ.

Jesus empowered the apostles to continue His mission of reconciliation.

authoritatively.

We participate in God's solution to our fears and lack of trust by fully participating in His true Church, which is "One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic."

We participate in the sacramental life. Christ gave us the seven sacraments to show us His presence in the various stages of our lives.

Study the Holy Scriptures and the Church's teachings, believing that they can positively contribute to our lives.

Formulate and remember how our Good Lord sees you.

Conclusion: We can grow in trust. Remember that God initiates everything. We are responders.

Life will rule you if you do not have a rule of life.

“Sometimes it seems that not only life rules me but work, family, stress, and my carnal desires. God, prayer, and church often take a back seat,” reports my client.

This morning, the news reported that "last Sunday less than 30% of Americans went to church although over 60% believe in God. Additionally, Americans believe that we should set a Christian example for the rest of the world." Something is wrong with this picture. Something is undoubtedly ruling our nation.

St. Benedict wrote his Holy Rule so that "You may return to Him from whom you had departed by the sloth of disobedience." "Come my children listen to me; I will teach you the fear of the Lord. Run while you have the light of life, lest the darkness of death overtake you." "And so we are going to establish a school for the service of the Lord."

I have always believed that original sin was essentially motivated by pride but energized by sloth. Both pride and sloth are certainly entertaining us today.

To those who have heard and responded to the Word of God, say, “Here I am Lord,” and seek to be on the mountain with The Lord of all Life; the Holy Rule of St. Benedict teaches, as a school, how to be with Him and simultaneously live in the world. The Holy Rule is for everyone who wants to listen “with the ear of your heart.” It can be applied to every walk of life. It is down-to-earth, realistic, and compassionate.

The Rule of St. Benedict, Conversion, Stability, Obedience

The Rule of St. Benedict has influenced the Church throughout the centuries. What is most impressive about The Holy Rule of St. Benedict is that it has been with us for 1500 years and is still relevant and contemporary.

It was adopted as a Rule of Life by numberless male and female monastics, religious orders, autonomous monasteries, religious families and congregations, lay oblates, and lay associations throughout the centuries. The Rule transcends factions, divisions, denominations, rites, politics, and administrative red tape. In all Christian faith expressions, one can find monastics, religious and secular people living The Rule of St. Benedict.

The Rule of St. Benedict is ecumenical. It covers all the practical aspects of life and is valued as a guide to a simple life lived fully in homes, businesses, churches, and monasteries. It leads those living under the Rule towards a holy life and encountering God face-to-face.

You might think of religious vows as “dead man walking.” Your life as you know it is over: no more smiles, no more friends, no more fun.

Actually, religious vows are a vehicle for more freedom. The Rule of St. Benedict is a “guide” to the kind of life that Christians want to celebrate. They want a simple life, lived well.

The last place that a Christian seeks is the whirlwind of earthbound stress, confusion, fear, and fragility.

Following a Rule of Life provides direction on healthy choices rather than making decisions forced upon us by fearful stress. The Rule of St. Benedict is a time-honored way of life that guides life’s challenges.

Conversatio, or conversion of heart, is not referring to one’s initial conversion into Christianity. Rather the daily desire to grow and change beyond our current earthbound paradigms. Those changes can be challenging but, having a Rule of Life and other like-minded persons helping you, the pilgrimage becomes rather liberating and exciting. Life becomes simple.

Stability is seeking God within the Cistercian community. It does not mean giving up your Church, family, employment, and other responsibilities. The Cistercian community becomes a complementary asset. We think of ourselves as extended family.

We dedicate ourselves to God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit and, in all things trusting in the Power of Grace and the love and support of the brothers and sisters in this community.

Obedience is the most liberating of all. It means trusting and gaining your confidence under the direction of a loving, compassionate leader. You will never be asked to do the impossible or anything outside of the Cistercian governing documents that include Scripture.

Now your simple life is lived well.

Seeing as God Sees, Turn the Dial

“Long before the night office began, the man of God, Benedict, was standing at his window, where he watched and prayed while the rest were still asleep. In the dead of night, he suddenly saw a flood of light shining down from above, more brilliant than the sun, and with it, every trace of darkness cleared away. He saw the whole world gathered up before his eyes in what appeared to be a single ray of light. Absorbed as he was in God, it was now easy for him to see all that lay beneath God. In the light outside that was shining before his eyes, there was a brightness that reached into his mind and lifted his spirit heavenward, showing him the insignificance of all that lies below.” (From Dialogues of St. Gregory the Great)

This is one of my favorite episodes in Benedict's life. Benedict saw as God saw. In Scripture, the word "saw" often means to know; to know means to possess and have power over. I suggest that if we could see as God sees, we might have a greater possession of life and enjoy it more. In this article, I suggest that how we possess our suffering is how we possess our Lord.

We have some exciting juxtapositions here reminiscent of St. Paul. Should I be so brave? Medicine, psychiatry, pharmacology, even much of the church do all they can to avoid, diminish, relieve and deny spiritual, emotional, and physical suffering.

I certainly appreciate the sciences and take my assortment of medications. I suggest that suffering has value and could be embraced to see as God sees and possess the divine.

Paul speaks about this as he describes attaching his suffering to that of the cross to complete Christ's salvific action. We can do the same by offering our suffering, joining our suffering to Christ's, and by turning the dial of our human vision to see how God sees our suffering. How do we do that?

I also ask God to help me see people who bring me suffering as He sees them. Almost immediately, I see them with compassion and empathy.

First, understand that: for God, all time is present time. What happened on Calvary some 2000 years ago is happening right now. Right now, you and I can stand at the foot of the cross with Mary, John, and the others and suffer with Him, join our suffering with His. In the Jewish tradition, memorials such as The Passover are not the calling to mind a historical event. Instead, they were reliving the event as though it were happening right now. That is turning the dial. For example, the Holy Eucharist is not a recalling, as a memorial. It is the life, death, and resurrection of Christ right now.

Next, do the things necessary to turn the dial. By that, I mean have an orderly life, be at peace with God and your neighbor, be in communion with your stability (The Order) and then do your Opus Dei, do your Lectio Divina. Know that where you lack, God will fill. Then we like Job, who, after chapters and chapters of whining, sees God and finally says, "in the light of you, my questions are irrelevant, I now just want to possess You."

What do I expect from God When I Pray?

I am usually reticent to describe my personal prayer life, lest it sounds too much of me and not enough of God. Of course, if the reader knew me, they would know that for me, everything is God. My second reservation is that this is my journey, not another's. Indeed, God leads and develops each of us somewhat uniquely, so the reader does not have to try to duplicate anyone other's prayer life. However, there are many good models available, St. Benedict's, for example.

To answer what I expect from God when I come to prayer, I first need to preamble.

I have been fortunate enough to have been raised by a stable, loving Roman Catholic family. I attended a Roman Catholic seminary and have had a valuable formal and personal education in theology, Scripture, psychology, and extensive training in various forms of prayer. God has directed me slowly and very lovingly over the fifty-plus years of praying the Liturgy of the Hours, the Rosary, Lectio Divina, and Benedictine theology.

I have been blessed to have been immersed in a sacramental life filled with the Holy Eucharist, sacramental confession, and ordination to the Priesthood and eventually to the Episcopate. I am in a loving marriage, a stable life, and am vowed religious.

Perhaps most importantly, I know that I have been and still am a grievous sinner who is unworthy of forgiving by a gracious God and inspired by the Holy Spirit to amend my lifetime and time again.

I have learned that I live in, with, and through God. He is "Dominus Tecum," intimately close to me.

So what do I expect from God when I come to prayer? I expect nothing. My prayer time is my gift of thanksgiving to Him as I grow daily to know my dependence on Him and His eager willingness to be with me.

My prayer continues throughout the day as I participate in His life. I find that he inspires and empowers me to participate in His Kingdom more and more perfectly.

I most experience Him when I celebrate the Holy Eucharist and hold the consecrated host in my hand.

I have mystical experiences most frequently during the Mass and when I pray with others for their needs. God has healed thousand through my prayers. Lately, I have experienced several occasions of purging, torn apart, wailing, and being made new. I do not fully understand it, but I know that in my "old age," He is preparing me for something inspiring.

Dryness in Prayer

All too often, I hear people complain about dryness in prayer. They complain from an erroneous belief that prayer was intended always to be filling and meaningful. St. John of the Cross calls this spiritual gluttony.

I remember reading a letter between St. Teresa of Avila and St. John of the Cross. She encouraged him to join her on a trip to see the latest "fad" in miracles. He responded that there were enough miracles in his garden, so he would not go.

Let me assure you that prayer is primarily an act of obedience and a joyful giving of our time to the Lord. When I pray, I give my gift, self-oblation of time, to my Creator. He is not obliged to respond in any way.

When He responds, it is mainly through enlightenment or a better understanding. I used to go to Him for emotional encouragement. He answered that it was my job and I should go for a run.

Frankly, I find God the most during the Eucharist. I saw the bread turn into flesh. Frequently I feel joined with the saints.

I also become one with the Lord when I pray with others. He often directs my prayers and brings healing. Br. Brendan, OCCO, reported that I had transcended on one prayerful occasion.

So dear ones, prayer can be inspiring at times. God will create those moments. Meanwhile, we do The Work of God.

Listen with the Ear of Your Heart

"Can you hear me now?" "Can you hear me now?" The narrator repeats the question over and over throughout the popular commercial. That is an interesting phrase that markets his product and mirrors our personal need to be heard.

I need to be heard. You don't necessarily have to agree or support me, but please listen to me. When you listen to me, I am validated. I become a person of some value. To be validated, I will talk on the cell phone about trivial nonsense, chatter all day about nothing important to anyone who will listen, or even create an argument to get attention. That is a sad state of affairs, to be sure.

Let us speak about listening skills. We can recall what we know about listening skills by remembering what Mamma told us, "We have two ears and one mouth, so listen more than you speak." The 90/10 rule came from this. That is to listen 90% of the time and speak 10% of the time. Sure would be a peaceful planet.

Active listening means full participation by the listener and response to the speaker. Active listening might include such communication efforts as mirroring. Mirroring is speaking back to what we have just heard. The opposite of active listening is passive listening. That consists of thinking of your response while listening rather than listening. You could also be viewing the sports channel, reading the paper, or almost anything other than listening to the speaker. You are not present to the speaker and show little interest in what is being said.

The next level of listening skills is "to listen with the ear of your heart." At first, that may seem an unusual statement. But slow down for a moment and listen to the words, "listen with the ear of your heart." I think you will figure it out. Listen so that the speaker, or writer, moves you towards transformation.

Imagine listening to your mate complain about his day. Imagine moving to the "ear of your heart" and the effect his words of sorrow, conflict, stress, and failure have on your heart. Your response to him would be different than if you just heard the words. You would be transformed, moved, more charitable, and compassionate.

Here is some advice on how to speak to the heart. The heart needs you to speak slowly. Look at your beloved. Do not be in a rush. Save your important messages to when you and your beloved are together. Do not discuss them over the cell phone. Touch your beloved whenever something is significant to you. Speak softly. The heart is tender. It gets frightened when you are loud, critical, and sarcastic. Be careful with your words. Say what you mean. Be clear and precise. Please, do not continually repeat yourself. The heart hears better with fewer words.

It takes practice “to listen with the ear of your heart.” We need to develop a quiet spirit. The quiet spirit is developed through a desire to be present to your beloved wither that be God or a person. Spend time in quiet. Let there be no noise,

Gratitude

Gratitude keeps us alive and kicking. The lack of gratitude makes us self-absorbed and lifeless. I tend to think that when Eve said to Adam, "try this one," if they had stopped for a moment and had spoken words of thanks to the Lord for all He had given to them, then everything would have been different. My point...gratitude changes us. We get happier, more empowered, more creative, more emotionally secure, more of the good things.

A friend of ours visited the other day. We mostly love her. We love her most when she is not griping, victimizing herself, and thinking that life should be easy.

Scott Peck says that people who complain believe that life should be easy. I agree.

We asked her why she believed that she should not suffer. She dodged that one with one of her famous "yes, buts..." "Well, but this," we all suffer. Her point is... that she deserves to have all good things given to her. My point is to stop complaining. Do what is good, right, and holy.

The persecuted apostles did not pray, "Poor us, Lord, please go change the hearts of our persecutors." No. They prayed, "And now Lord take note of their threats, and grant that Thy bond-servants may speak Thy word with all confidence, while Thou extend Thy hand to heal, and signs and wonders take place through the name of Thy holy servant Jesus. (Acts 5: 29-30)

My message today:

Gratitude will open our souls to the unity of God, self, and others. Gratitude moves us from limitations and fear to expansion and love.

My 2021 Advent Reflections

Why did Jesus come to us as a human infant dependent on us for his safety and development?

Before I begin, my reader needs to understand that I believe that it is impossible to comprehend God's mind, motivation, and style fully. As finite human beings, we struggle to express our understanding of God primarily through metaphor, illustrations, analogies, stories, etc.

Consequently, my attempt to answer the question will be flawed and incomplete. My point of view is the result of this Advent's Christmas preparation and some Divine inspiration and insights. By no means am I creating dogma. Instead, I am trying to illustrate God's gentleness and mercy as He interacts with His creation.

I will be using Prochaska's six stages of change* to aid in our journey*. To avoid unnecessarily cluttering my presentation, I will give further explanations and definitions in the asterisks below. It is important to remember that our journey toward change is seldom fixed. Generally, change is fluid, changing, ebb and flow with frequent reversals. Nonetheless, God's defined outcome always prevails. For simplicity's sake, I will hold my presentation to a simpler model with only forward motion and do so in an outline fashion.

I will be doing some stage setting, so hang in there. I will answer the question.

Pre-contemplation

Contemplation

Preparation

Action

Maintenance

Termination

God has inspired and directed His peoples' development into a nation from the beginning of creation through their resistance, doubt, rebellion, and external forces. He led them through the use of separation from captivities, forty years in the desert, prophets, angels, and the development of kingdoms, including building the city of Jerusalem. Throughout Salvation History (the Old Testament), there is an abiding message of the arrival of a Savior. Essentially the stage is set for the Annunciation*.

Pre-contemplation***Contemplation******Preparation******Action******Maintenance******Termination***

Mary was prepared via her miraculous sinless birth*, her family of origin, and Jewish culture. The selection of Joseph as her husband is thought to be by Divine intervention. The Angel Gabriel announced God's intent. Mary asked some thoughtful questions and agreed. Shortly after she brought the news to Joseph, who had some difficulty processing, Joseph was enlightened and accepted the situation during a dream. They soon traveled to Joseph's hometown of Bethlehem to register for taxation. Difficulties and stresses arose in finding housing, giving birth, visits by shepherds, kings, etc. After some time, they had to escape to Egypt.

Now that we have seen the process of Pre-contemplation to Termination, I can answer the question. **Why did Jesus come to us as a human infant dependent on us for his safety and development?**

Pre-contemplation***Contemplation******Preparation******Action******Maintenance******Termination***

Mary and Joseph had some understanding of their mission and had given their consent. They developed their confidence together on the journey to Bethlehem and overcame various trials and stresses. Both Mary and Joseph committed themselves to Jesus by protecting his life, providing love, security, cultural and religious education. After Joseph's death, Mary continued to live with family and supported Jesus in His growth, although not yet knowing the eventual outcome. Jesus surrounded himself with apostles and disciples, and they overcome many challenges. Eventually, Jesus gave authority to His disciples to continue His mission after His death and resurrection. Finally, the Holy Spirit empowered those same apostles, and the church was formed.

To sum up, God gave His Son to us as an infant because this is how we process and understand life events. This is the process of how we change through understanding. In His love and gentle mercy, God, our creator, worked in harmony with His creation.

Now let me explain my mystical understand and vision.

Pre-contemplation

Contemplation

Preparation

Action

Maintenance

Termination

Typically, before the birth of a child, the parents prepare themselves and their circumstances for the child. Sometimes they have to overcome fear, anxiety, and lack of social and environmental support.

Frequently the birth event itself is filled with mystery and awe. Parents often "adore, reverence, hold in awe their inspiring creation." They often commit themselves to that child pledging safety and opportunity. From those and many large and small acts of love, they grow in their love not only for the child but toward themselves and often toward God. Over the years, together as a family, they battle doubts, fears, lack, and sinfulness but remain faithful to and grow in their love of each other. Those acts of love give empowerment and solid commitment to each other.

In my vision, I saw the Holy Spirit seamlessly directing each step. I saw the parents' commitment to the infant returning to the parents, thus empowering them to sustain themselves and continue their original act of creation in that child.

I saw this and more as an act of God's grace upon all of His creation so that it might thrive and return to Himself and live in the fruits of the Holy Spirit.

The yearly celebration of Christmas is our opportunity to hold the infant Jesus and give Him our love and commitment, thus allowing Him to grace us with the faith and ongoing devotion to make our changes.

***"Prochaska's six stages of change."**

Six key stages: from *Pre-contemplation* to *Contemplation*, then to *Preparation* and *Action*. But that's only the beginning, and we can easily coast right back into preparation or contemplation if we lose our nerve, focus or steam. For our behavior change to prove sustainable, it must enter a *Maintenance* phase until it finally becomes ingrained as a stable habit. This final, ongoing phase is known as *Termination*, which implies that the change is now a permanent part of our lifestyle."

Pre-contemplation

Cultures, nations, or "people in this stage may wish to change, but for the immediate future have no plans to do so. Why? They may not be fully aware of all the potential benefits, or they may feel disinclined to try because of past failed attempts, or a lack of available energy.

Moving from Pre-contemplation to Contemplation: Frequently change may be motivated by some difficult or intolerable events which causes thoughts of creating something better."

Stage 2: Contemplation

Cultures, nations, or "people in the Contemplation stage are thinking about taking action, but aren't quite ready or don't know how to get started. While not actively making changes they are no longer apposed. And may even listen if new information comes a long."

Stage 3: Preparation

Cultures, nations, or "people in the Preparation stage are getting ready to take action. They are more decisive, confident, and committed; they're developing a plan and may have already taken small steps. At this point, the pros of making the change clearly outweigh the cons — but there's some work to be done before meaningful action can take place.

The Preparation stage is all about building confidence — and troubleshooting against the obstacles or weaknesses that stand the greatest chance of undermining it.

You're in the Preparation stage if: You're actively gathering information, support, maybe even gear and supplies — and feel nearly ready to take your first steps. You're feeling motivated to learn the skills that will help you be successful in making this change”

Moving from Preparation to Action: Cultures, nations, or “people are inclined to accept appropriate support, and you welcome invitations and incentives to participate in activities that will move you forward.”

Stage 4: Action

Beyond just thinking about it or preparing to act," a culture, nations, or "people in this phase has actually begun doing something (or a lot of things) differently, and may be experimenting with expanding his or her efforts. Even if the changes are small so far, he or she is building momentum, knowledge and confidence, all of which encourage continued action.

You're in the Action stage if: You're implementing your action plan.

Moving from Action to Maintenance: Prochaska's model specifies you transition into Maintenance. Getting to that point mostly involves doing whatever keeps you strong, motivated and focused. Finding ways to integrate your chosen behavior change into your social life and sense of identity can be a big help."

Stage 5: Maintenance

Culture, nations, and "individuals in the Maintenance stage have managed to stay in Action mode for at least six months. That means they've successfully avoided or overcome the obstacles that could have caused them to slip back into old behaviors. Through practice, they've attained a greater level of confidence and capacity. Their new behaviors have started to become a more integrated part of their lifestyle and identity, and their risk of relapse is much lower than when they began.

You're in the Maintenance stage if: you've been diligent and consistent in performing the actions you committed to as part of your desired behavior to change. They now seem fairly routine.

Moving from Maintenance to Termination: “Treat obstacles and unanticipated challenges as opportunities to develop new strengths. Ward off boredom by taking on new challenges and expanding your skills. Stay on the maintenance path for two years or more, rallying even through stresses and setbacks, and you’ll reach a point where you can’t really imagine ever going back to the way things were before.”

Stage 6: Termination

When culture, nations, or "people in the Maintenance stage continue their healthier behavior for at least two years, they enter into Termination (sometimes also referred to as "Adoption"). In Termination, the behavior change is completely integrated, and the temptation to revert to the former behavior is entirely gone. This element of behavior change is no longer something you have to "do" — it's just who you are."

<https://experiencelife.lifetime.life/article/the-stages-of-change/>

*When I say our journey, I include changes in culture, nations, and individuals.”

* Annunciation is when the Angel announced to Mary that she would be the Mother of the Christ, Savior.

*Mary was prepared via her own miraculous and sinless birth. Mary's parents, High Priest Joachim and mother Anna, were aged beyond the standard childbearing years, yet Mary was conceived through prayer and divine intervention. The church teaches that Mary did not suffer from Original Sin, Immaculate Conception. She was raised "in the temple" with a solid Jewish heritage

More Healing Stories

Dennis Brown witnessed these events.

"It was during one of those joyous occasions when friends gathered for a celebration. There was a lot going on and electricity filled the air. We gathered together in a room for a healing session. In the first session I participated by holding on to the recipient. What transpired next is difficult to explain in mere words. The best description I can come up with would be that I felt weightless. The presence of the Holy Spirit was intense and profound.

For the second healing session, I was only a witness. The presence of the Holy Spirit was definitely felt, but it was a slow radiance, a glow on the face of the recipient that really comes to mind. Her face flushed ever so slightly followed by a smile which grew bigger in the next moments.

When the hands-on portion of the healing ended you could tell that she was slightly disoriented yet the glow and smile remained for the next several minutes. It was a remarkable experience. I believe I will be a participant rather than a witness the next time I am offered the chance"

"When I received the news that my 21-year-old friend had been diagnosed with thyroid cancer that had also spread into several of her lymph nodes, it was a shock to say the least. I contacted Abbot Oscar Joseph and scheduled a meeting for her. During the time of prayer we all felt God's powerful presence that left us with the assurance that the cancer would no longer be an issue for her. She has been cancer free for two years now."

"At a later time I came to the Abbot in such spiritual, emotional, and mental disarray, that I was on the verge of a complete melt down. Through conversations and prayer with him and private, intense prayer with God, I have begun to let go of years of shame and guilt that have accumulated within my soul. In doing so, I am experiencing a healing that has been long overdue. I am not afraid to look inward at myself anymore because I know that God is there with me now and He gives me the strength to face everything with my eyes wide open."

The Abbot writes:

One of my college students was recently devastated by her newly born nephew's dramatic, life-threatening condition. I was troubled as to what to do in the public school setting. Of course, I asked the Lord and St. Benedict what to do. God told me to give her my St. Benedict scapular right off of my neck with the instructions to place it on the baby and that the family was to circle the baby and pray. They did that, and the infant returned home from the hospital the next day.

We can all pray for each other. There is NO magic formula, NO incantation, and NO "sacred dance."

I do the following:

- Ask God if He wants me to pray.
- Ask Him how and when to pray.
- Pray simply and expectantly.
- I do not impose any personal agenda on the prayer.
- My prayers often have long periods of silence and are very low-key.

A healing story

by C.R.

“I was recently hospitalized in a life-threatening condition, where the doctors had advised my family and friends that with the removal of a ventilator tube, I had about 20 minutes to live. Prior to my insisting that they take the tube out (during moments of awareness before they sent me back into a coma), I had asked to see Father/Brother Lee (Columcille) as we call him.

Lee (Br. Columcille) is a friend of my daughter, and prior to this crisis, I had little or no contact with him on a personal level. However, it was Lee that I asked for by simply printing his name in my sister’s hand. Even semi-conscious, I know a good thing when I see it!

Well, my daughter drove the sixty miles back to her house and picked up Brother Lee (Columcille) and brought him to the hospital. It is hard for me to remember much of what happened, but I knew he was there and could hear his voice.

I’m sure that you are aware that Lee (Columcille) has serious health problems of his own and what he did for me during the next twelve hours was nothing short of a miracle in itself. Lee (Columcille) stayed with me, standing beside me, holding my hand almost the entire time. I remember him praying for me, talking to me, and letting me know that I was not alone, either physically or spiritually.

It was a very powerful experience; even though I can’t remember most of it, my friends still talk about the intense electricity they felt in the room during this time. I know that Father Lee (Columcille) brought the Holy Spirit with every angel to my room to help me through whatever was to come. Thank God, I was healed and will live to bear witness to the power of prayer and the love and forgiveness of God.

I just wanted you to know what a fine man and servant of our Lord that you have, and I hope that he is supported by your love and prayers. Several months later, Br. Columcille’s mother almost died. Many people prayed for her with great success. I spoke with her on the phone the other day, and she was doing well and had no brain damage what-so-ever. God is Good.”