



ASSISTANTS' BOOKLET

WELCOME TO L'ARCHE NOAH SEALTH OF SEATTLE!



L'Arche Identity and Mission

IDENTITY

We are people, with and without developmental disabilities, sharing life in communities of faith. Mutual relationships and trust in God are at the heart of our life together. We seek to build a world that recognizes the unique value of every person and our need of one another.

Mission

To make known the gifts of people with developmental disabilities revealed through mutually transforming relationships. To engage in our diverse cultures, working together toward a more human society. To foster community that is inspired by the core values in our founding story and responds to the changing needs of our members.

Trust in the Slow Work of God

Above all, trust in the slow work of God
We are quite naturally impatient in everything
to reach the end without delay
We should like to skip the intermediate stages.
We are impatient of being on the way to something
unknown, something new.

And yet it is the law of all progress
that it is made by passing through
some stages of instability-
and that it may take a very long time.
And so I think it is with you.
your ideas mature gradually – let them grow,
let them shape themselves, without undue haste.

Don't try to force them on,
as though you could be today what time
(that is to say, grace and circumstances
acting on your own good will)
will make of you tomorrow.

Only God could say what this new spirit gradually forming within you will be.

Give Our Lord the benefit of believing that his hand is leading you,
and accept the anxiety of feeling yourself in suspense and incomplete.

COMMUNITY AND FREEDOM

Community is the place where we ideally learn to be ourselves without fear or constraint. Community life deepens through mutual trust among all its members.

The more authentic and creative a community is in its search for the essential, the more its members are called beyond their own concerns and tend to unite. A community becomes truly and radiantly one when all its members have a sense of urgency.

It is when the members of a community realize that they are not there simply for themselves or their own sanctification, but to welcome the gift of God, to hasten His Kingdom, and to quench the thirst of others, that they truly live as community.

The process of becoming a community happens when the majority of its members make the transition from 'the community for myself' to 'myself for the community.'

Loving means to want others to fulfill themselves according to God's plan. It means wanting them to be faithful to their own calling.

The more community deepens, the more vulnerable and the more sensitive its members become.

Community is established by the simple, gentle concern that people show each other every day. It is made of the small gestures, all the services and sacrifices which say 'I love you' and 'I'm happy to be with you.'

COMMUNITY AND FORGIVENESS

Community reaches its height in celebration and its heart in forgiveness.

Community is the place of forgiveness. There are always words that wound, self-promoting attitudes, situations where susceptibilities clash. That is why living together implies a certain cross, a constant effort and an acceptance that comes from daily and mutual forgiveness.

If we come into community without knowing that the reason we come is to discover the mystery of forgiveness, we will soon be disappointed.

If we are to make the passage to acceptance and love of others we must start by recognizing our own blocks, jealousies, prejudices and hatreds.

Our antipathies towards others is a thorn in the flesh that perhaps the Holy Spirit may someday liberate us from. But perhaps He will let us go on walking with this thorn which humiliates us and forces us to renew our efforts each day, careful not to offend again.

Patience, like forgiveness, is at the heart of community life; patience with ourselves, with the laws of our own growth and with others.

COMMUNITY AND IDEALISM

A community is not simply a group of people who love each other. It is a current of life, a heart, a soul, a spirit.

We shouldn't seek the ideal community. It is a question of loving those whom God has set beside us today. They are signs from God. We might have chosen different people, people who were more cheerful or intelligent. But these are the ones God has given us, the ones He has chosen for us. It is with them that we are called to create unity and live in covenant.

It is difficult to make people understand that the ideal community doesn't exist and that the equilibrium and harmony they imagine possible are things that come only after years of struggle, and that even then come only as flashes of grace and peace.

COMMUNITY AND UNITY

Community is the place where each person grows towards interior freedom. It can never take precedence over the individual. In fact, its beauty and unity come from the radiance and diversity of each individual when its own light, truth and love come into free union with others.

The gift of community, of unity, will come only when all members of the community are truly themselves, living as expression of God's love within them in the exercise of the gifts He has given them. The community becomes one because it is fully under the influence of the Holy Spirit who unites it. Almost everyone finds their early days in a community ideal. It all seems perfect. They seem unable to see the drawbacks, they see only what is good. Everything is marvelous. They feel they are surrounded by saints, heroes, or at the least, most exceptional people who are everything they want to be themselves. And then comes the let-down. During this time everything becomes dark; people no longer see anything but the faults of others and of the community. They feel they are surrounded by hypocrites. Life becomes intolerable. The greater their idealization of the community at the start, the greater the disenchantment. If people manage to get through this second period, they come to a third phase; that of realism and of true commitment. They no longer see other members of the community as saints or devils, but as people; each with a mixture of good and bad, darkness and light, each growing and each with their own hope. The community is neither heaven nor hell, but planted firmly on earth, and they are ready to walk in it, and with it. They accept the community and the other members as they are; they are confident that together they can grow towards something more beautiful.

Many people who have lived together for years and whose love for one another has been often tested know that community has not resulted from the fact that they were able to hold together but from the knowledge that they were somehow held together by a greater force. We are a community not because

we happen to like each other, or share a common task, but because we have somehow been called together by God.

All members of a community must be on their guard against sowing discord, whether consciously or unconsciously. All of them must constantly seek to be instruments of unity.

COMMUNITY AND PURPOSE

A community is there not only for the growth of its members, but for the growth of the people for whom it is destined. When we know these people, and our responsibility towards them, then we are able to go beyond ourselves.

A community gradually discovers as it grows that it is not there simply for itself. It belongs to humanity. It has received a gift which must bear fruit for the sake of others.

When it begins, a community is like a seed which must grow to become a tree. As it matures, and becomes a tree that bears fruit, it also must be a place where birds of the air can come to make their nests.

COMMUNITY AND GROWTH

Community is always in a state of growth. The growth of a community depends on the growth of each of its members.

Communities need tensions if they are to grow and deepen. There are a thousand reasons for tension. And each of them brings the whole community, as well as each individual member, face to face with its own poverty, its inability to cope, its weariness, aggression and despair.

There is nothing more prejudicial to community life than to mask tensions and pretend they do not exist, or to hide from them behind a polite facade and flee from reality and dialogue. But people are not necessarily helped to overcome their limitations, egoism, jealousy and inability to enter into dialogue simply by being made conscious of them. In fact, this can sometimes shut people off in an even greater despair.

People can generally only become conscious of their limitations if at the same time they are given the strength to overcome these by being helped to discover their own capacities for love, goodness and positive action, and to regain confidence in themselves and the Holy Spirit.

Tensions in a community should neither be hidden nor be brought prematurely to a head. They should be taken on with a great deal of sensitivity, trust and hope. They should be approached with deep understanding and patience, with neither panic nor naive optimism, but with a realism born of a willingness to listen and a desire for truth.

An individual's growth towards love and wisdom is slow. A community's growth is even slower.

Members of a community need to be great friends of time. They have to learn that many things will resolve themselves if they are given enough time. It can be a great mistake to want, in the name of clarity and truth, to push things too quickly to a resolution.

Each member of a community who grows in love and wisdom helps the growth of the whole community. Each person who refuses to grow, or is afraid to go forward, inhibits the community's growth. All the members of a community are responsible for their own growth and that of the community as a whole.

Perhaps the most essential quality for anyone who lives in community is patience: a recognition that we, others and the whole community, take time to grow. If we are to live in community, we have to be friends of time.

COMMUNITY AND RELATIONSHIPS

We all carry our own deep wound, which is the wound of our loneliness. Some people think their wound of loneliness will be healed if they come into community. But they will be disappointed.

We have to realize that this wound of loneliness is inherent in the human condition and that what we have to do is walk with it instead of fleeing from it. We cannot accept it until we discover that we are loved by God just as we are, and that the Holy Spirit, in a mysterious way, is living at the center of the wound.

One of the signs of life in a community is the creation of links with others. An inward-looking community will die of suffocation. Living communities are linked to others, making up a huge web of inter-relationships for the world.

Some people cannot see what nourishment they are and refuse to become bread for others. They have no confidence that their word, their smile, their being or their prayer could nourish others.

There is external growth in community which is nearly always in expansion. But there is also internal and secret growth. In monasteries and houses of prayer, this growth is a deeper rooting in prayer in Jesus. This is invisible, but it creates a tangible atmosphere wherever this growth is present: a lighter joy, a denser silence, a peace which touches hearts and leads people to a true experience of God.

Through the experience of providence communities, in time, discover how God has watched over them in times of trial which could have destroyed them. Serious tensions have been resolved, people have arrived exactly when they were needed, there has been unexpected financial or material help, someone has found inner freedom and healing. This growing awareness enables the community to accept difficulties, times of trial, need or weakness with a new serenity because it knows from experience that God is present and creative within them.

The first sin of a community is to turn its eyes from the One who called it to life, to look at itself instead. The second sin is to find itself beautiful and to believe itself to be a source of life.

Some communities should stay small, poor and prophetic, signs of the presence of God is a world which is become more and more materialistic. But other communities are called to grow in order to show the world that it is possible to create structures which are sensitive to people and to exercise authority in a way that is both humane and Christian.

COMMUNITY AND PRAYER

We are nourished in community by everything that stirs the essential in us and brings it to consciousness. This may be a word, a reading, a meeting or a suffering: all these can reawaken our deepest heart and give hope.

Solitude and community belong together; each requires the other as do the center and circumference of a circle. Solitude without community leads us to loneliness and despair, but community without solitude hurls us into a void of words and feelings.

If we do not pray, if we do not evaluate our activities and find rest in the secret part of our heart, it will be hard to live in community. We will not be open to others. We will live only from the stimuli of the present moment and we will lose sight of our priorities and of the essential.

A community which prays together, which enters into silence and adoration, is bound together by the action of the Holy Spirit. God listens in a special way to the cry which rises from a community.

The Eucharist links communal and personal nourishment because it is itself both at the same time. The Eucharist is celebration, the epitome of the communal feast, because in it we relive the mystery of Jesus' gift of his own life for us. It is the time of thanksgiving for the whole community. There we touch the heart of the mystery of community. But the Eucharist is also an intimate moment when each of us is transformed through a personal meeting with Jesus.

BECOMING AN ASSISTANT

We should let you know right away that L'Arche is not an ordinary job but also a choice to intentionally participate in community with a certain lifestyle.

Simply by living in a L'Arche community, assistants are often surprised by the new horizons that open up for them through the depth of their experiences and by the way that the people at the heart of a L'Arche community touch their lives. Prompted by our spirituality, often they are inspired to discover in themselves new gifts of creativity leadership and a clearer sense of direction for their future whether that be in L'Arche or outside.

Your House Responsible will oversee your orientation and integration to the home. Your first two weeks will be taken up with various requirements. Your bedroom is fully furnished so all you'll need to bring with you are your personal effects. Our homes are all within walking distance of downtown and are well served by the Seattle Metro Bus service. Each of the homes has wireless internet accessibility.

As a L'Arche Seattle assistant, you will be invited to make your home in one of our three L'Arche households. There you will accompany core members (people with an intellectual disability) in their activities of daily life, helping them as needed, discovering who they are, and developing a relationship of mutuality with them over time. Please recognize that this does take time and allow things to unfold naturally.

Besides being able to communicate in English, we ask applicants to attend a weekly ASL class as we have four deaf members. We also ask for a willingness to learn from and be open to the possibility of being challenged and changed through your experiences in community, to embrace the formation that L'Arche provides, to work in a team, to support the members of a house and to participate in the activities of the community. As a candidate for probationary membership, you don't need any previous experience with people with a developmental disability, and for many, L'Arche is also their first experience of community.

Except during the summer months, assistants usually make an initial commitment of a year with an openness to a second. The first three to six months are a period of probation, orientation and a time for the assistant and the community to discover whether the choice to come to L'Arche is a good fit at a particular time; both in the life of the person and the community.

Many assistants decide that, because they are growing and finding life in L'Arche, they will make a further commitment of a second, third or more years. Currently we have six members who have been a part of the community for more than 10 years.

L'Arche is both an intentional community and an agency receiving government funding. This carries an inherent tension that leads to much creativity as we respond to the sometimes apparently conflicting or competing demands of each component.

During the first months as an assistant you will learn about the values, philosophy and way of life at L'Arche as well as developing relationships with the people in your home or day program. Gradually you may take on more responsibilities.

You will have 120 days to complete the mandated 75 hours of State trainings. Some of this is done on site and some in the wider community. You will have to take a Home Aide Certification test before 150 days and pass for continued employment. After your first year, you will be required to take 12 hours of continuing education each year.

One of our values is the volunteer nature of our community. Assistants are choosing to live with people with an intellectual disability rather than being paid to do so. Consequently assistants are remunerated with a modest monthly stipend along with Medical and Dental benefits. They have a limited amount of personal time each day and two days away each week. Vacation days accumulate to 28 days at the end of each year. We also have special events throughout the year, a Community Retreat, Community Vacations, the Regional Gathering and time for a personal retreat.

Many people have found that their time in L'Arche is one of the most formative of their life.

We hope that this will be true of your experience with us also.

Welcome!

Historical Background

L'Arche ("The Ark" in French) is an international federation of communities dedicated to the service of people with developmental disabilities. It was founded in 1964 in Trosly, a French village about an hour north of Paris, by Jean Vanier (son of General Georges Vanier, former Governor General of Canada).

L'Arche began when Jean welcomed two persons with developmental disabilities to live with him in a small home. His desire to share his life as a brother with Raphael and Philippe attracted others who joined him there, and soon a community of several homes and workshops grew in the same village.

Later, some of those living in Trosly left to begin similar communities in other parts of the world, maintaining at the same time strong links of friendship and support with one another. In 1972, the International Federation of L'Arche was constituted, and today there are over 135 communities in 33 countries in the world. The word "L'Arche" is French for "The Ark" and is taken from the Old Testament story of Noah. It signifies a place of refuge, of salvation from the flood. The name was chosen for the original home begun by Jean and was later given to that first community founded by him. Still later the name was attached to the whole movement so that each community in the Federation is called a L'Arche community.

L'Arche holds a specific philosophy which has been outlined in the original Charter of L'Arche. "The first aim of L'Arche", says the Federation Charter, "is to create communities inspired by the Beatitudes and the spirit of the Gospels." Thus the inspiration of L'Arche is Christian and we call ourselves, Christian Communities. The aspect of 'community' means that we come basically to share our lives with others as brothers and sisters. In sharing the details of everyday life, we are gradually able to recognize the dignity and the gift of the person who has been labeled 'handicapped' and we can thus grow to recognize the truth of the first Beatitude, namely, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven". To create L'Arche and to welcome and live with those who have been marginalized by our society is a joy and a challenge. Today we are being encouraged by the norms of our culture to seek ourselves first, to climb the ladder of success and to surround ourselves with many possessions. L'Arche, on the other hand, is calling us to create relationships of friendship with some of the weaker members of our society and to give our energies to the creation of loving homes and a meaningful work environment with them. L'Arche in Seattle seeks to create a community of hope, of simplicity, and of love.

THE ASSISTANT

How to come to Community

Each community welcomes volunteers as assistants to "assist" by living with and creating homes with the people who are developmentally disabled (core members) and with the other assistants.

If you decide to join our community, you will need to adjust quickly to living with a large group of people. Therefore, we felt it useful to write some things in order to help you orient yourself to the community.

We want you to take time to get to know us if you come. Thus, we hope that for several months we won't have to ask you to carry very much heavy responsibility in the community. It is much more a time for you to listen, to watch and to become 'at home' with the people with whom you are living. That doesn't mean that you won't be asked to work. Very quickly you will discover that we are busy and that there is a lot to be done. We will ask you to perform certain tasks, but we hope that within the tasks you will build relationships with the people of the community.

CREATING HOME AT L'ARCHE NOAH SEALTH

Creating home is a very important art in our lives. It means creating a place where we are loved for who we are.

Creating home involves not only providing a physical structure, but, more so, it refers to the setting of an ambiance and the cultivation and continuing of traditions. The essence of L'Arche is creating home; creating a place where each person whether core member or assistant, can feel at home and be themselves.

We all create home together. Sometimes the ways in which a person contributes to our home may not be noticed until he/she is gone and we discover little things that then go unattended. Hopefully we are also able to notice these things a little after a person arrives (and before they leave!) so we can be grateful for the contribution each person makes in his/her own way to the home we share.

Following are some of the different aspects involved in creating home. We all come to the community with different levels of experience around creating home, but wherever we may be at, it is helpful to be reminded of the essence of this art.

MEALS

Gathering together around the supper table is a central point of our daily lives. It is often the only time of the day when the whole house is together. This is where communion takes place. Meals meet our deepest needs for nourishment -physically, emotionally and spiritually. Meals should be planned ahead of time to be sure they are nutritious and tasteful. It is important to involve the core members, as much as possible, in the preparation of meals. This could range from making a salad or grating cheese to setting the table.

Be conscious of how you gather at the table. Is everyone included and heard throughout the meal? Do some people need help in being drawn into conversation? Are core members and assistants intermingled? Are the dinner conversations respectful and appropriate for all present? Does anyone need help with his or her food? Be sure the mealtime traditions are honored. Who serves? Who prays first? When is coffee served? If you're unsure, please ask the core members; they are often the carriers of these traditions and some will be quick to tell you "how it's supposed to be" if they are asked.

Mealtime can be a special time. Sometimes houses like to have a simple or quiet supper occasionally (maybe more often during Lent) to be grateful for all that we have received. A "theme dinner" (for example, "A South of the Border night" with Mexican food and Salsa music) is fun on occasion.

CELEBRATIONS and TRADITIONS

Celebrations and traditions are an important part of our life together in community. It is vital to find the balance between preserving and passing on the traditions we have established and welcoming new traditions as new people arrive. This can be a tricky balance to maintain. Do you know what the traditions of your home are? What about the traditions of the community? How does your home welcome new assistants and core members? How do you send off those who are leaving? What are the ways that you celebrate those who stay? How about everyday life?

HOUSE ROUTINE

Routine is very important to the life of a home. It brings a sense of stability and security. Everyone needs different degrees of structure in their lives, and it is very important to discover that optimum level for yourself, your home and the core members. It can be a challenge to combine these different levels into a house routine that is life giving, but that is what home is all about. While each person has his/her own routine, it is important to know the routine of the house for the day and the week, as well. We all need to encourage each other to find a rhythm that is livable, a rhythm that paces us for the long haul. Of course there will be times of stretching, but our goal during those time should be to continue to care for ourselves and each other as much as possible. We want to give out of our healthy selves, not out of our "dry bones".

It is helpful for each home to have an overall Weekly House Schedule. This schedule can include regular meetings, chores, days away, laundry schedule and any other things that are consistent from week to week (ideally). This schedule can be developed through your weekly house team meetings and full house meetings so everyone has an opportunity for input. This is also a great way to help the core members be involved in caring for their home. As new people come to the house, the schedule can be revised to include their gifts and needs. Morning check-ins are another way to foster a good rhythm in a house. They usually last 15 minutes and they begin with prayer and check-ins before the agenda. Then each person's 100% for the day is shared and incorporated into a "plan for the day".

BEDROOMS

A person's bedroom is a sacred area. It is the one room in the house where no one enters without being invited. It is where a person keeps his/her treasures. It is important that each person's bedroom reflects his or her individuality, and that it is a place where he/she can be comfortable. The core members may need help with making it their own space and keeping it clean and well organized. Please remember that their rooms belong to them, not to anyone else. When invited try to help them articulate, to the best of their ability, what it is that they want their room to say. Some practical items to think of are: wastebasket, laundry basket, shelves, appropriate hangings on the

walls, nice curtains, attractive bedding, comfortable bed, storage for clothes and shoes that is sturdy, attractive and accessible, good lighting, etc. Whenever we are in another person's bedroom, (or when supporting a person in the bathroom) whether core member or assistant, we agree to leave the door ajar.

PRAYER

Praying as a house is a crucial dimension of creating home. There should be a set time for daily house prayer that is agreed upon by all. This prayer can take many forms. The important thing is that the house is coming together to share their hearts with each other and with God in away that is meaningful to all in the house. This may involve different styles of prayer. The most common time for house prayer is after the dinner dishes are finished. Some core members appreciate saying night prayers in bed as well. This can be a very grace filled and life-giving time between a core member and an assistant.

THE GIFT OF ORGANIZATION

A less glamorous, but equally vital element of creating home is sharing and growing in your ability to be organized. While some people have a natural gift for organization and others have abundant creative potential, it is important for all of us to continue to find our own ways of organizing or ordering our lives. By having a clearer picture of what our priorities are in our days, months and years, we are better able to ask for the support we need and reach out in support of others.

The community has set channels of organizing that we are asked to work within as assistants, for example, our meeting format (check-ins, 100%) and the Policies & Procedures Manual. While we ask everyone to work within these structures, we realize that each person approaches structure differently. Not everyone is suited for every role. So we rely on people knowing themselves and their gifts well enough to have a sense of where they fit in. And yet, we ask people to be open to responding to the needs of the community and this may involve doing what you never dreamed of doing before!

We ask assistants to take responsibility for organizing their days and roles in a mature manner. If you are interested in specific input or formation around organizing and scheduling, we encourage you to talk to the House Responsible or Support Coordinator. At the beginning of the year, we will schedule a New Assistants or Assistant Sharing meeting around the subject. There are also workshops and trainings available through outside resources. It may also be helpful to talk with other assistants about how they organize themselves. We often can get great ideas from each other.

RESPONSIBILITIES IN THE HOUSE

Each house team goes through a previously drawn up list of tasks/duties that need to be done or taken responsibility for. First, this is done by the assistants in the team and then with the whole house. The list has to be broad enough and creative enough to encompass a task/role for each person, despite any significant disabilities. L'Arche's philosophy is that each person, disabled or not, has a true gift to bring to community. This may be a task or it may be more relational, i.e., accepting of many people, forgiveness, welcome, etc. The key in naming each person's responsibilities is to acknowledge that everyone is needed to make the team work and ultimately to create ownership with each community member. The task / responsible list is always evolving and changing. It will never be static. As new people enter the team, tasks assignments are reevaluated in the light of people's gifts, talents, and the desire for new challenges.



Noah House

*Home is where
we can laugh and cry,
embrace and dance,
sleep long
and dream quietly,
eat, read, play,
listen to music
and be with a friend.*

The Weekly Rhythm

The Thursday Morning Meeting

The Thursday Team Meeting begins at 10.00am. A new person to the community doesn't join this meeting immediately but after their period of training.

The meeting is in four parts. The first part is prayer and is usually twenty minutes of Centering Prayer. The second part of the meeting is a short "check-in" where we briefly let people know how we are doing, if we're distracted by something or other, whether rested or not, what space we're in, etc.

The third part is called "sharing" usually takes about an hour. We choose various topics to reflect on: spirituality, living in community, psychology, sharing of faith stories, the lives of our core members and so on.

At the beginning of the year a professional counselor leads a sharing on "family of origins". Sometimes we have a reading to prepare before the meeting and sometimes we share on the writings or videos of Jean Vanier. In any case, the function of this time is to build community and support one another by reflecting and sharing more deeply on matters related to our wellbeing in community. Everybody is encouraged to share. One person begins and we go around in a circle from that person. It is possible to "pass" if you are not ready and we return to you later. This part of the meeting is followed by a 15-minute break.

The fourth part of the meeting is the business of the community and usually takes from an hour to an hour and a half. This is when we plan for the following week's community meeting, discuss issues, plan and organize events and welcoming people, assign various tasks and basically update people on what is happening in the community. Sometimes we discuss matters related to the lives of our core members and information regarding their personal lives is strictly confidential. Participants should read the Coordinator Meeting notes prior to the meeting.

Thursday's Evening's Community Night

Community night begins at either 5.30 or 6.00 depending on the season. The second and the fourth Community Nights of the month are "open". This means that visitors from the wider community are most welcome. On the other Thursday nights in the month when we gather just by ourselves and go bowling, dancing, have a bingo night, or go out to a park for a picnic.

The first open community night of the month is held at Shuinota House and the other (on the fourth Thursday) is at Angeline House.

Community night has three parts. First, we gather for Community Sharing of our week, a half hour opportunity for people to update us on what is going on for them in their lives and to make announcements of upcoming events, recognize anniversaries and birthdays. This is followed by a prayer service, often times this lead by an outside representative of one of the major churches represented in the community.

Then, we share a meal and socialize. Various roles attached to community night are assigned during the team meeting. Community nights are also when we celebrate birthdays and anniversaries. The birthdays are celebrated the Thursday nearest the actual date of the birthday while the anniversaries are celebrated at the end of the month. The evening usually ends between 8.30pm and 9.00 pm.

Fridays at L'Arche Noah Sealth

Formation begins at 10.00am at Shuinota House and is usually led by Jennifer Kelly. Various topics are covered related to life in the community; the mission and vision of L'Arche, issues regarding Core Members, the structures of community, dealing with conflict, etc. Come prepared to take notes.

As there are four members of our community who are deaf, we also have two ASL sign classes, one for beginners and one for more advanced students. It is expected that all attend one or other of the classes.

Some recommended reading:

Community and Growth by Jean Vanier

Enough Room for Joy: The Early Days of L'Arche By Bill Clarke, S.J. *Novalis Press*

Sleeping With Bread: Holding What Gives You Life

by Dennis Linn, Sheila Fabricant Linn, Matthew Linn *Paulist Press*

Open Mind, Open heart, by Thomas Keating *Harper Collins*

Why we share.

We are all in danger of living superficially, on the periphery of ourselves.

We tend to react to immediate stimuli, to demands from individuals who confront us and to the need for "urgent" action; we tend to flee from the treasure hidden within us.

When for one reason or another, we become aware of it, or when it is touched by an external event, we are nourished.

We are nourished by everything that stirs the essential in us and brings it to consciousness.

This may be a word, a reading, a meeting or a suffering: all these can reawaken our deepest heart and give hope.

Community life demands that we constantly go beyond our own resources.

If we do not have the spiritual nourishment we need, we will close in on ourselves and on our own comfort and security, or throw ourselves into work as an escape.

We will throw up walls around our sensitivity; we will perhaps be polite and obedient, but we will not love.

And when you do not love, there is no hope and no joy.

It is terrible to see people living sadly in community, without love.

To live gratuitously, we have to be constantly nourished.

Jean Vanier, *Community and growth*

Tips on Sharing

St. Ignatius asks us to *put the best possible interpretation on what another says to us* and this is very important component to living well in community.

When you say something...

please be honest, tell where you are, not where you'd like to be
please be personal, don't speak for anyone but yourself
please be current, share what is fresh and lively for you now
please be brief, remember that we are a big group!
please be down to earth, we've all had too many lectures!

When you listen ...

be attentive, try to hear and digest the real point
be affirming, each person has something precious to contribute
be sensitive, hear what is being said
please don't offer advice at this time, wait to be asked for it.

It is understood that what is shared is received with respect and remains within the group.

DEFINITIONS OF L'ARCHE NOAH SEALTH TERMS.

Accompaniment: There are many components to continuing to live community life well. An Accompanier is a mature person, approved by the community, assigned to new assistants, to walk with them in community. **Adult Family Home:** (A.F.H.) All three houses are AFH licensed. This is a license which issued by Adult and Aging and generally speaking is used for non-DDD clients. Our licensor is Brenda Mooney. Angeline and Shuinota have “Adult Family Home Clients who have “Residential Contracts” from DDA also. **Assistants:** Direct care-givers. Usually commitment is a year, come from all walks of life to volunteer their services in return for room & board and a stipend. Foreign Assistants come on B-1 visas and are not allowed to receive a paycheck, only remuneration for expenses incidental to their stay. However, in order to be in compliance with Wage and Hour Law, their total benefits package must at least equal the minimum wage. **Assistant Director,** Support Coordinator, and Community Coordinator are synonymous in the sense that each is a key-supporting role for the director. They vary slightly depending on where the emphasis is: *Administration* for Assistant Director and *Community* for Support and Community Coordinator. **Associate Member:** Close member of the community, usually someone who has served the community in another capacity, assistant or Board member, before becoming an Associate.

B-1 Visa The type of visa issued to foreign assistants for between 6 – 12 months, which allows only for “remuneration for expenses incidental to one’s stay.” **Basic Plus Waiver:** One of 4 different kinds of waiver programs for people with a developmental disability in the state of Washington. The Basic Plus waiver funds people in Adult Family Home settings. It is Medicaid funded. Noah House members are on the Basic Plus.

Case Manager: Representative from DSHS who assists with various issues related to the lives of the core members.

Client Participation: (Res-Par) amount a core member is required to pay as his/her participation in the cost of residential care, support and training purchased on his/her behalf by DSHS .

Core Member: Person with a developmental disability. Core: they are at the heart (*coeur fr.*) of community.

Core Waiver: One of 4 different kinds of waiver programs for people with a developmental disability in the state of Washington. Originally there was only the CAP Waiver. This *Community Access Program* waiver program provided funding to people with a developmental disability to live in the wider community and waive their right to live in an institution. The core waiver funds people in Supported

Living and Group Home settings. It is Medicaid funded with matching federal dollars and significantly better funded than the Basic and Basic Plus waivers. Community Protection is the 4th. **Comprehensive Assessment (CA):** This document is the result of an annual meeting with a Core Member's Case Manager in the presence of the Core Member and significant people in their lives for an evaluation of needs. The extent of a person's needs determines which of one of six levels of funding the person receives. This is also more recently known as the SIS Assessment. **C.P.I:** Clothing, Personal Incidentals.

Discernment: See attached. **D.D.A.:** Developmental Disabilities Administration which is under **D.S.H.S.** (Department of Social and Health Services) We are in DDA Region 2.

Fundamentals of Care-giving and Specialty Training: Two three-day trainings required of all who work one on one with core members.

Group Home Contracts: Angeline and Shuinota Houses have certain core members who are on Group Home contracts with DDA for services. These core members, four in each house, have a much higher funding than AFH members do (average per diem is less than half of Group Home).

International Council: Group comprised of International Coordinator, (Patrick Fontaine) and Vice-Coordinator, (Eileen Glass) a Pastoral Minister, L'Arche International Board President, and Secretary General. (these form the International Exec.) and the eight National Coordinators.

ISP: Individual Service Plan provides the basic frame for the development of the IISP. **IISP** The Individual Instruction and Support Plan is drawn up with Case Manager insures the needs of Core Members are being met at several levels: Health and Safety, Developing life skills, Growing in Independence, Social interacting, etc. An in-house program based on the ISP involving core member and significant people in their lives designed with the view to enhance quality of life.

Negotiated Care Plan: AFH requirement based on the C.A. and must be in place within the first 30 days of admittance. An individualized program developed by the Residential Manager in consultation with a core member in order to meet their specific needs in all areas of their lives. This will be found in their medical files. All changes in life style are recorded in the NCP.

Residential Manager: The state term for House Responsible, the house leader who supervises their home. **Region:** There are three regions in the U.S. Zone. They are U.S. West, U.S. Central, and U.S. East. There are four communities in our region, U.S. West: Seattle, Spokane, Tacoma, and Portland. We

have a Pre-project, (Community in gestation) “Wavecrest”, in California. **Regional Leader:** Patty McNally in Portland. **Regional Council:** The Directors of the communities in the region meet two or three times a year and form a decision making body to facilitate regional life and provide support to one another. The Regional Coordinator facilitates this meeting. **R.C.W.** Revised Code of Washington; foundation for the W.A.C.

SIS Assessment: Supports Intensity Scale – a Comprehensive Assessment tool adapted by the DDD in the State of Washington at the request of the legislature to provide a basis for remuneration of services.

SSI: Benefit which most of our core members receive: Supplemental Security Income for the aged, blind or disabled. **Subsidiarity:** Principle by which decisions are made at the lowest level possible. **Solidarity with the South:** Relation building whereby L’Arche communities in the Northern hemisphere are linked with those in the Southern.

Triangulation: Involving a third party in a complaint / conflict instead of dealing directly with the initial, implicated party. (Please see our Conflict Resolution Policy.)

W.A.C.: Washington Administrative Code: set of rules governing minimum requirements for Licensing.

Waiver: See Core Waiver and Basic Plus.

Some reasons to pray daily.

1. Prayer leads to an increase in self-understanding. The recognition of our particular weaknesses of character is basic to growth in the spiritual life, for self-awareness and the realization of how far we fall short of the Christian ideal leads us to acknowledge our nothingness before God, and that without him we can do nothing. With this increase of self-awareness there must also come the power to accept and love ourselves in spite of our faults.
2. Prayer develops the attitude of being prepared for the unexpected. It is not unlike that attentiveness that is cultivated by mothers of small children. The mother knows that if she turns her back for one moment she risks finding her child with his hands in boiling water. So it is with our openness to God. We must be ever alert to the people we meet and situations which occur, for the requests he makes often come in a totally unexpected form. This openness can only be achieved in regular prayer, by pondering his word in Scriptures and by reflecting upon the way he has revealed his purpose to us in the past.
3. This attitude of expectancy towards the demands of God will be reflected in our lives in two main ways: in availability to our neighbor and in the knowledge of the ephemeral nature of human life. It is precisely because we cannot see God that we can only know that our prayer is valid by the effect it has upon our lives, by the way we treat our neighbor.
4. Prayer opens us up to the grace of God, to his power to transform us into his likeness.
5. An attitude of openness to the demands of God expressed in the needs of our neighbor leads naturally to an awareness of the ultimate demand that may be made upon us, even that of our life. While the knowledge of the inevitability of death is a common human experience, the ability to accept and welcome the fact that it may happen at any time comes with spiritual maturity. This doesn't necessarily render the believer exempt from fear of pain and death though people of faith usually have more serenity facing death.
6. With the understanding that on earth we have no lasting city comes a degree of detachment from things material. As our faith / prayer life deepens so does our trust in God.
7. An effect of prayer is hope. Hope is a gift of God. Unlike "expectation" with which it is often confused, hope is based upon the unshakable belief that God can and will bring about the unlikely, the humanly impossible, however bleak the future may look.
8. Prayer makes it possible for us to assimilate our aggression. What otherwise might be at the least a mild exercise in self-indulgence, and at worst the kind of naked aggression that brings violence into the world, becomes in prayer a channel for the discovery and exposure of self.
9. Prayer makes a space simply to look and to contemplate, and thus to free our ego from compulsively controlling all kinds of urges, often without thought or understanding, through the mechanical use of a religious precept or moral code that marks them as bad. In the freeing space of prayer, we can no longer pretend that they do not exist. We no longer are reduced to repressing them or just diving into them unthinkingly. The alternative route that prayer encourages is to see and to offer, to accept what is there and give thanks for it and open our living out of sexuality as a central part of our being to God's care.

1 - 7 Prayer for Pilgrims, Sheila Cassidy (Out of print.)

8 & 9 Primary Speech; A psychology of Prayer, Ann & Barry Ulanov. John Knox Press.

Resting in God's Presence

Thomas Keating, OCSO

Centering Prayer as taught by Contemplative Outreach is a fairly nuanced practice. You can't always rely on what people say about the instruction they received. I have found that even after several years, people may not have fully understood how to do Centering Prayer. This becomes apparent during the Intensive Retreats or the Formation Workshops in which there is a careful review of the method itself.

One objection to Centering Prayer is as follows: "One is advised to let go of the sacred word just to rest in God's presence: " That advice has to be taken in its proper context and depends on certain steps going before.

First of all, letting go of the sacred word in Centering Prayer is not a deliberate choice. Still less is it a permanent disposition. The whole thrust of Centering Prayer is to encourage us to let go of all thoughts. A "thought" in Contemplative Outreach terminology is any perception whatsoever including memories, plans, visualizations, external or internal sensations, feelings, and self reflections. Any kind of reflecting, even to make a choice, is a "thought," and hence, an invitation to return to the sacred word.

In the beginning our advice is: Resist no thought, retain no thought, react emotionally to no thought, and when you notice you are thinking about some thought, return ever so gently to the sacred word. One does not think about whether to return to the sacred word or not. One simply returns to it when thoughts are attracting one's awareness to a particular object.

We recommend the "discrete" use of the sacred word rather than its constant repetition. By this we mean using it as much as one needs it. This may be continuously at first. Beginners need it whenever they notice they are thinking about some other thought. In following this advice, we note the fact that the sacred word may become indistinct or even disappear for a limited period of time. When thoughts again engage our attention, we return to the sacred word as before. Thus, a disposition of alert receptivity is gradually formed.

Later we suggest returning to the sacred word or symbol only when we notice that we are attracted to some other thought. The meaning of this advice is that with time and regular daily practice one can discern intuitively whether one is disinterested in the thoughts that are coming down the stream of consciousness. Disregard of the thoughts is the sign that the consent of the will is becoming habitual. The will can be directed to God at a very delicate level without having to express its intention in a sacred symbol. Thus, from our perspective, the sacred symbol is not a means of going some place like an elevator. Still less is it a means of bulldozing other thoughts out of awareness. It is rather, a question of cultivating the spiritual level of awareness, which is real awareness, but without particular content.

This brings me to the chief difference between Centering Prayer, Vipassana and Hindu mantric practice. Centering Prayer comes out of the Christian Contemplative Heritage, inspired in the first instance by the Desert Mothers and Fathers and the Hesychastic tradition of the Eastern Orthodox Church, both of which cultivate interior silence and purity of heart. In the methods of meditation in the Eastern religions, the emphasis is on concentration for the sake of developing clarity of mind. By concentrative practices, I understand the use of the rational faculties and the imagination, physical movements and postures, and continued repetition of a word or phrase.

Centering Prayer is a passage from concentrative practices to alert receptivity through consenting to God's presence and action within us, which places the emphasis on purity of intention. Effort refers to the future, consent to the present moment where God, in fact, is. According to St. John of the Cross, purity of intention manifests itself during prayer as "a general loving attentiveness toward God." This is attentiveness not of the mind but of the heart. Its source is pure faith in God's presence leading to surrender to the interior action of the Holy Spirit in the here and now.

Spiritual Stages of Community Excerpt from *Near Occasions of Grace* by Richard Rohr

Fr. Richard Rohr, OFM is a Franciscan priest of the Guadalupe Province and Founder of the Center for Action and Contemplation in Albuquerque, New Mexico. He is the author of numerous books. For more information, please visit www.cacradicalgrace.org. (Used with permission.)

Stage One

In order to have a good middle and a good end, you must have a good beginning. Just because it is Stage One does not mean that it is unimportant and can be quickly jumped over in order to get into the "real thing." Fortunately or unfortunately, we do not usually know that we are in Stage One. We are probably not aware that community is about to happen. We are uniquely in the power of the Spirit. It is usually un-programmed, unplanned, and unsuspected. It is usually pure gift. Only years later do we become aware of the power available and given at the beginning.

This phenomenon is probably what people are referring to when they speak of things "beginning charismatically and ending institutionally." Perhaps this is the only way that it can really happen, and why we constantly need new beginnings, breaks with the past, or at least a return to the power that is inherent in the mythic first stage.

We cannot maintain the fervor and euphoria of Stage One for very long. If we try-as many groups do-we will pay a very high price: We will have to choose blindness. It is a great and very subtle temptation precisely because stage one appears to be so holy, inspired, and empowered. It is not unlike the first blush of romantic love, and no one wants to let go of it.

Stage One is a type of passive dependency. We have not necessarily discovered a new life within ourselves, but we have instead discovered it in another, in the group, in the vision. We lean on them heavily, because we are drawing life from them and they are putting us in touch with the depths of our own dreaming. It is very nearly the only way that we can begin, even though it is a kind of blind listening. It is not a deep listening to the self, but an enthrallment in what is "out there" or what we have together. But ironically it is not really a love of these things. It is still a clear, but absolutely necessary, love of the self. We are in love with what the dream does for us, what the community brings out of us, what others give to us.

Lest we snobbishly pull up our nose at such puerile and disguised motivation, let me be quick to say that at least it is trust. At least it reveals a capacity for wonder, and awe, and desire. It is dependency on another, recognition of life within another, and therefore the beginnings of love. Pity the poor folk who are not capable of Stage One. And many today are not-because they refuse to release their hearts to any group or individual who is not formed and perfect and worthy of their self-donation.

The consistent experience of history is that love and communities and, in fact, most events that enlist the commitment of people have largely non-rational beginnings. If we are waiting around for something to appear in which we can invest ourselves from a position of total, objective detachment, then we want a job perhaps, but we do not want a community. Certainly we do not want a community of trust.

Trust is very likely the most free and most fully personal response that a human being can make. It includes intellect, will, and affection. But it is only the beginning. The goal is integration - not just excitement.

Stage Two

Here is where the trouble begins. We would rather remain blind than see what we begin to see in Stage Two: The community is imperfect. And so is the leader, the vision, the structure, the timing, the theology, the initial call, the present situation, and the tuna casserole that was served for lunch. The patterns of Stage Two are as many as the leaves on the trees, but that it will come is *absolutely certain*. It must come if love and light are ever to happen.

This is the desert, the wilderness, the dark night of the soul, the time of temptation. Many leave, get divorced or discouraged during this time. There is a loss of perspective and a loss of nerve. Many rational types of problems will appear, but this is basically an emotional journey that must be walked through with both the emotions and the head together. It is a

letting-go of control, and this is what we do not want to do. We begin to experience our inadequacy and our need and know deeply and darkly that we are imperfect, that we are sinners. And then we have to be converted in order to live.

Stage Two is a period of non-listening to others, and even to ourselves. It is a state of alienation and discouragement, in which we should never make major decisions or too quickly trust our first emotional responses. Our emotions are being stretched; they are growing. They will embarrass us, frighten us, and serve our relationships rather poorly during this time. But the greatest mistake would be either to deny them or believe them totally in order to reassert control. We must, however, be free to feel them, both the negative and the positive.

And blessed are we if we have a true and wise friend to walk with us during this darkness. We need someone who will not just correct us or just caress us, but who can say, "I have been here before." We need the sister or brother who can assure us that there is light in this period and not just darkness. Most difficult of all, we need to have given them enough authority beforehand so that we will believe what they say when nothing else within us wants to believe it.

It is in Stage Two that we have the greatest lack of wisdom and understanding. Most church communities have foolishly chosen to remain in Stage One rather than venture into this great and terrible wilderness. Individuals have often been forced to go it alone. This destroyed many, and made saints out of some. But the desert was God's chosen journey to make saints out of all the people. Competent spiritual direction is perhaps the only way through. *Yet it is one of the most noticeably absent gifts in many attempts at community today.* For too long we held our communities together by law, fear, tradition, and social pressure. Now that we are trying to form truly voluntary and healing communities, we find that we need directors more than "heads"; we need real spiritual authority instead of just "superiors." We need people who understand darkness, and by their presence can hold us through to the light.

Stage Three

Turn around! Believe the good news! The breakthrough to Stage Three is a moment of grace that exceeds even the amazing grace that breaks us into Stage One. Only now does love really begin. We still know everything that we knew in Stage Two. We know that we live in an imperfect world and with an imperfect self; but we are freed to love anyway. Here we can begin to speak of adult Christianity, because now we have the beginnings of free persons who are capable of decision and response, and therefore of faith.

In the first two stages, we are largely dealing with reaction, experiment, and divine initiative. Now life is beginning to recognize life. We are choosing - not out of fear or need or convenience - to respond to a call. Grace has met its mark. We are now looking back at God with the very eyes with which God once looked at us. And yet they are now our eyes. That is the one and only miracle after the incarnation.

Stage-Three people are the creators of community. Their very freedom draws life around them. They seem to draw their life from within themselves and are, in this sense, healthily independent. They do not really need community, it appears. And yet they decide for what God has decided for. They choose to participate, to share in the pain and life of God for the sake of God's kingdom. They know that they do not have to do this, and yet they must do it to be who they already are. Stage-Three people are not passively dependent; they are positively dependent. They face the need of being human. They choose to need, just as the Father needs the Son and the Son needs the Father. They agree to the Trinitarian life within. Shared life is the only life possible because God is shared life. Community is no longer a way of life. Community is life. And God is perfect community.

You must have at least one - hopefully several - Stage-Three people in order to form a community. Sometimes, like Moses and Miriam, they are themselves formed on the same journey that they are leading. These are the sisters and brothers who can say to us floundering around in Stages One and Two, "I have been here before. Come, let's walk together."

A community where many or even the majority of the members have at least once broken through to Stage Three is a delightful and holy place to live. It is a true foretaste of the coming kingdom and the communion of saints. Here real virtue and heroism are possible. *Here honest communication begins.* True listening and healthy obedience are no threat. We can at last deal with real issues and not just projections, fears, and reactions. Words become truly helpful and even beautiful because they come from deep and quiet places within. The community is no longer used to simply work out personal goals and agendas, but it is seen and enjoyed as an end in itself. Community now has the possibility of becoming family. And yet there is more.

Stage Four

There is another moment of response that must be spoken of. It is surely the triumph of grace. It is the goal toward which we move and for which all good pastors work as they teach their communities. It is the stage of perfect listening, perfect responsiveness, perfect love. Stage Four is the stuff that saints are made of. Stage Four is what the world is longing to see in our Christianity. The wise world always believes Stage Four and easily recognizes counterfeits. The irony is that people and communities can often fool themselves, even though the world will see through their disguise. Stage-One people often think that they are in Stage Four. They are out of touch with the whole, and interpret their exciting part as if it were a perfect whole.

This deception has been so common in the history of religious movements and groups that people are understandably suspicious and mistrustful of idealistic people with pious platitudes and pretensions. They are right when they say, "Wait, and see." Saints do not happen overnight or at the age of twenty-one. Communities are not measured in years, but in decades or even centuries. I speak of this deception because of the American phenomenon of religion, which includes so many Stage-Four pretensions in the guise of fundamentalist, charismatic, or even social-activist communities. As we have seen in the recent Moral Majority drama, such groups can gain influence far beyond their deserving, because the masses have no clear criteria for spiritual discernment.

Stage-Four communities come not to do their own will, but the will of the One who sends them. They are the clearest incarnation of Jesus in space and time. They do only what they hear God saying. They are known for what God is known for. They are free to succeed and free to fail. They are not just positively dependent on one another, but now they are interdependent and together facing the larger world. By their time and trials together they have discovered a basis for unity deeper than momentary differences. God goes on working, and so do they.

Such communities are ready for vocation and mission in the fullest sense. Some are very likely being raised up to face the faith problems of the next decades. Their intellects, their wills, and their emotions are even now being tried and tested to stretch to full capacity our desire and longing for unity.

Every attempt at faith community is a necessary participation in the eternal longing of God that we might be one. We would otherwise find little reason to hold out and hold on through these stages or any other stages of growth. Growth does not just happen without the proper conditions. Two of those proper and necessary conditions are time and wisdom.

We probably go through these stages many different times in our life and in many different ways. But once we have experienced and chosen at least a Stage-Three existence, I doubt that we could ever again be satisfied with an ongoing Stage One or Two response. We would see it for what it is and again move on. Not to do so would probably be the real meaning of sin. Hopefully, this growth journey will give us some helpful perspectives on what the Lord seems to be doing in many of our lives. Perhaps this has taught a few people who will themselves teach a few people about the one thing that is more precious than our life - and that is our life together.

PROCEDURE FOR RESOLVING DISAGREEMENTS OR CONFLICTS
(AND THE PREVENTION OF GOSSIP)

*All members of the community must be on their guard against sowing discord,
whether consciously or unconsciously.*

Jean Vanier

*We experience good only by doing it.
We experience evil only by refusing to allow ourselves to do it, or, if we do it, by repenting of it.
When we do evil we do not know it, because evil flies from the light.*

Simon Veil

*To bear with patience wrongs done to oneself is a mark of perfection,
but to bear with patience wrongs done to someone else is a mark of imperfection and even of actual sin.*

Thomas Aquinas

We have learned that it is inevitable that conflicts will arise in community. We strive to resolve them in an open, honest and mature manner. To do this we will try to abide by Jesus' words in Matthew 18:15-17.

If your brother sins against you, go to him and show him his fault, just between the two of you. If he listens to you, you have won your brother over. But if he will not listen, take one or two others along, so that every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses. If he refuses to listen to you, tell it to the church, and if he refuses to listen even to the church, treat him as you would a pagan or a tax collector.

To prevent a minor disagreement from becoming a major conflict, the following is expected: When a person with a complaint comes to talk to a third party without having gone first to the party involved, the third party must:

1. Avoid passing on the story to yet another party without taking some responsibility.
2. Suggest that the person with the complaint speak to the party involved.
(Offer suggestions on how to address the issue.)
3. Where this is not feasible, offer to go together to the party involved.
4. Where this is not feasible, offer to go alone to the party involved.
5. Where this is not feasible, bring the matter to a higher authority.

This will help prevent gossip and the formation of divisions in the community.

The matter is confidential and will remain with these people.

SECRETS AND SYSTEMS

Family secrets act as the plaque in the arteries of communication; they cause stoppage in the general flow and not just at the point of the existence.

The communication system of many families is riddled with secrets. Favorite subjects are an affair, illegitimacy, elopement, terminal illness, abortion, adoption, institutionalization (crazy or criminal), previous marriage, black sheep in previous generation (skeleton in closet), finances, and any minor matter where one family member says to another, "But don't tell Dad (Mom, etc.)."

Far more significant than the *content* of any family secret is ramification of its *existence* for the emotional processes of the entire family. These effects are specific and predictable.

1. Secrets function to divide a family, as an avalanche would a community. Those "in" on the secret will become far better able to communicate with one another than with those in the outsider group, *about any issue*, not just about the secret. For example, a minister complained how he was unable to help four sisters who were recuperating from an accident because they had yet to be told that brother had died in the same crash. He spent so much time pre-thinking everything he said, for fear it would lead to questions about the brother, that he was totally unable to be the spontaneous self that was the basis of his pastoral effectiveness. When that same emotional phenomenon occurs in a family over a long period of time, very rigid triangles result.

2. Therefore, a second effect of secrets on a family system is that they create unnecessary estrangements as well as false companionship. For example, a father and daughter conspire not to tell mother about the abortion. Mother and daughter's relationship is likely to be affected well beyond the specific issue. An overall atmosphere of unnecessary distance will develop between them. On the other hand, father and daughter will become closer, but it will be a shallow togetherness.

3. A third major effect of secrets on a family is that they distort perceptions. Family members will become confused or misled by information they obtain because they really are seeing only part of the picture. An ironic example of this is the husband who was considering leaving his wife because she had become "cold, selfish, and distant." She was having an affair, which she kept a closely guarded secret for fear he would leave her if he found out. When she finally told him the truth at the urgings of the counselor, though he first expressed deep hurt and rage, breaking almost every glass in the house, he then began to feel better about things because he was now able to put together, in a comprehensive way, many messages and actions that had not made sense. Almost immediately, they found they were able to communicate better *on every subject*.

4. The most important effect of secrets on a family's emotional life is that they exacerbate other pathological processes unrelated to the content of the particular secret, because secrets generally function to keep anxiety at higher energy levels. When secrets are revealed, despite the fact that family members might at first be upset (either over the information or the fact that the secret is out), the anxiety level the family generally decreases. This is particularly the case if the family continues to work at the issues that then surface, issues that often had precipitated the forming of a secret. The formation of a family secret is always symptomatic of other things going on in the family.

To some extent, secret formation feeds back to the previously mentioned issues concerning pain. Family members will say that they kept a secret "to spare" someone's feelings; the truth is more likely to be that they did so in order to spare their own feelings. Few of us are irreparably hurt by upset. *Chronic anxiety*, on the other hand, *kills*.

All of the above is equally true in the parish. The clergy are instantly triangled by various clandestine messages that parishioners report to them about one another, or about the other minister. That network of interlocking triangles is always in operation. But to the extent that messages about the minister are reported back and forth between "family members" *in secret*, then such secrets will promote pockets of pseudomutuality and unnecessary estrangements throughout the emotional system of the entire congregational family.

The ultimate proof of the function and the power of secrets within family is that when they are revealed, more change usually takes place throughout the entire system than could have been attributed solely to the content of that secret. In short, secrets create and perpetuate triangles; they are always on the side of the existing homeostasis, the labeling process, and the chronicity of symptoms. They are never on the side of challenge and change. Secrets are very serious stuff.

Most Christians, one supposes, are just. But I cannot bring myself to accept Christian justice as a unique form of moral behavior. The very juxtaposition of Christian and justice is not only paradoxical but much too stingy. The evidence against the fittingness of fusing those two priceless realities is legion: "Turn the other cheek, walk the extra mile, give him your jacket, too"; "Love your enemies, do good to those who torment you"; "Does no one condemn you? Then neither do I"; "Your brother was dead; we simply had to celebrate"; "You strain out the gnat, but you gulp down a camel"; "Forgive us our trespasses just as we forgive those who trespass against us"; "Forgive 70 times seven times"; "This is the cup of my blood. It will be shed...so that sins may be forgiven."

Christianity's two overriding laws are not strictures but limitless invitations, & its sole determinative assessment of one's life at the end is not about conformity but about attentive kindness. Then there is that last-minute kicker, from the place of Jesus' execution, "Father, forgive them. They know not what they do." All this puts Christianity light years beyond the reach of "justice."

In an interview with Catholic News Service, Professor Edward Peters, canon law professor at Detroit's Sacred Heart Seminary and a top adviser on that subject to the Vatican, excoriated Bishop Howard J. Hubbard of Albany for not publicly refusing Communion to New York's Gov. Andrew Cuomo, since he is a public sinner. Newspapers far and wide had trumpeted the fact that the governor, divorced with three children, is living with his girlfriend, Sandra Lee, a well-known television personality, yet still dares to approach the sacraments. Mr. Peters declared, for all to hear: "If he approaches for Holy Communion, he should be denied the august sacrament in accord with Canon 915." Who could deny those "facts"?

Yet in at least three places in the Gospels, Jesus reacted quite differently to sharing food and drink uncritically with manifestly public sinners. At a dinner hosted by Simon the Pharisee, a woman "known as a sinner in the town" broke in indecently, wept on Jesus' feet and dried them with her hair. Not only did Jesus not reprehend her, but he told his indignant host, "Much has been forgiven her because she has loved much." Elsewhere, Jesus met at the well of Sichar a Samaritan woman who had already had five husbands, "and the man you're with now is not your husband." In a small town, six men would guarantee a woman a considerable reputation, but Jesus immediately dropped the subject and spoke of more important matters, like eternal life. And when he encountered the feisty enemy collaborator Zaccheus, peering down at him from a sycamore tree, Jesus boldly invited himself (and his entourage, one supposes) to the tax man's house for lunch. Neither the Samaritan woman nor Zaccheus forced themselves on Jesus' hospitality. On the contrary, he imposed himself quite blithely on theirs.

Moreover, there is reliable evidence that Jesus washed Judas's feet and shared food with him at his farewell dinner, the model for our eucharistic celebration, even knowing what the disciple was about to do. How shockingly nonjudgmental! Laws are not only laudable but utterly necessary, of course, especially for people unable—or unwilling—to think. But the first sign of a dying society is a new edition of the rules. Conformity begins to outweigh conviction.

A story that poses the justice/Christianity contrast is the segment in *Les Misérables* about the bishop's candlesticks. The gendarmes return Jean Valjean to Bishop Bienvenu with the silverware Valjean has stolen. In justice, the bishop has a right not only to the return of his property but also to some kind of retributive penance because of the betrayal of his hospitality and kindness. But no! "Ah, my brother! Here you are! How is it you forgot I gave you the silver candlesticks, too!" That is not justice. Even to the minds of some professed and diligent Christians, such a way of behaving is rank foolishness. Unmerited forgiveness is an attitude that would corrode the entire fabric of our usurious and litigious society.

As a teacher of religion for close to a half century, I have frequently been tempted to violate the school administration's "laws"—at times, I think, to worthwhile effect. Once while reading English essays, I found two that were not only similar, but identical. When I spoke to the two students, it was clear they had not collaborated; each had copied the essay verbatim from an Internet provider. They asked me with anxious interest what I intended to do. I told them I thought it was pretty serious, so I would let them know the next day. The following morning, while presiding at a small Mass for teachers and staff, I mentioned the cheating during the prayers of the faithful and said that rather than summarily "turning them over to the Polizei," I would like to handle it in the way Jesus might, but I had yet to find a way. Afterward, one teacher was irate and insisted the matter be brought to the attention of the office. Instead, I saw the two students separately and asked them to write an essay covering three points: What does integrity mean; what does it feel like to lose it; and how does one get it back?

One boy wrote that it was the first time in his life he understood what Christianity really meant. The other came to confession "for the first time since eighth grade." The angry teacher, meanwhile, went to the administration to report the matter. Although I reported the results of my attempt to be Christian, I was told, "All well and good, but their cheating has to go on their records." I refused, because this was one of those rare occasions when I myself felt how good Christian conversion feels—for both sides.

I am fairly sure those students, as confused as Jean Valjean was with a basket of silverware in one fist and two silver candlesticks in the other, will remember that event more than they would remember prolonged detention or even suspension. Perhaps public sinners might more meaningfully be lured home if authorities depended less on judgment and more on imagination.

Mr. Peters has certainly spent many hours pondering church law. But since he has sat in public judgment on both a governor and his bishop, one might legitimately ask of him publicly whether he has adequately pondered the intentions of the Person who occasioned the law. Justice is so much easier than Christianity.

IGNATIUS OF LOYOLA'S RULES FOR DISCERNING INSPIRATIONS

Ideas occur to us all the time. We often call them 'inspirations,' and consider ourselves 'inspired.' Unfortunately, not every bright idea is a right idea; not every plan is good for the planet. Ignatius Loyola included a short list of rules for understanding these inspirations so that people might better discern which to follow and which to shun.

What follows is my own paraphrase and reorganization of his rules for discerning among inspirations and his rules for dealing with scruples. I rely on more current psychological terminology – e.g., 'feelings' in place of 'movements.' I follow a model of the subject based on functions (insight, judgment, and decisions) rather than on faculties (memory, intellect and will).

Part One: Spiritual Consolations and Desolations

1. The imagination and the emotions normally reinforce a person's stance in life, while reasoning and calculation tend to upset it.

2. For example, in people leading a generally self-centered life, their imagination and emotions tend to draw them even further from God. Delights and pleasures fill their memories and hopes. Their thoughts, however, tend to sting their consciousness. So they avoid serious analysis of the long-term consequences of their actions, either for themselves or others.

3. In people leading a generally virtuous life, their imagination and emotions tend to draw them ever closer to God. They joyfully remember good deeds and courageously hope for the best for all concerned. Where they become confused or anxious, it is usually on account of fallacious thinking about what that best might actually be.

4. It is very important to learn, through experience, the difference between spiritual consolation and spiritual desolation. It is not enough to memorize a definition. Learning the difference is a matter of each person paying attention to his or her own unique, inner experiences and growing accustomed to which ones to trust and which not to. The following descriptions can help us begin to learn about our spiritual dynamics.

5. *Spiritual consolation* includes a range of different experiences. At its peak, it is an experience of love for God so direct that everything on earth, including intimate friends and relatives, are loved and appreciated as gifts of God. More ordinarily, spiritual consolation includes the acts of appreciation, of compassion, of kindness, and of hope that usually flow from being in love.

Spiritual consolation is not the same thing as feeling happy; it can include feeling grief over genuine tragedy, whether our own or others'. It is an experience of feeling centered, at peace within, full of confidence in God. Finally, spiritual consolation is any inner experience /that enables us to make balanced judgments about reality and wise assessments of the value of persons, words, & deeds.

6. *Spiritual desolation* is the opposite. At its core it is the experience of loving neither God nor neighbor but rather acting out of fear or compulsion. We are "in a mood." We feel dark inside, troubled, anxious, restless, lazy, and sad. Or we may feel giddy, scatterbrained, skittish, frivolous, and silly. We feel out of touch with our center, separated from God, and alone.

Spiritual desolation is not the same thing as feeling sad. It can include feeling excited or satisfied, but without any connection to heartfelt love beyond oneself. It can include the sense that we're running just for the sake of burning energy. In any case, it becomes difficult to appreciate people and things around us, or to be kind, or to have hope in the future. Our thoughts spin wildly but without giving us any help. Finally, spiritual desolation is any inner experience or state that prevents us from seeing reality in its fullest context and from making balanced value judgments.

7. Generally speaking, the reliable realizations, feelings, and proposals that occur to good people have the quality of water penetrating a damp sponge. They begin without notice, quickly and softly filling consciousness and easily directing our attention to what is true and worthwhile. In contrast, the unreliable inner movements have the quality of water falling on a stone. They are violent, noisy, and disturbing; they seem to head off in a variety of directions at once.

In people going from bad to worse, however, the effects are just the opposite: The draw toward in-authenticity feels natural and gentle while the tug toward authenticity feels harsh and nagging.

8. Art, architecture, and especially music can evoke either spiritual consolation or spiritual desolation or the tension between them. They can perform this function even when we do not realize it. Because they are related to our imagination and emotions, they tend to reinforce our attitudes rather than change them.

9. When we experience spiritual consolation, it is wise to remember that this consolation is a gift, that we cannot create it for ourselves, and that without it we are unable to do much of any worth. In particular, we should recall the times when we knew very well what we ought to do but could not bring ourselves to do it. We can recall how much we needed the gift of courage from God at the point. It also helps at this time to consider how we will act later, when spiritual desolation comes.

10. In a time of spiritual desolation, we should not make any decision, but stay with the decision made when we were more at peace.

11. Great courage is required to stand up against the tug toward self-centeredness. If we lose courage and let go of the reins on our hearts, the tug can plunge us into behaviors that we ordinarily are deeply ashamed of. On the other hand, if we do something entirely opposite to what that pull suggests, it soon loses its force.

12. There are many ways to act energetically against spiritual desolation.

If sad, do not withdraw from people but rather make contact. If silly, sober up. If tempted, talk about it with someone. Just as feeling love is no cause for pride, so being tempted is no cause for shame or secrecy. Candor being the enemy of cunning, once we tell someone else our temptations, their grip on us usually relaxes. If badgered by complicated thoughts, pay close attention and try to see through their fallacies. If upset by feelings that some good you have done is worthless, resist the feelings and rely on the truth that God alone knows the true worth of things.

Generally, take greater care than usual in choosing music and a place to dwell. Although it goes against the grain, we should not slacken our prayer but intensify it. We should not indulge ourselves in excessive eating or excessive recreation or excessive work. In a storm, trim the sails.

13. In spiritual desolation, we can always rely on the truth. We can recall the truths that our faith has taught us, namely, that God will never forget us, that God's Spirit still prays and works in us, that the divine Jesus is still human and suffers his compassion for us. We can recall the truth that desolation does not last forever, even though it may seem so. "I have faith, even when I say, 'I am completely crushed'" (Ps 116:10).

14. There are lessons to be learned from spiritual desolation. If the desolation is our own fault, because we have been listless in our love and have ignored God, we discover the high cost of spiritual inattentiveness.

Another lesson is the poignant realization that we cannot create spiritual consolation for ourselves and yet we need it for living out a life of love. We learn the lessons of humility and gratitude to the Spirit of God.

A third lesson is the discovery of our secret treasures. Particularly when we face a difficult decision, explosions of fear, anger, or anxiety can erupt in us far out proportion to the issue. This is because we are secretly guarding something very precious, and its life is being threatened by our deliberation. With some reflection we may uncover what we love so much and whether that love is from God.

Adapted by Tad Dunne

Humility

The Rule of Benedict, one of the oldest documents in the Western world to deal with humility, confronts a patriarchal society with humility as the major countercultural witness of the age. It endures in the history of spirituality to this day as an antidote to a disorder of the human heart. The context in which the rule was written may be its strongest lesson. Benedict was writing a rule of life for men, not for women, in a world given to male hierarchy and independence. By developing this new form of religious life around obedience, community and humility, Benedict called Roman men, who had been formed in a totally patriarchal society, a society that institutionalized power, hierarchy and dominance, to a clearly feminist spirituality. Humility, this ancient spirituality insisted, requires the ability to learn from others, to be part of the group, and to understand and accept personal limitations. ...

Humility, according to the Rules of Benedict, rests on 12 principles or degrees of development that cover the gamut of human existence and confront us relentlessly with the notion that human limitation is the gift that relates us to God, to the world, to the self and to others. Pride drives a wedge between us and reality; humility its glue.

Humility, the principles imply, has something to do with our relationship to God, our openness to people, our expectations in life, and our attitudes toward others. The program is deceptively simple. In actuality, it would turn both spirituality and life upside down.

Humility, the Rule of Benedict teaches, requires first and foremost what the ancients called the *memoria dei*, the "awareness of God," at all times, in all places, at the center of all things. It is so easy in a patriarchal society to make ourselves gods of the tiny kingdoms we occupy. We climb very small ladders and then assume that we have risen to the heights of our humanity. The realization that God is God and that we are not requires serious reflection. Striving for all the tops of all the pyramids in the world will not change the fact that no person ever reaches the top of anything and that the real acme of creation lies deep within the soul and waits for us to bow before it in awareness and in praise. Those whose lives are lived without listening to their hearts, those who make themselves, their work, their status, their money their god, never find the God of the universe, who waits quietly within for us to exhaust our compulsive race to nowhere. Unlike everything else in a patriarchal world, God, according to the Rule of Benedict, is not a goal to be reached; God is a presence to be recognized. Men need the first degree of humility to curb the delusions of grandeur inherent for them in the system; women need it to realize that the presence of God is as strong in them as it is in any man. Real humility, based on the will of God for creation, leads women to reject oppression, not to accept it. The willingness to be defined by others for their own convenience, the indifference to the invisibility that comes from exclusion from the boardrooms, the synods, the decision-making centers, even from the pronouns of the language, and the lack of a sense of responsibility for women who are in the situations with no one to help them, no one to speak for them, no one to care become postures inconsistent with the first degree of humility.

Becoming aware of the presence of God within us, then, ranks clearly as the first characteristic of humility. The second degree of humility, that we love not our own will, that we trust that God's will for me is what is best for me, is its corollary. These are impelling words. They raise the question of how it can be argued that the God who made women and men as two sexes of the same creature wills development for men and diminishment for women. Humility reads the will of God in creation and learns from it. God has a will for the welfare of all creation. We have no right to wrench it. When we can accept the obvious will of God for us, we learn to accept life and live it to the hilt. God's will for the universe, rather than my will for the universe, becomes a constructive way of thinking. The need for one group of people to subvert another group of people for its pleasure, its profit, its comfort, its convenience becomes clear for the obscenity it is. The need to consider myself the standard, the gauge of life, diminishes. The rationale for patriarchy disappears.

... In this degree of humility, men are called to recognize that they are not the norm of humanity. Women are called to live up to the potential that is in them. The second degree of humility teaches a patriarchal world that none of us, male or female, is either the last word or the only word. Each of us provides only one word of the human dialogue with life. For the rest of it, we must learn to listen -- men to women, women to men, and all of us to the word of God that's in us. There is so much glory to be missed in the world if we miss the will of God in it either for ourselves or for others.

Benedict's stages of humility call us to live in accordance with what is God's will, not simply to submit passively to someone else's will for us. At the same time, in the third degree of humility, to submit to authority, Benedict tells the seeker in the spiritual life that omnipotence is a quality that must be consciously forsworn. By recognizing that there are people in my life who have a claim on my behavior -- wives on husbands, authority figures on personnel, parents on children, officials on citizens -- we find a therapy for arrogance. There is no such thing as absolute authority, mine or anybody else's. There are only multiple authorities in different dimensions of life, to whom we owe a privileged hearing. To refuse to recognize someone else's right to help us construct our worlds is to live a very lonely life cut off from the wisdom and care that those around us are required to provide for us.

Beyond the insights of legitimate authority, however, there is a wisdom that comes from opening our minds and hearts to the world at large. Accepting the authority of those who have no official authority over us -- the middle-aged son who listens to his father, the professional expert who accepts the recommendations of the team, the experienced manager who accepts the expertise of the younger executive, the husband whose wife is his head as well as he is hers, the man who seeks direction and takes counsel and listens to advice and admits to error and weakness and uncertainty, the woman who learns to respect one man at a time rather than patriarchy for its own sake -- joins us to the human race. ... A man's sin against the third degree of humility is to assume that his independence gives him the right to be a woman's authority just because she is a woman. A woman's sin against the third degree of humility lies in accepting authority without seeking at the same time to shape it, to stretch its vision, to test its truth, and to hold it accountable for its consequences.

The fourth degree of humility, to endure direction and not grow weary even when the situation is difficult, requires growth in internal discipline. Running away from the hard moments in life solves nothing, the Rule implies. We need guides. To be our own light is to have dim direction. Men in a patriarchal society find themselves required to prove their value by proving their independence. But arrogant autonomy makes for devastating effects -- on marriages, on businesses, on the society itself. Life is too important an enterprise to be in the hands of any single person. There is simply too much to know for any one person to know it all. We need help, and seeking it is not a sign of weakness.

Relationships crumble under the strain of power struggles. In order to merit the right to hold power, it is imperative to give up struggling to assert it before we have the kind of internal strength it takes to qualify to use it. Violence will stop only when we learn to learn from others and to control ourselves in difficulty. Men are called by the fourth degree of humility not to use force as a substitute for patience. Women, the missing members of every institution, are called to be patient in the struggle for personhood but to refuse to bear the unbearable, as well. Patience with an ongoing process is one thing. Acceptance of abuse is another. To bear abuse, injustice and invisibility is not a virtue; it is the sin of passive compliance with evil.

There is, at the same time, the need to develop the ability to work things through. Always to compete for immediate preeminence, never to accept guidance, constantly to demand instant results, instant gratification, is the mark of a spiritual adolescent. Real spirituality lays up strength for the long haul. Patience and perseverance hone us for those moments in life when there will be nothing we can do but wait, when there is nowhere to go but here, when there is no way to impose my will on the world. Laying down personal power enables me to benefit from the power of others, to accept direction so that I can learn to function without it, to gain self-confidence, self-control and insight.

Men who are denied the right to defer to others become social bullies. Women who are expected always to defer to others rather than to learn to exercise power themselves become trapped in small worlds, half developed, only partially alive. A world where men rule unilaterally and women bear the results is a world out of kilter. And we do. And it is.

The fifth degree of humility, Benedict says, is to let someone know us, to confide in someone any sinful thought entering our hearts or any wrongs committed in secret. Striving always to appear to be something we are not leads the soul into a morass of emptiness and dissatisfaction. The masks weigh heavy on our hearts. What we seem to be we are not; what we are we do not want to be. We live our lives behind darkened windows. We pretend. We embellish circumstances and stretch details. We hide and parley and play with facts. We lose sight of ourselves. If there is no one with whom we are completely truthful in life, we are not truthful at all.

Self-revelation is the beginning of growth. Self-knowledge corrects. Once we open our hearts to another, the charade ends.

We are saved from the burden of having to be perfect anymore. We get the opportunity to be compassionate with others. ... It is humility, not pride, that makes us fearless. Once we ourselves have admitted who we are in the secret places of our hearts, who is it that can diminish us? Self-righteousness dies, and simplicity and equality rise to take its place. For men, the call of the fifth degree of humility is to honesty with themselves and with others. Bragging can stop; self-sufficiency can stop; entitlement can stop. Men can learn to accept the human condition -- and admit it. They can simply put the universe down and relax. For women, the fifth degree of humility is also a call to honesty. They can admit their gifts and come to see them as a piece of God's will for them; they can stop waiting to be called on and begin to volunteer the answers they feel inside of them. They can take responsibility for the resentment, the anger, the anger they feel at being overlooked, underrated and outtalked. They can turn the sin of false humility into honest participation.

The sixth degree of humility, the Rule of Benedict teaches, is to be content with the lowest and most menial of treatment. Hoarding things in order to create a public image smothers life before it ever starts. When enough is never enough, happiness is always just out of reach, and unrest is pervasive. We set out to buy status by buying things. "I have; therefore, I am" seeps into the psyche and shapes the soul into nothing but a plastic profile of myself. It is an empty existence. Humility, the grace not to put on airs, restrains us from substituting things for character.

Part 2

The truth is that whatever the patriarchal delusion, there is no such thing as entitlement -- for anyone for any reason. We must learn to grasp life lightly, to look for its essentials rather than its baubles, to loose ourselves of things that clutter the soul and tie down the spirit. If we can possibly learn to be contented with less, we can never be frustrated again, never insulted again, never ashamed of our cars or furniture or clothing again. Freedom calls. Humility disentangles us from the burden of the unnecessary. Men are called to accept the mundane circumstances that make life go round -- the shopping, the washing, the care of small children -- and take personal responsibility for them. Women are called by this degree of humility to insist on spending less time on the window-dressing of life and more time on becoming everything God calls them to be in a culture that calls them to less.

Humility frees us to make no exaggerated demands on the universe, to live with more soul and less greed. A patriarchal world touched by humility could learn to live with less oil, less money and fewer toys. Wars for gadgets could be over forever.

The seventh step of humility, according to the Rule of Benedict, tests Western patriarchy to the marrow. It is the step most often misread in the name of psychological theory, most totally rejected in the name of modern social science. It is the degree that cuts to the bone. The seventh degree of humility, the ancient text asserts, is that we not only say but really believe that we are inferior to all and of less value. The patriarchal mindset rises in revolt. The woman's mind recoils from the message she has sought all her life to throw off. And rightly so. Yet, unless we face our basest selves, unless we see that we, too, are created from the same clay as the rest of the world, we run the risk of thinking just the opposite. ? We, too, all of us, are human, fully human, not members of a one-person super-race, not immune to anything. No, the real truth is that we, too, are capable of the worst in the human condition. Self-acceptance is not the right to say to the world, "Too bad. That's the way I am." Self-acceptance is the obligation to say to the world, "Forgive me, friend. There is so much more than I can be." Both women and men are called by the seventh degree of humility to realize within themselves the grace of glory that comes with the grace of recognizing one's own need. Men need to recognize their needs. Women need to bring their needs for personhood, presence and power to light so that the world has access to all of its resources, unblocked by groundless invisibility and sinful deference.

The seventh degree of humility ties us to the human enterprise, links us to the rest of the human race, requires us to think in terms of circles rather than pyramids.

The eighth degree of humility is that we do only those things "endorsed by the community." We are invited, in other words, to learn from experience, to value wisdom figures, to follow in the wake of those who have tried life and found it navigable. We can stop reinventing the wheel. We can cease to act as if the world depends on us. We can stop calling attention to ourselves and simply join the stream of humanity at its best. We are immensely weak, the seventh degree of humility reminds us, none of us, male or female, beyond the pale of the human condition, and so, the eighth degree of humility instructs us, we need models; we need support; we need teachers. The patina of patriarchal independence disappears. We are called to see the glory of God in the other and to learn from it. Gone is the great-man theory of history. History is not one man anywhere. History is history. It is the story of all of us, none of us to be forgotten.

... People who use a group for their own purposes destroy it. People who forget the wisdom of the group in favor of their own whims sacrifice the group to a private god. Self-worship is the beginning of cruelty to others. If I am superior, I can do what I will to others. Women in a patriarchal society have known the truth of that for centuries. Only a consciousness of brokenness opens us to what is good in others. It is my unrehabilitated self that is tender, that is kind. When I see my own limitations, when I see the goodness in others, when humility comes, violence ends.

According to the time-tested wisdom of the spirituality of humility, consciousness of God, openness to direction, self-knowledge, and a sense of otherness shape the soul of a humble person. But attitudes are not enough to make for a world of equals. Behaviors matter. Behaviors signal what we think about ourselves -- and what we think about others. Benedict singles out four of them in particular.

The ninth degree of humility, this wise psychologist argued, is that we "control our tongues." The blustering has to stop. The commands have to stop. The criticizing has to stop.

None of us is anybody's god. None of us is anybody's patriarch. Other do not exist at our fiat, and we cannot extinguish them, verbally or otherwise. What we need is reflection. Talk without thought is useless. What we may need most is interior quiet in a culture of boom boxes, agitation and perpetual motion. We need space to think in a culture bombarded by sound, most of it vacuous, much of it extraneous, a great deal of it self-centered. We have a culture forever geared to mending the way we talk when it may be silence that is lacking.

Silence is not an empty thing. Silence is full of what we need to learn about ourselves. The angels with which we each must wrestle reside in the silence within. ... The adversaries within us with whom we have yet to contend, the strengths within us which we have yet to release are all exposed by silence. Without silence, we risk the possibility that everything else we do will be nothing but sound and fury. Humility lies in discovering what we really think, what we really fear, what we're really worried about, what we really want to do in life. The questions are within us; so are the answers.

Silence also makes us accessible to others. When I am able to resist announcing myself, I can listen to others. I can hear what they're trying to say to me. I can listen to them for their own sakes. ... The relationship of silence to humility and of humility to equality is plain for all to see: The first step in becoming a humble member of the human race, in tempering the arrogance that patriarchy breeds, lies in silence. To be true to the ninth degree of humility in a patriarchal world, men must learn to listen; women must learn to speak the silence that has been imposed on them for centuries, without apologies, without timidity, without fail.

The 10th and 11th steps of humility, then, follow naturally. The 10th step of humility is that we "are not given to ready laughter," the 11th, that we "speak gently and without laughter, seriously and with becoming modesty." When we know ourselves, cruel laughter aimed at others ends. The quality of our laughter is a measure of our sanctity. It tells us how we feel about others. It tells them, too. More than that, laughter tells us what we think about ourselves, whom we think we're free to judge, who we think we are. Why we laugh, the way we laugh, and the things at which we laugh say more about ourselves than they do about whatever it may be that provokes it. A sneer and a smile are not the same thing. A document that was clearly written for men in a barbarian age rises above the cultural level of that age and brooks no misunderstanding of the relationship of laughter to humility. The bawdry and the brutal are not humor. There is no boys-will-be-boys philosophy here, no tolerance of locker-room language, no assumption that girlie jokes are innocent humor, are acceptable commentary. The 10th and 11th degrees of humility order us to take life, all its facets, all its peoples, seriously. The 10th and 11th degrees of humility bring patriarchy with all its derisiveness, all its ridicule, to its knees. Humor and laughter are not necessarily the same thing. Humor enables us to see life from a fresh perspective. It gives strength, insight and sight. Benedict does not forbid humor. Benedict forbids the garrulous, the thoughtless. Benedicts insists that we take our humor as thoughtfully as we take our life so that the lives of others are not impeached by it.

Finally, the 12th degree of humility describes the human being with the humble heart. The 12th degree of humility, the Rule says, is that we "manifest humility in our bearing no less than in our hearts." Bearing comes from the soul. Presence itself is a message. Communication theorists tell us, in fact, that over 80 percent of every message is communicated nonverbally. What I believe in my heart will show in my body. It's in the strutting, the agitation, the seething, the disdain that corrupting, damaging, demoralizing pride shows. It's the "Daddy says" look on a husband's face; it's "the Terminator wants" look on the bully's face; it's the 'because I said so' look on the face of the boss who intends to intimidate, who expects to be obeyed, who humiliates and deprecates and exploits the other that signal pride where humility should be. It's also the wilting, the withdrawal, the agitated hovering in a woman that belie a false, a damaged and deficient sense of humility.

Pride is patriarchy played out in a democratic world to remind its underlings who's really in charge. Humility brings us, instead, to the presence of God, the wisdom of others, the authenticity of the self, and the esteem of the other that make life, the world, a good and gracious space. It is the preventative of bitter divorces, abuse in the home, disparagement in the workplace, ethnic wars, domineering relationships, social derision, classism, sexism, and global exploitation.

Benedict of Nursia was a man with a feminist soul in the midst of the most macho of cultures. He brings us all, women and men alike, to realize that in the softer side of human nature, in the cultivation of the mystical, nurturing and poetic side of life, lies the key to equality, to respect, to spiritual maturity, and, perhaps, even to the preservation of the planet.

Benedictine Sr. Joan Chittister is a frequent NCR contributor, author, international lecturer and the executive director of Benetvision [2]. Excerpt from Heart of Flesh: A Feminist Spirituality for Women and Men [1] (Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1998). Reprinted by permission of the publisher; all rights reserved.

Source URL (retrieved on 01/30/2014 - 11:10): <http://ncronline.org/news/women-religious/turning-life-upside-down>

Links: <http://store.benetvision.org/heofflfespfo.html> <http://benetvision.org/>

THE MAJOR IMPERATIVES WITHIN MATURE DISCIPLESHIP Ron Rolheiser

In his autobiography, Morris West suggests that at a certain age our lives simplify and we need have only three phrases left in our spiritual vocabulary: Thank you! Thank you! Thank you! He is right, if we understand fully what is implied in living out gratitude. Gratitude is the ultimate virtue, undergirding everything else, even love. It is synonymous with holiness. Gratitude not only defines sanctity, it also defines maturity. We are mature to the degree that we are grateful. But what brings us there? What makes for a deeper human maturity? I would like to suggest ten major demands that reside inside both human and Christian maturity:

1. Be willing to carry more and more of life's complexities with empathy: Few things in life, including our own hearts and motives, are black or white, either-or, simply good or simply bad. Maturity invites us to see, understand, and accept this complexity with empathy so that, like Jesus, we cry tears of understanding over our own troubled cities and our own complex hearts.
2. Transform jealousy, anger, bitterness, and hatred rather than give them back in kind: Any pain or tension that we do not transform we will retransmit. In the face of jealousy, anger, bitterness, and hatred we must be like water purifiers, holding the poisons and toxins inside of us and giving back just the pure water, rather than being like electrical cords that simply pass on the energy that flows through them.
3. Let suffering soften rather than harden our souls: Suffering and humiliation find us all, in full measure, but how we respond to them, with forgiveness or bitterness, will determine the level of our maturity and the color of our person. This is perhaps our ultimate moral test: Will my humiliations soften or harden my soul?
4. Forgive: In the end there is only one condition for entering heaven (and living inside human community), namely, forgiveness. Perhaps the greatest struggle we have in the second-half of our lives is to forgive: forgive those who have hurt us, forgive ourselves for our own shortcomings, and forgive God for seemingly hanging us out unfairly to dry in this world. The greatest moral imperative of all is not to die with a bitter, unforgiving heart.
5. Live in gratitude: To be a saint is to be fueled by gratitude, nothing more and nothing less. Let no one deceive you with the notion that a passion for truth, for church, or even for God can trump or bracket the non-negotiable imperative to be gracious always. Holiness is gratitude. Outside of gratitude we find ourselves doing many of the right things for the wrong reasons.
6. Bless more and curse less: We are mature when we define ourselves by what we are for rather than by what we are against and especially when, like Jesus, we are looking out at others and seeing them as blessed

("Blessed are you!") rather than as cursed ("Who do you think you are!"). The capacity to praise more than to criticize defines maturity.

7. Live in an ever-greater transparency and honesty: We are as sick as our sickest secret, but we are also as healthy as we are honest. We need, as Martin Luther once put it, "to sin bravely and honestly". Maturity does not mean that we are perfect or faultless, but that we are honest.

8. Pray both affectively and liturgically: The fuel we need to resource ourselves for gratitude and forgiveness does not lie in the strength of our own willpower, but in grace and community. We access that through prayer. We are mature to the degree that we open our own helplessness and invite in God's strength and to the degree that we pray with others that the whole world will do the same thing.

9. Become ever-wider in your embrace: We grow in maturity to the degree that we define family (Who is my brother or sister?) in way that is ever-more ecumenical, interfaith, post-ideological, and non-discriminatory. We are mature only when we are compassionate as God is compassionate, namely, when our sun too shines those we like and those we do not. There comes a time when it is time to turn in our cherished moral placards for a basin and a towel.

10. Stand where you stand and let God protect you: In the end, we are all vulnerable, contingent, and helpless both to protect our loved ones and ourselves. We cannot guarantee life, safety, salvation, or forgiveness for ourselves or for those we love. Maturity depends upon accepting this with trust rather than anxiety. We can only do our best, whatever our place in life, wherever we stand, whatever our limits, whatever our shortcoming, and trust that this is enough, that if we die at our post, honest, doing our duty, God will do the rest.

God is a prodigiously-loving, fully-understanding, completely-empathic parent. We are mature and free of false anxiety to the degree that we grasp that and trust that truth.

ROBERT MOORE ON HUMAN ENERGY by RON ROLHEISER, OMI

Few thinkers have influenced me as profoundly as Robert L. Moore. Who is he? He's a scholar who has spent almost 50 years studying human energy from the perspective of psychology, anthropology, and spirituality. Few scholars are his equal in linking human energy, even when it is raw and grandiose, to the image and likeness of God inside of us. He merits an audience.

Recently, I had the privilege of attending an Institute at which he keynoted. I share with you a couple of his insights:

Our growing anxiety and our need to build "an arc" so as not drown in it:

Our lives today are awash with anxiety and this is wreaking psychological and spiritual havoc everywhere. We are being assailed by "unregulated anxiety" and, as this anxiety is rising, our capacity to handle it is simultaneously going down. This is causing, in his words, a "pan-tribal regression", that is, we are seeing most everywhere groups huddle together in paranoia and self-protection. And what are the consequences of this?

Studies have shown that when we feel threatened our capacity to listen to each other begins to shut down, even biologically. In brief, when we feel anxiety our brains instinctually move towards a more primitive place, namely, towards the reptile, more cold-blooded, part of us. This is further compounded by the fact that we have less cultural and spiritual vessels to help contain our anxiety. Many of our former cultural and spiritual rituals to deal with anxiety have either deteriorated or died. Hence, it is no surprise to see so much paranoia and violence in our world today. We are drowning in anxiety and lack the psychological and spiritual resources to deal with that. This, for Moore, can be called "Noah's flood" in our time, the world is drowning in anxiety and we need to learn to build a "spiritual arc" (an "inner psychic temple") in order to not drown and, like Noah, help preserve life on this planet.

But, Moore warns, this won't be easy. We are still very much in a state of denial and, ironically, at one level that denial is actually healthily protecting us. As Moore puts it, if we punch through our denial and other defense mechanisms without first building an inner psychic temple, we can fall into psychosis because we can be overwhelmed by our archetypal energies. Our defense mechanisms are needed, at least for a while, to help safeguard our sanity. Fundamentalism is one of those safeguards: People are turning to rigid ways in order to try to remain sane.

On our fear of God, our attempts to block off God from our lives, and our naive religion:

We have many defense mechanisms against the “numinous”, but that is understandable. When we are standing before God and trying to access that energy it is somewhat akin to a person standing before an electrical wire carrying 200,000 volts and trying to plug in a coffee maker. That’s an image for our struggle to try to access and contain Godly energy. We are constantly pressured by this energy, from within and without, and need, inside of us, to construct a psychological chalice, a holy grail, an inner temple, to consciously hold our God energies. This psychological chalice is too the cup of the Eucharist.

Beyond that, we must also ask the question: Why is there such a resistance in us regarding being aware of the great presence? Why our habitual refusal of the awareness of God? Why do we prefer to walk alone, without God? For Moore, this is really a key part of the mystery of iniquity: We habitually shut out a gracious God, preferring darkness to light.

On the difference between science and theology:

The difference between science and theology is the difference between a jet-engine and a rocket- engine. A jet engine needs oxygen and can only fly to a certain height; it has to remain inside our atmosphere. A rocket engine is powered in such a way that it can fly outside of the atmosphere.

On how we are to build an inner psychic temple:

We all have amazing potential, but are forever shooting low. It is possible to learn to walk in the way of beauty, to live elegantly because we are already sitting in radiance. There is a radical compassion already inside of us, but we must “awake” to it. We are already living in a huge love. The road home must already be home. And so we need to be really suspicious whenever we feel alone, because we are never alone. When we are feeling lonely we are being tricked.

What are some steps towards living the way of beauty and compassion? In brief:

Cut through your denial, recognize what you lack. Eliminate “the waffle” from your life, learn to hold the tension, balance opposites, and consciously (through prayer) try to abide in the Great Presence. Employ a “holy fierceness” in doing that.

Few spiritual writers exhibit Moore’s combination of depth and balance. He merits an audience.

“The Groove ”

Dennis McGuire, PhD.

One of the most interesting and consistent findings from the Adult Down Syndrome Center is the discovery that people with DS need sameness, repetition and order in their lives. We call this tendency the “groove” because thoughts and actions of people tend to follow fairly well worn paths, or grooves.

TYPES OF GROOVES

One of the most common grooves is a set pattern or routine in one's day to day activities. Many will often have set methodical and meticulous morning routines for dressing and grooming, daily work routines, as well as evening routines for relaxing and preparing for bed. We have also found that many individuals are meticulous in the care of their rooms and possessions. Much time and effort is spent in making things “just so”. Beds are often made and rooms are neat and tidy. Closets and drawers are quite often in perfect order. In addition, people often have a set place for furniture and other personal items in their rooms or living spaces. Parents and caregivers have found that if any of these items are moved or disturbed by others they will be returned to the original location in short order.

A wide array of other grooves also exists. The most common centers on personal preferences for such things as music, sports teams, or celebrities. Grooves may also include such personal issues as a favorite relative or a love interest. Also common are grooves which have independence issues as a theme. These are often expressed as “I want to do it (a particular activity) by myself and in my own way”. Some people may also develop self-absorbing grooves around emotionally charged experiences. These may involve positive experiences, such as an award, or negative experiences, such as the loss of a loved one.

ADVANTAGES OF GROOVES

There are numerous advantages to grooves. They give an important sense of order and structure to peoples' lives. They also help persons, who process things more slowly in a fast moving world, have some control over their lives. Routines help to organize and manage daily living tasks which increase independence. Once an activity is learned and becomes part of a daily routine, there is rarely a need for “prompting” or supervision from others.

The ability to follow routines at set times each day can be of great benefit. For example, independence is greatly enhanced when a person is able to get up and off to work on his own. Independence and performance may also be enhanced in the work environment. Employers are often impressed with an employee's reliability in completing routine work tasks and in adhering closely to work time schedules.

Grooves may also offer a refuge from the stresses and strains of daily life. This may be especially important to persons with DS because communicating with others may be

tiring and frustrating due to expressive language limitations. In dealing with daily stresses, people will often repeat a specific, enjoyable activity in a quiet or private space. In the worksite, many people will also schedule time during their daily routine, or when needed, to be alone. The most common and often only place for privacy in the work site is the washroom.

Grooves involving the conscientious care of one's appearance, room and personal items can be of great benefit. Such care of one's appearance conveys an image of pride, self-respect and dignity, which will often help develop a good self image. Meticulous care of one's room and possessions may also increase pride and self respect. As an added benefit, family members and caregivers in other settings who share living spaces often appreciate this kind of groove.

Finally, and most importantly, the groove is a powerful means of expression and communication. This is especially true for people with DS, who have limited ability to express themselves verbally. Each groove is a clear and unambiguous statement of a personal choice or preference. For example, daily grooves and routines express how people choose to organize and manage such things as the care of their own grooming, appearance and personal items, their participation in social, recreational, and work activities, as well as personal preferences in music, hobbies and artistic endeavors. Each person's choices will in turn help to shape and define their own unique style and personality.

DISADVANTAGES AND MINOR PROBLEMS

Although there are many benefits and advantages, there are also some disadvantages to grooves that sometimes cause problems. Some of the problems need not be serious if handled appropriately by caregivers. For example a person may be interested in a particular issue, such as a favorite sports team, which they retell over and over to family and friends. While this may be a minor irritant to caregivers, it is not necessarily a problem that interferes with important spheres of living. Additionally there are grooves that may be adaptive if done at the appropriate time or place. For example, a groove for cleaning the bathroom may be greatly appreciated by family members unless it is done in the morning when everyone in the family needs to prepare for work. Similarly, a restaurant manager may be pleased with clean washrooms unless patrons have to wait for long periods while a meticulous job is done.

At the Adult Down Syndrome Center we have also found that a person's need for order or sameness may ironically clash with their need for meticulousness and cleanliness. This is because some people prefer to wear the same shirt or comfortable pair of jeans, over and over, rather than a stiff new pair. Similarly, others may fold and put away dirty clothes rather than have them sit in a rumpled pile in the laundry basket.

MORE SERIOUS PROBLEMS

On the other hand, a groove may become a maladaptive rut when it interferes with functioning in the important spheres of living. There are a number of ways in which this may happen. Some persons may become inflexible about the completion of grooves and routines that may interfere with their participation in other important life activities. For example, one may rigidly adhere to an evening room cleaning and organizing groove rather than choose an opportunity for social or recreational activities which may be beneficial to their health and well being. Some may also make poor decisions, which then become “bad habits”. For instance, we have seen a number of people who have serious problems with sleep deprivation. This may happen if one gets in the habit of staying up late to watch movies or TV, even though he or she must get up early for work or school. Others may acquire unhealthy food habits, such as the intake of too much junk food or soda. Some may get stuck on a particular issue such as a love interest, a favorite celebrity, or the loss of a close relative. Others may get stuck on certain behaviors, which are either part of a regular routine, such as housekeeping tasks, or activities outside one's normal routine, such as flushing toilets or turning lights on and off.

Additionally, the benefits of a groove, derived from sameness, order, and repetition, may become a serious disadvantage in the face of change. For example, gains to one's independence from following a set routine at a set time may be lost if the person is not able to adjust to inevitable changes that occur in daily life. For instance, some may have difficulty changing a morning routine to prepare for an earlier arrival of the bus to school or work. In the workplace people may have trouble adapting to changes in the schedule or in doing activities which are not part of their regular routine.

Apart from daily changes, grooves may also create serious problems for people when they are confronted with major life changes or events, such as transition from school, a move into a residential facility, or the loss of a parent or primary caregiver. These changes often interrupt the bedrock of established grooves and routines which people use to manage their daily lives. In response to these changes some will persist in following old routines or they may get stuck on a particular issue or behavior.

Serious problems may also result if caregivers misinterpret a person's need to complete routines or grooves as oppositional behavior. For example, many persons with Down syndrome try to finish a routine before starting a newly assigned task. Unfortunately, if the careprovider believes the motivation for delaying the new task is to resist authority, then an escalating conflict may ensue. Pressure by the careprovider may cause further entrenchment by the individual with Down syndrome.

A similar problem may occur if the rules in a residential facility interfere with the completion of grooves. For example, in an attempt to be fair, many group home policies specify that residents can only do a particular housekeeping task for one week. As you might expect, some would much prefer to do the same task for extended periods rather than to change every week. Predictably, conflicts occur when the staff tries to enforce this rule. We have encountered these types of problems most often in residential settings

with careproviders who have had little experience with persons with DS. We have also found similar problems in workshop settings. We believe this misinterpretation of the groove is one of the reasons people with DS have a reputation for being “stubborn”.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO CAREGIVERS

When faced with a person seemingly stuck in a groove, we recommend that caregivers first identify and minimize any possible stressors or precipitants to the problem. In some cases, reducing stress may be sufficient to free up someone that is stuck. In other cases action by caregivers may still be necessary after stress is reduced.

When action is needed, caregivers should be careful with how they approach the person who is apparently stuck. Attempts to directly force the person having difficulty with a groove will usually worsen the problem. Caregivers who are most successful at helping in these circumstances, understand the need and benefits of grooves. Instead of a direct and forceful approach, they will slowly and gently help the person resolve the issue in a positive way. This approach will encourage new steps which will become the basis of a new, more productive groove.

Caregivers also need to be mindful that problems with grooves may masquerade as behavior problems. This may occur if a groove is misinterpreted as oppositional behavior. We have found that once caregivers understand and accept the fact that grooves can be helpful, problems are more easily resolved. The tension and hostility derived from misinterpretation of a groove and an ensuing power struggle will often be replaced by a more conciliatory and cooperative interaction between caregiver and the person with DS.

Parents and other careproviders who seek professional help for a person dealing with a stuck groove need to choose a professional who has experience in working with persons with DS. Professionals may be experts about certain things but parents have a lifetime of experience and are experts on their son or daughter. In our experience parents' instincts are usually accurate and they understand the grooves that their family member has developed. This is also true for other caregivers that have had a long relationship with the individual. Be sure that the professional listens carefully and looks at all areas of the person's life (health, significant changes in social, school or work environments or other stressors) for possible causes of the problem. Be sure that the professional does his or her homework before making a diagnosis.

Finally, there are a number of preventive measures which may reduce the chance of problems. One of the best ways to learn to deal flexibly with changes is to have persons with DS begin early in life to gain mastery over small day to day changes and challenges. The earlier and more consistently these opportunities are presented, the more likely people will be able to adapt to life changes when they occur. In this way, individuals develop a comfortable pattern or groove for dealing with change. Another important preventive measure is for parents and other caregivers to attend school or workplace staffings to ensure that others have a clear understanding of the nature and benefits of grooves.

L'ARCHE SEATTLE MEMBERSHIP CODE OF CONDUCT

(Principles and Foundation of our Community Life.)

Purpose: To establish a set of values and expectations which safeguard the mission of the L'Arche Noah Sealth Community and supports membership.

Preamble: L'Arche Noah Sealth is a community of persons with a developmental disability, assistants, staff, associate members, board members and volunteers. All share a mutual responsibility and the active concern for the good of all, in a common pursuit of growing in the spirit of loving and serving one another well. This mutual responsibility includes regard for the safety, security, health and well-being of others. It also includes respect and care for what we share in common and hold in trust for the mission of the organization: tangible goods like the vehicles, physical facilities of the homes and workshop and intangible goods like traditions of mutual respect and civil behavior. Finally, inspired by our Charter, it includes fostering an atmosphere of openness in which growth may occur, an atmosphere of freedom and safety, yet also an environment characterized by the values of respect, integrity, kindness and cooperation which are necessary for good relationships among us.

Values and Expectations:

1. Respect for the Dignity of the Person

Respect and reverence for each person are fundamental values of L'Arche Noah Sealth. It is particularly necessary that this respect encompass diversity and differences of opinion. The dignity of the individual may not be violated in any way, and the community views with utmost seriousness offenses against the person. Individuals deserve to be free from the threat, or actuality, of physical violence, verbal abuse or slander.

2. Personal Integrity and openness to personal growth.

The communal experience offered by L'Arche Noah Sealth involves an education in values and a commitment to personal growth. Especially appropriate in our community are values of truthfulness, honesty, integrity and personal honor. Members living in community commit to personal accompaniment to foster their understanding and growth.

3. The Presumption of Goodwill

We presume that all members of our community want to see the community thrive. The intense commitment required of members precludes the likelihood of casual involvement or intentional sabotage. Therefore, when someone appears to be acting in a counterproductive manner, we must believe that they are doing the best they can under the circumstances and are not intentionally trying to hurt other people, or the community. We believe that if we all can remember this, that we will be able to address difficult situations in a compassionate yet forthright manner.

4. The Value of Divergent Opinions

Experience shows us that differing opinion is an ongoing part of community life. We are a group of attentive, involved and committed people. We give a lot and we care deeply about what happens in and to the community. While we share a commitment to one

another and to the mission and philosophy of the community, we also differ in many other ways. We accept that when a high level of caring combines with divergent opinions that disagreement occurs and we strive to use this to our advantage. We believe that by exploring disagreements that we end up considering a wider range of options, continually rejuvenate the culture of our community and grow closer as a community.

Those embracing membership in L'Arche Noah Sealth,

- Art. 1. Dedicates himself/herself to the well being and dignity of the human being, and to the common good. He/she always acts with respect for the fundamental rights of all people. He/she does not impose his/her own moral values.
- Art. 2. Respects the people he/she comes into contact with, without distinction of disability, age, sex, race, religion, nationality, ideology or societal status.
- Art. 3. Acts freely and pursues the commitments and the tasks he/she has undertaken or been assigned.
- Art. 4. Operates when and where he/she is most needed, doing what is required and not necessarily what is most gratifying.
- Art. 5. Cooperates with other members / volunteers and takes a full part in the activities of L'Arche Noah Sealth. He/she attends and participates in appropriate meetings / gatherings in order to sustain or rejuvenate his/her motivation and grows in a communal spirit of mutual cooperation and reciprocity.
- Art. 6. Is bound to observe professional confidentiality with all information given to him/her and on what he / she finds out in the course of his/her activity.
- Art. 7. Honors the policies and the regulations of L'Arche Noah Sealth.
- Art. 8. He/she undertakes to attract other people to the Community to help support the continuation of the mission.
- Art. 9. Fosters his /her commitment, recognizing the necessity for annual formations (retreats) and ongoing education carried out within or outside the organization.

As a member of the L'Arche Noah Sealth Community, I understand and agree to abide by these values, expectations and articles:

Signature	Role	Date
-----------	------	------

For Board Members, Associate Members and Volunteers, the following are added:

Art. 10. Board Members, Associate Members and Volunteers avoid all semblance of conflict of interest. _____(Initials)

Art. 11. Board Members, Associate Members and Volunteers seek no material compensation from his/her activity. He/she does not accept presents or favors unless of nominal value. _____(Initials)

The Fingerspelled Alphabet

Lifepoint.com



Copyright Lifepoint.com. The Gallaudet font is copyright (c) 1991 by David Rakowski. All Rights Reserved. Used with permission.

For a much higher resolution of the above file, visit "[wallpaper.2](#)."

For a copy of the above chart as a Microsoft Word document:
[Fingerspelling Chart \(.doc format\)](#)

