

Living Life to the Fullest

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Section 1 - Points to Ponder

Proverbs 4:23 "With closest custody, guard your heart, for in it are the sources of life."

Remember in the bible the word "heart" means the core of your being where you and God are one.

Q.T.I.P. = Quit Taking It Personally.

"Hurting people hurt people" is a quote from Healing of Memories by Dennis and Matthew Linn. People are usually not trying to hurt you; it is coming out of their brokenness. How many times have you hurt someone by an accident?

No more pity parties. Everyone has to deal with things not being fair or not going their way.

"Your sins are consumed by God's love, like a piece of cotton is consumed by a forest fire." – St. Paul of the Cross

When you attack sin straight on it becomes stronger. To fight sin, you need to build virtue, especially the virtue that is opposite the sin.

Are you the master or the slave to your phone, computer, social media or...?

You need to forgive others for not being God. Too many times we expect others to perfectly fill our needs and take care of us, only God can fill this role. Don't expect yourself to be perfect and able to do everything. It is good to need others.

Are you a slave to a particular sin? Which one? Christ can set you free! The Sacrament of Reconciliation can be very freeing.

Where do you think your value comes from? What you do, others, God or...?

Are you focused on Jesus or is He an afterthought? Jesus is your brother and you are a child of God. Thank God for making you His child, (son or daughter).

Anger is like a pop can that has been shook and is ready to explode. When you get angry with yourself you are "shaking the pop can" and setting yourself up for failure. Decide on what action you are going to do and make things better, instead of getting angry with yourself.

"Saint Joseph pray that my love for the Child Jesus may increase. Be a father to me!" - St. John Neumann

If you wish to be close to Christ, we again repeat, "go to Joseph."

-Venerable Pope Pius XII

Is your life centered on Christ or on something else? It is easy to allow ourselves to focus on our problems, anxieties, or worries and then they become magnified. When seen through Christ not only do we see them as they are, but we also receive the wisdom to deal with them.

Years ago, my father said to me, "you have more time saving devices than I ever had, yet you have less time for family, friends, and to do the things you like." -Salvatore Bellittiere

"Offer it up for the poor souls in purgatory" - Anna Bellittiere

"Virtue is found in the middle." -Fr. David Bursmeyer

Excerpt from The Gift of Peace by Joseph Cardinal Bernardin

"When we are faced with serious illness (or any serious difficulty), we should do several things – things that have given me peace of mind personally. First is to put ourselves *completely* in the hands of the Lord. We must believe that the Lord loves us, embraces us, never abandons us (especially in our most difficult moments). This is what gives us hope in the midst of life's suffering and chaos. "Come to me, all you who labor and are burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am meek and humble of heart; and you will find rest for yourselves. For my yoke is easy, and my burden light." (Mt. 11:28-30) ... The "rest" He offers us comes from adopting and living each day his attitudes, his values, his mission, his ministry, his willingness to lay down his life – in whatever circumstances we find ourselves... Jesus promises that his yoke will be kind and gentle to our shoulders, enabling us to carry our load more easily. That is what he means when he says his burden is "light." Actually, it might be quite heavy, but we will find it possible to carry out our responsibilities. Why? Jesus will help us... Jesus tells us, walk alongside me: learn to carry the burdens by observing how I do it. If you let me help you, the heavy labor will seem lighter.

- Joseph Cardinal Bernardin

Section 2 - Prayers

Daily Prayers

* Use these or similar words - God the Father thank you for making me your beloved son or daughter, please help me to live as a son or daughter of a noble Father.

* Count three special blessings that God has given you each day and record them. A special blessing is one that you don't have every day. This will keep you rooted in the realization that Jesus, the Good Shepherd, is your life long companion who cares about you.

* Daily Examen

Daily Examen is a way of seeing God's presence in your life and growing spiritually. It is not a time to put yourself down, but to experience the love of God.

1. Ask the Spirit of God to lead you through your review of the day seeing it from His point of view.
2. Give thanks for your entire day. Then review your day
3. Relish the moments that went well and all the gifts you received today. Give thanks for them.
4. Repent of any mistakes or failures. Ask for God's forgiveness, healings and wisdom to help learn from them.
5. Resolve, in concrete ways, to live the next day with God's help by mentioning certain upcoming events that you in a special way need His guidance and assistance to accomplish. With an attitude of always trusting God and giving thanks.

There are apps and websites that have more information on the Daily Examen also call the Ignatian Examen, because St. Ignatius promoted it. Two websites are www.prayasyougo.org (which also has an app) and www.xavier.edu/jesuitresource

*I LIFT UP MY NEEDS IN PRAYER

Joseph, with Jesus and Mary, you knew hunger, uncertainty, and illness. You turned your heart to God to lift up your needs and those of your family. In faith you accepted the Father's response as events unfolded. Be with me today as I offer my requests to the Father. (*You can mention your intentions here*). Joseph, let me recognize God's will as I open my hands to accept what God bestows in loving kindness.

With tenderness, God fills creation with life and love.

Open my eyes to the wonders that God works without ceasing.

Let me learn the true intention behind my request so that I may discover within myself the lowly one that God commends. Amen.

(*For information on St. Joseph or other prayers go to www.StJosephOurGuide.org*)

Prayer of St. Teresa of Avila

Let nothing trouble you,
 Let nothing frighten you.
 All is fleeting,
 God alone is unchanging.
 Patience obtains everything.
 Who possesses God
 Wants nothing, for
 God alone suffices. Amen.

The Jesus' Prayer

The Jesus prayer is hundreds of years old and has some different versions. The prayer is "Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner." The prayer can be connected with your breathing. First part of the prayer is prayed when breathing in, second part on the out breath. Don't force the words to match your breathing, just let it come naturally.

Prayer when suffering

My mother used to tell me, “Offer it up for the poor souls in Purgatory.” Jesus offered His suffering to God the father and the world was redeemed. Think of what could happen if everyone offered his or her suffering to Jesus. Sufferings offered to Jesus are powerful prayers. When I am suffering or hurting, I give it to Jesus and ask him to use it to help someone

Section 3 - Tools For Life

Be a Blessing to Those You Meet

When we think about those who have blessed us with their lives a smile comes to our face. Unfortunately, at other times, others may notice the flaw in what we have done and not rejoiced in who we are or what we have accomplished. We can choose to be the person who encourages and supports others.

To be a blessing to someone we need to:

1. See the other person as having hopes, dreams even though they are broken
2. Respect the other person
3. Want the best for the other person even more than you want it for yourself. Therefore, you are willing to go the “extra mile.”

God places people in our path so we can reflect God to them. Being a blessing to someone can be as simple as saying hello, have a nice day, or opening a door. Special blessings are when you take time to really listen to another person, give them a shoulder to cry on, or pray with them. How wonderful our world would be if every day we dedicate ourselves to bless those we meet.

Praying with Others

In the Gospel Jesus says, “Where two or more gather in my name, I am with them.”

It is not difficult and you become more at ease the more times you do it. First trust the Lord Jesus to give you the right words. If the other person is open to holding hands, take their hands into yours. Start with addressing God, asking His blessing on the other person and continue with whatever Jesus tells you to say. If nothing comes you might want to say, “we now join your needs and hopes into the prayer Jesus gave us.” and then say an Our Father. I have discovered that it is not so much what you say, but your willingness to pray with them that helps them experience Jesus.

Forgiveness – A Healing Gift

Forgiveness sets us free to be the person we want to be and helps us heal the world. A few negative effects of not forgiving are: you hold yourself prisoner to that incident; you fill yourself with anger and rob yourself of happiness; your anger hurts you and others by destroying relationships; you may start acting like the person you are not forgiving.

Steps to Forgiveness

You can also use these steps to forgive yourself. Do not expect yourself to be perfect.

1. As you begin remember you are a child of God and no one can take your dignity away from you. You are no less a person because someone has hurt you. In matter of fact, you can become a stronger person as you grow through this hurt.
2. Ask God to forgive the person and to bless the person with all that is good. Do this frequently.
3. Remember how much God has forgiven you.
4. Gather testimonies and witnessing of people who have forgiven and listen to their experiences. YouTube can be a good resource as well as other people who are in your life.
5. Decide to forgive. Make an act of the will to forgive.
When it comes to forgiveness, you need not know how you are going to forgive. You need not determine a precise strategy or even see its actual possibility. All you need to do is decide that this is what you *will* to do. It is a step in the right direction.
6. Ask God to give you the graces and courage to forgive the other person.
7. Try to see the one who hurt you in a new light. Remember hurting people hurt people. When we forgive others, we are offering them a healing remedy.
8. Remember to offer this healing remedy of forgiveness to yourself.
9. Do not be afraid to seek out someone who can help, even if that is a counselor.

Dealing with Anger

Recognize your anger - Calm down - Think – Talk to someone – Come up with an action

1. Recognize the anger
2. Calm yourself down
Praying can help – One prayer that uses images is: close your eyes and picture your anger as a dragon, then picture Jesus walking up to the dragon, and the dragon laying his head at the feet of Jesus. The dragon symbolizes your uncontrollable anger. The dragon placing his head at the feet of Jesus, symbolizes that Jesus has come to your aid and He is more powerful than your anger. Jesus also wants you to know that He is there loving you and helping you.
3. Think about why you are angry – try to see it from God's point of view. Think about if it is really that important to be upset about and if the answer is yes how can you constructively deal with the situation.

4. Talk to an objective person to help you understand what happened and what is the best course of action.
5. Come up with an action – like forgiving the person, doing something nice for someone, etc.
6. Do not get angry with yourself for being angry. This only sets you up for failure. Stay focused on Jesus and ask Him to help you carry out your course of action.

Self-Esteem

St. Bernard of Clairvaux often reminded his monks that the love of God begins and ends with love of oneself.

God does not make mistakes; He wants you to be the person He created you to be. God celebrates you and calls you into a deeper relationship with Him.

Perfectionism is not part of His plan; you were created to need others and help others. If you were perfect, you would need no one.

Your self-esteem comes from God not from others.

SELF-KNOWLEDGE plus SELF-ACCEPTANCE equals SELF-LOVE AND SELF-ESTEEM

As you learn about yourself, whom can you share your findings with?

Self-acceptance is to be able to accept the person you perceive you are even with your flaws.

It is a gift when you can say and totally believe, “I am a beautiful person, loved by God and made in the image and likeness of God.

Quote from **Design for Wholeness** “The ultimate criteria for enhancing self-esteem is the realization that each person has been made, sustained and loved into being by an infinitely loving God, who has taught us that we are made in the image of God.”

Some final notes

1. Most importantly: I would be honored to hear from you your wisdom and experiences. In other words, to walk on holy ground which is your life.

2. These are reflections from what I have learned from a spiritual person or from spiritual reading or from life experience. It is my hope that in some way you have experienced Christ and grown closer to Him.

3. Some of the ideas for dealing with anger and self-esteem are taken from the book **Design For Wholeness** by Sofield, Juliano and Hammett. This is an excellent book, which deals with anger, forgiveness and self-esteem.

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