

Ecumenical Order of Charity

Community Newsletter

Online Edition – September 2002

Letter from the Editor

Dear Brother, Sisters, and Associates:

On September 2, Canada and the United States celebrate **Labor Day**, a national holiday in honor of working people. We honor the labor movement and those workers who fought for better treatment by employers through the formation of labor unions - organizations of workers formed to promote collective bargaining with employers over wages, hours, fringe benefits, job security and working conditions. We owe the five-day, 40-hour workweek to those who went before us. We probably also ought to acknowledge the great papal social encyclicals, which gave impetus to the labor movement in this country and countries around the world.

Saturday, September 7, is **Rosh Hashanah**, the festival of the Jewish New Year; and Monday, September 16, is **Yom Kippur** (Day of Atonement), an annual day of fasting and prayer. The eight days in between these two celebrations are special days of penitence. So, for all of you recalcitrant sinners in the community, I will be hearing your personal confessions by phone. In order to keep our long distance charges to a minimum, just cut to the chase and tell me the really good stuff!

I doubt that you need to be reminded; but September 11, is the anniversary of the bombing of the World Trade Center in New York City. We have gotten a year older, but apparently not a year wiser? We are being controlled by the fear of terrorism and have adopted a siege mentality, which is causing us to bargain away our civil liberties at an unprecedented rate under the guise and illusion of security. **Rest in Peace** by Vietnamese Buddhist monk, Thich Nhat Hanh, which Sr. Patricia shared with us last October, reminds us once again of the ripple effects of this event.

Our community birthday this month belongs to Sr. Diana on September 22. Sister falls into the same category as so many of the rest of us – she is somewhere between 40 and death! Since she and Kath are working on the road again (sounds like

an old Willie Nelson song), you may send birthday greetings to her at the following address: Sr. Diana Phipps, OC; 12 Arthur Street - #12; East Providence, RI 02914.

Monday, September 23, we celebrate the [First Day of Autumn](#), that season where nature shows us the finest display of her beauty. [An Autumn Healing](#) acknowledges, however that sometimes the autumn we long for takes place in the depth of our hearts, instead of in our fields and meadows.

We have a new member coming into the fold! [Introducing Reverend Seal Zalinski](#) does just that. Read Seal's interesting background. Do we have women of substance in our community or what!

Our Vow of Simplicity of Life says in part, "Our life as religious is to be known by simplicity and service. We cast off useless burdens so that we might break down artificial barriers of privilege based on money, status, possessions, race, gender, and affectional orientation." Yet "affluenza" – a painful, contagious, socially transmitted condition of overload, debt, anxiety, and waste resulting from the dogged pursuit of more – continues to lay waste to nation! Take the [Affluenza Self-Diagnosis Test](#) to see if you have been stricken by this dreaded disease.

[What's on the Web](#) lists several interesting web sites dealing with gay spirituality: The White Crane Journal and Buddhist Resources for Gay Studies, along with information on the Mercy Corps. Shakespeare said it isn't strained you know. I mean mercy. Mercy isn't strained. Oh, never mind.

And finally, since we are the Ecumenical Order of CHARITY, we might also note that September 27 is the [Feast Day of St. Vincent de Paul](#). Vincent is the founder of the Congregation of the Missions (Vincentians) and co-founder of the Daughters of Charity. Born in France in 1580, the son of a peasant farmer, Vincent attended university and was ordained at 20. His first inclination was to earn a good income, but, appointed to the Queen's household, he came under the influence of Berulle (later Cardinal), and became a changed man. Vincent devoted the rest of his life to acts of charity. He organized groups to provide food and clothing for all who were poor: orphans, prostitutes, the sick, the disabled, the homeless. He established a congregation to preach and to train clergy. He collected large sums of money for his many projects and his influence spread from France across Europe. He died in 1660, was canonized in 1737, and is a patron saint of charitable societies. He is commemorated in our prayer book, **Venite**. The Sisters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul were once noted for their unique coronets, which looked like wings. They

were known as “God’s geese”. If you don’t know what I am talking about, watch Sally Field and the “Flying Nun” on Nickelodeon.

September is a busy month. And, now that you have received all of this information, it’s time to play THE WEAKEST LINK!

Love,

Br. John

Religion is something infinitely simple, ingenuous.
It is not knowledge,
Not content of feeling . . .
it is not duty and renunciation, it is not restriction:
but in the infinite extent of the universe,
it is a direction of the heart.
~ Rainer Maria Rilke

Rest in Peace

I am a World Trade Center tower,
standing tall in the clear blue sky,
feeling a violent blow in my side,
and I am a towering inferno of pain and suffering
imploding upon myself and collapsing to the ground.
May I rest in peace.

I am a terrified passenger on a hijacked airplane
not knowing where we are going or that I am riding
on fuel tanks that will be instruments of death, and
I am a worker arriving at my office not knowing
that in just a moment my future will be obliterated.
May I rest in peace.

I am a pigeon in the plaza between the two towers
eating crumbs from someone’s breakfast when fire
rains down on me from the skies, and I am a bed of
flowers admired daily by thousands of tourists now
buried under five stories of rubble.

May I rest in peace.

I am a firefighter sent into dark corridors of smoke and debris on a mission of mercy only to have it collapse around me, and I am a rescue worker risking my life to save lives who is very aware that I may not make it out alive.
May I rest in peace.

I am a survivor who has fled down the stairs and out of the building to safety who knows that nothing will ever be the same in my soul again, and I am a doctor in a hospital treating patients burned from head to toe who knows that these horrible images will remain in my mind forever.
May I rest in peace.

I am a tourist in Times Square looking up at the giant TV screens thinking I'm seeing a disaster movie as I watch the Twin Towers crash to the ground, and I am a New York woman sending e-mails to friends and family letting them know that I am safe.
May I rest in peace.

I am a piece of paper that was on someone's desk this morning and now I'm debris scattered by the wind across lower Manhattan, and I am a stone in the graveyard at Trinity Church covered with soot from the building that once stood proudly above me, death meeting death.
May I rest in peace.

I am a dog sniffing in the rubble for signs of life, doing my best to be of service, and I am a blood donor waiting in line to make a simple but very needed contribution for the victims.
May I rest in peace.

I am a resident in an apartment in downtown New York who has been forced to evacuate my home, and I am resident in an apartment uptown who has

walked 100 blocks home in a stream of other refugees.
May I know peace.

I am a family member who has just learned that
someone I love has died, and I am a pastor who
must comfort someone who has suffered a
heartbreaking loss.
May I know peace.

I am a loyal American who feels violated and vows to
stand behind any military action it takes to wipe
terrorists off the face of the earth, and I am a loyal
American who feels violated and worries that people
who look and sound like me are all going to be
blamed for this tragedy.
May I know peace.

I am a frightened city dweller who wonders whether
I'll ever feel safe in a skyscraper again, and I am a
pilot who wonders whether there will ever be a way
to make the skies truly safe.
May I know peace.

I am the owner of a small store with five employees
that has been put out of business by this tragedy,
and I am an executive in a multinational corporation
who is concerned about the cost of doing business
in a terrorized world.
May I know peace.

I am a visitor to New York City who purchases
postcards of the World Trade Center Twin Towers
that are no more, and I am a television report trying
to put into words the terrible things I have seen.
May I know peace.

I am a boy in New Jersey waiting for a father who will
never come home, and I am a boy in a faraway
country rejoicing in the streets of my village because
someone has hurt the hated Americans.

May I know peace.

I am a general talking into the microphones about how we must stop the terrorist cowards who have perpetrated this heinous crime, and I am an intelligence officer trying to discern how such a thing could have happened on American soil, and I am a city official trying to find ways to alleviate the suffering of my people.

May I know peace.

I am a terrorist whose hatred for American knows no limit and I am willing to die to prove it, and I am a terrorist sympathizer standing with all the enemies of American capitalism and imperialism, and I am a master strategist for a terrorist group who planned this abomination. My heart is not yet capable of openness, tolerance, and loving.

May I know peace.

I am a citizen of the world glued to my television set, fighting back my rage and despair at these horrible events, and I am a person of faith struggling to forgive the unforgivable, praying for the consolation of those who have lost love ones, calling upon the merciful beneficence of God/Yahweh/Allah/Spirit/Higher Power.

May I know peace.

So may it be; and so it is.

An Autumn Healing

Death, where is your victory? Death, where is your sting? The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin comes from the law. Thank God, then, for giving us the victory through Jesus Christ our Lord.

. . . keep firm and immovable, always abounding in energy for the Lord's work, being sure that in the Lord none of your labors is wasted.

(1Corinthians 15:54-58)

Sometimes the autumn we long for takes place in the depth of our hearts, instead of in our fields and meadows. The seasons of our hearts have a way of changing our colors just like the seasons that pass over our fields.

Such a season visited me one autumn and colored me with life-giving death. It was the color of emptiness, and I'll always remember how it felt. I have celebrated that color over and over again, each time with a new understanding. I praise God for the miracle of emptiness.

There has been no outside seasonal autumn
for me this year
no colored leaves
no falling leaves
no wind-flying, caught-up, dancing leaves
no dreams of sun-reflected colors
climbing through my window
reminding me of trees left bare and autumn poems everywhere.

But deep inside where I like to hide
autumn walked today
like a guest awaited autumn came
and did the things that autumn always does.
It left no gold that I can see
for I am bare
and almost empty
and autumn poems I can't find.

But I wouldn't trade this autumn
for a thousand of my favorite kind.

~ Sr. Macrina Wieiderkher, OSB, **Seasons of Your Heart**

Know, O my son that each thing in the universe
is a vessel full to the brim with wisdom and beauty.
~ Rumi

Introducing Reverend Seal Zalinski

Reverend Seal Zalinski is one of EOC's newest members. She is 53 years old, with three grown children and three grand daughters. Originally born and raised in New York and of Sicilian and Polish decent, Seal went from 12 years of Catholic school into the Franciscan Sisters of Mill Hill as a postulant. When she asked to be received as a novice, she was told by the Mother General that she was a nonconformist and too much of an individual to continue. She was sent to Norfolk, Virginia, to see the director of a music program. She met her ex-husband there, and they were married in October 1971. Seal is a graduate of Lynchburg College and has been a social worker for the past 18 years. She was recently ordained in the American Catholic Church in Roanoke, Virginia. Seal now lives in Ohio, close to her son.

Accept that you are a child of God.

Sing your own song with gusto.

Fulfill your mission as a copartner with the Holy One
in the unfolding drama of the universe.

~ Frederic and Mary Ann Brussat, **Spiritual Literacy**

Community, Key to the Salvation of the World (Part 3 of 4)

Dynamics of Community

Patterns of Group Behavior

- **Flight** – Groups flee from troublesome issues (task-avoidance). They act as if it is their purpose to avoid them. They also ignore emotional pain.
- **Fight** – here the group tries to solve each other's problems. The process becomes angry and chaotic.
- **Pairing** – Alliances between two or more members can interfere with the group's mature development. A romantic liaison or intense friendships can be disruptive.
- **Dependence** – This occurs when members depend on the leader to carry the load.

Size - Scott Peck has led groups of several hundred into community over a time span of five days. He finds that two days is the right time for a group of 30 to 60 people to form community.

Commitment – Participants must commit to continue and not to drop out.

Exercises

- **Silence** – This is the ultimate facilitator of emptiness.
- **Stories** – The best way is to learn through experience.
- **Dreams** – These can provide elegant stories with lessons for the group.
- These can provide elegant stories with lessons for the group.
- **Prayers, Songs, Liturgy** – Group prayer often has remarkable results. It should be optional, that is, only those interested should take part. Religious rituals may not be appropriate for interfaith groups, but some sort of ritual is necessary for a closing.
- **Confronting Reentry** – Changes often occur in short-time communities, which make it difficult for people to reenter their regular environment. Follow-up communities are often necessary for those who have experienced real community or behavior change. (Support groups for recovering alcoholics, parents who have lost a child.)

In a real sense all life is interrelated.
All [people] are caught in an inescapable network of
mutuality,
Tied in a single garment of destiny.
~ Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Affluenza Self-Diagnosis Test

Answer yes or no.

1. Do you get bored unless you have something to consume (goods, food, media)?

2. Do you try to impress your friends with what you own, or where you vacation?
3. Do you ever use shopping as “therapy”?
4. Do you sometimes go to the mall just to look around with nothing specific to buy?
5. Do you buy home improvement products in a large chain store rather than the neighborhood hardware store?
6. Have you ever gone on a vacation primarily to shop?
7. In general, do you think about things more than you thank about people?
8. When you pay utility bills, do you ignore the amount of resources consumed?
9. Given the choice between a slight pay raise and a shorter workweek, would you choose the money?
10. Do you personally fill more than one large trash bag in a single week?
11. Have you ever lied to a family member about the amount you spent for a product?
12. Do you frequently argue with family members about money?
13. Do you volunteer your time less than five hours a week to help other people?
14. Do you routinely compare the appearance of your lawn and/or home with others in your neighborhood?
15. Does each person in your house or apartment occupy more than 500 square feet of space?
16. Do you routinely gamble or buy lottery tickets?
17. Do you check your investments at least once a day?
18. Are any of your credit cards “maxed out”?
19. Do worries about debt cause you physical symptoms like headaches or indigestion?
20. Do you spend more time shopping every week than you do with your family?
21. Do you frequently think about changing jobs?
22. Have you had cosmetic surgery to improve your appearance?
23. Do your conversations often gravitate toward things you want to buy?
24. Are you sometimes ashamed about how much money you spend on fast food?
25. Do you sometimes weave back and forth in traffic to get somewhere faster?
26. Have you ever experienced road rage?
27. Do you feel like you’re always in a hurry?
28. Do you often throw away recyclable materials rather than take the time to recycle them?
29. Do you spend less than an hour a day outside?

30. Are you unable to identify more than three wildflowers that are native to your area?
31. Do you replace sports equipment before it's worn out to have the latest styles?
32. Does each member of your family have his/her own TV?
33. Is the price of a product more important to you than how well it was made?
34. Has one of your credit cards ever been rejected by a salesperson because you were over the limit?
35. Do you receive more than five mail-order catalogs a week?
36. Are you one of those consumers who almost never takes a reusable bag to the grocery store?
37. Do you ignore the miles per gallon of gasoline your car gets?
38. Did you choose the most recent car you bought partly because it enhanced your self-image?
39. Do you have more than five active credit cards?
40. When you get a raise at work, do you immediately think about how you can spend it?
41. Do you drink more soft drink by volume, than tap water?
42. Did you work more this year than last year?
43. Do you have doubts that you'll be able to reach your financial goals?
44. Do you feel "used-up" at the end of your workday?
45. Do you usually make just the minimum payment on credit card bills?
46. When you shop, do you often feel a rush of euphoria followed by anxiety?
47. Do you sometimes feel like your personal expenses are so demanding that you can't afford public expenses like schools, parks, and transit?
48. Do you have more stuff than you can store in your house?
49. Do you watch TV more than two hours a day?
50. Do you eat meat nearly every day?

Scoring Your Results (Gulp!)

Each "yes" answer carries a weight of two points. If you're uncertain as to your answer, or it's too close to call, give yourself one point. If you score:

- | | |
|--------|--|
| 0- 25 | You have no serious signs of affluenza. |
| 25- 50 | You are already infected. |
| 50- 75 | Your temperature is rising quickly. |
| 75-100 | You've got affluenza big time! See the doctor, read Affluenza , and take appropriate actions immediately. You may be contagious. |

There's no time to lose!

~ Affluenza: The All-Consuming Epidemic,
by John De Graaf, David Wann, Thomas H. Naylor

What's on the Web

www.pitaka.ch/gay.htm – Buddhist Resources – Links for Gay Studies – Extensive list of links for research materials and further reading related to homosexuality in Buddhism. Find bibliographies and articles.

www.mercycorps.org – **Mercy Corps** is a not-for-profit organization that exists to alleviate suffering, poverty, and oppression by helping people build secure, productive, and just communities. Mercy Corps:

- provides emergency relief services that assist people afflicted by conflict or disaster.
- develops sustainable communities that meet the needs of children and families using integrated strategies which include agriculture, economic development, health, housing, infrastructure, and strengthening local organizations.
- promotes civil society initiatives in all their programs to encourage citizen participation, accountability, nonviolent conflict management, and the rule of law.

www.whitecranejournal.com – **White Crane: A Journal of Gay Men's Spirituality** explores gay spirituality to uncover the variety of manifestations of spiritual quest among contemporary gay men and to reclaim their place in the development of human consciousness. WC is committed to the intuition that gay consciousness plays a special and important role in the evolution of life on planet Earth. Read about the Day of Action Against Homophobic Violence, which takes place on September 26, 2002, on this web site.

Creatures are all around me with their disappointing
Weaknesses and their terrifying powers.

~ Pierre Teilhard de Chardin