

“Every Thing is Sacred” — 50-07
PAUSE TO CONSIDER: REFLECTIONS ON SESSION #7

1. We have one session left — the series has sped by, for sure, and with the onset of Spring, we look forward to walking on dry sidewalks and listening to birds singing. Today, daughter Rebekka saw a huge, well fed cardinal in one of her trees — maybe it became a mutual gazing time for the two of them!!!
2. Opening tonight was with Joan who shared with us a devotional reading by Fr. Richard Rohr and concluded with two quotes from Meister Eckhart. Thank you, Joan.
3. Housekeeping with Brenda
 - a. **Flowers for Easter...** contact the office up to April 3, 2023
 - b. **Guided Meditation Pastoral Care Zoom** at 8:30 a.m. Thursday mornings during Lent. **ACTS Thursday morning Bible Study** on Jeremiah gathering will go as usual between 10 a.m. and 11 a.m.
 - c. **Broadview subscriptions can be purchased through St. David’s** for \$25.00
 - d. **Men’s breakfast is on Saturday morning, March 25. Sounds like fun. P.S. there were 11 of us with Rev. Eva Stanley on Wednesday noon for lunch at Chiantis.**
 - e. Opportunities abound with Calgary Alliance for the Common Good. Monthly meetings are attended by people like you from all walks of life with one goal in mind: Making Calgary the best it can be.
<https://www.calgarycommongood.org/> (Copy the link and insert in your search for weekly updates to this important Calgary initiative.)
 - f. Children and Youth will be leading worship on Palm Sunday, April 2, 2023. Easter Sunday will have membership and baptism time.
4. Wayne’s Reflections on Reflections 35 through 40. **Discussion as we move through the Reflections with Wayne seems to involve many of us. I have run comments for Pause to Consider together in an ongoing conversation. Forgive the paraphrasing of your ideas.**



Pause to Consider

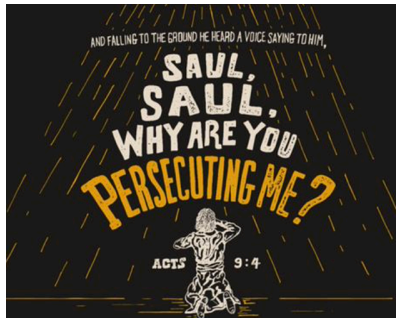
•**Universal Encounter:**

We remember those who remember our names and call us by them... a tour guide in Moscow who recalled names of all of our group ... first day of school learning names and calling students by name as they exited the classroom ... a life guard in Egypt calling mom and son by their names days later responded, “You are my guests. I protect you from the water.”... Aha moments, Gestalt principles,

epiphanies... moments when everything makes sense after a period of confusion...
angels come into our lives at the right time as they are needed... concept of miracles
can be problematic...

- **Paul's Personal Encounter:**

Acts 9:3-9



Another word for conversion is transition. Paul transitioned from a Jew to a follower of Jesus... 13 of the 27 books of the New Testament are credited to Paul... This story permeates our culture — most have heard about the Road to Damascus — part of our ethos ... Mary Magdalene's encounter with Christ was a personal experience whereas Paul's was a group experience... Paul already held strong convictions as a persecutor of followers of Jesus and those strong convictions became as powerful as a follower of Jesus, himself... there are often days of darkness (light Paul's blindness) before

light... possibly we are practising our beliefs more than just attending church and believing that is sufficient... recalling a trip through Arizona with its critical water shortages yet seeing huge McMansions being built in defiance of reality.

- **Both...And...:**

Our Binary minds are so limiting... Science is based on fact while religion is based on beliefs... values count... dualism leaves out the mystery ... society is moving from binary thinking about gender — no longer works ... Both/and manifests us — involves listening!

- **Contemplative Practice:**

We need to practice how to really “see.”... giving up coffee for Lent ... walking not just for health but for spiritual growth ... 30 seconds in the car driving to work during COVID gave a chance to be really present, settling and calming... prayer...sitting at the beach overcome by gratefulness.

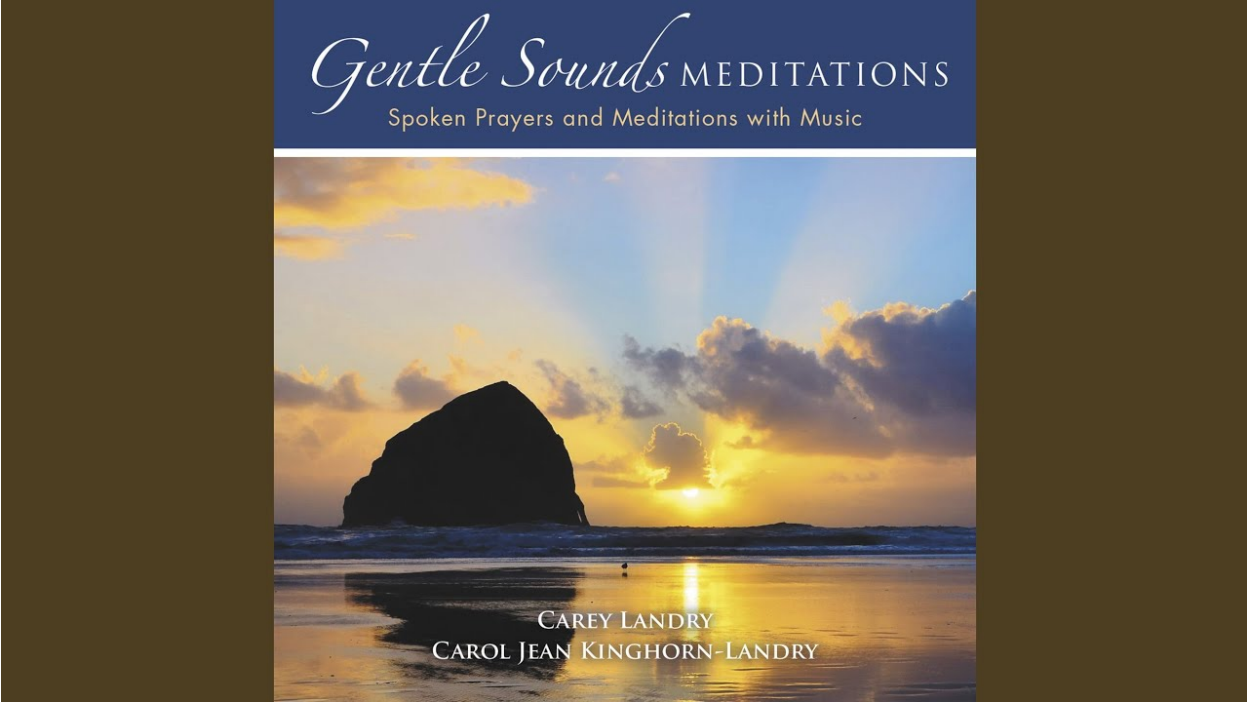
- **The Contemplative Path:**

Philosophers speak of ascending (Heaven after earth) and descending (Heaven on earth)... look where we are — we live here, now ...about symbols of the cross, pause to consider — often worn as a reminder of Jesus' death, freely offered. The central symbols of Islam are the crescent and the Star... early Christian symbols included a ship, a dove, an anchor and a lyre. Constantine in 4th century introduced the empty cross, the crucifix became a symbol in the 6th century.

- **Finding Balance:**

The tricycle concept shows Boland's Catholic background, with tradition's importance and scripture coming later. Scripture and Tradition keep us grounded.

5. Closing with Carey Landry: What follows here is a guided meditation by Carey and Carol Jean. Enjoy!



6.Homework: Spend some time reflecting on what you will be taking away from this study and we will be sharing our stories next week. Wayne’s suggestion is to take a look at your favourite or most thought-provoking Reflections. (Reread various Reflective Exercises and select a few that you would like to revisit and even develop in the future). (Patrick’s suggestion— #6,#10,#21, #24, #25, #28, #29, #30, #38.)

Michael’s Challenge to us: Write you own obituary.
 Thank you, so much, for your sharing of journal notes (now up to Reflection #23) — a generous contribution!! We hope you are enjoying your holiday. I know that we really enjoyed spending time with you on Sunday morning.

Mike’s notes from Reflection 23 through 40

Well, manna could be viewed as God giving some of himself for us to eat.

When injured or ill, listening to the body is absolutely critical.

Exercises 24-1-24-3, mine is swimming. Always the first lengths, and the first full rotation (medley, butterfly, backstroke, breast stroke,

front crawl, sidestroke—4 lengths each) are the hardest and it is more real and relaxing after that. My best swims are at a friend’s cottage when i do 6-8 rotations in one go. Very cleansing for me. It used to be swing dancing, but my leg has told me not to do much of that anymore

Your tradition kind of comes from ours. At the sabbath meal, everyone takes a small ceremonial piece of the challah (egg bread). We also do grace, but it's after the meal and takes about 5-7 minutes, all singing

He is echoing much of Father Rohr's false self exposition

Exercise 25-1. 10 things. Wow. I don't spend much time articulating this sort of thing. You will see this list parallels my eulogy in some respects

- I love that I love others and that I want to continue to do so
- I love that I want to keep learning
- I love that I still have a deep desire to travel and experience new places and people
- I love that my work doesn't define my life
- I love that my religion isn't the whole of my spiritual journey
- I love that I have learned to be more vulnerable and, I hope, a better listener and sharer—and I could stand to love myself more in this way
- I love that I have mostly gray hair and don't really care about that
- I love that I have drunk deeply from the horn of plenty when it has been presented to me—that I have lived life
- I love that I think occasionally and with affection of family and friends who are no longer with me
- I love that I have been given the gift of playing and composing music as part of the way I communicate

I think that's 10

Bonus round. I love that Arizona, who I had picked to win the entire NCAA basketball tournament, can get bounced in the 1st round by Princeton and I can retain equanimity and a cheerful disposition despite this crushing blow

I've outlined before some of the liturgy around Kol Nidre and Yom Kippur. A lot of how it is structured is designed to 'attract your attention' to the atonement process. The Kol Nidre prayer sets the foundation—that your vows are not

vows, your oaths are not oaths—you are preparing to have a clean slate for the year. On Yom Kippur, the service is divided as follows: morning service; Torah reading (a special section, the one about the 'scapegoat', paired with the uplifting piece of Isaiah that includes 'is this the fast that I have chosen? To loose the fetters of wickedness...to deal bread to the hungry'); Yizkor—the memorial service for the departed; the additional service; the avodah service (the retelling of the ritual of the high priest going into the holy of Holies to pray for everyone); the martyrology service (concentrating on the rabbis cruelly slain by the Romans but also including E.g. holocaust victims); the afternoon service, with the reading of the book of Jonah, and the concluding service, where we ask not to be 'inscribed' in the book of life (which is the wording used to this point), but to be *sealed* in the book of life. The service ends with the sounding of the shofar

The Al Het—the sequence of reciting the sins—occurs at least 7 times. There are a *lot* of sins. I do read them off in Hebrew but I also will at least once in English and ask myself 'did I commit this sin?' Notice the difference here. Rather than being invited to speak our sins, we are invited to...accept that we have so sinned. Each of the elements I've listed tunes my attention to things we don't normally stay in tune with—regret, reflection, respect of the divine, acknowledgement of our flaws, acknowledgement of our mortality, being less in the presence of God. I could go on

My personal change has been to tilt from 'I have sinned' to the words 'I wish I was better at'. I have a long list for that

Exercise 26-3 (I can't really contribute to 1 or 2). I honestly don't think I can come up with an example. I'm just not hardwired this way. I haven't been ever since one of my best friends, long ago with an offhand remark, set me on a critical path of casting off the strangling yoke of expectations—that it was totally unfair of me to expect a reciprocal level of love commitment from a person relative to my 'love output' to

them. It was a hard lesson that I was grateful to learn

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Sense of entitlement — he puts very well in a different way what I referred to above about expectations

I think it can be very useful to be ‘shocked’ out of our routine ritual—or ritualistic routine?—by experiencing first-hand the rituals of another culture. The memories of the ceremonies surrounding my good friend’s 4-day Indian wedding (including my super-grateful awe at being chosen as the person who led in his part of the processional arrival) and the semana santa parade in Madrid have remained strong

Exercise 27-1. I am trying to be careful of self-delusion and misperception but I do think I see the world from a healing and restorative view. That is not a pure position, however. Part of me at times still conducts the counting and weighing process. I go back to my maxim—I’m not a good person. And I’m not a bad person. I’m a mixed person, and that makes me human

There is one example sitting in the front of mind now, something I’m preparing myself for. This is hard to spit out, but this seems to be the point of this book. To face our faults. A good friend of mine, who has been through the wringer and who I have helped financially...it is not unlikely that she will ask if she can stay with me rent-free. I have the space and we definitely get along. I am prepared to say ‘yes’. For one month. That will still be 3 weeks longer than anyone else has stayed at my place. And she might need longer. But, at least vis-a-vis our relationship, that is probably as far as I’m willing to go. In my living space, at least now, I treasure my solitude within that space and perhaps my need to exert control over when and who spends time there. Is that selfish? Probably

Exercise 27-2. On a broad societal scale, it’s something I’m still only at the start of the journey to change—my unconscious whiteness and not caring enough about or standing up for BIPOC,

LGBTQ and other not-my-class groups. I am hoping that a continuing journey through the ideas of reconciliation and through books like caste and white fragility will help me to take ownership of responsibility. That’s not a very adequate answer to this exercise but it’s what I have right now

I’m back on the addiction train here. We are taught to be addicted to success. Failure, therefore, means a withdrawal of the success drug, with all the pain and agony involved in withdrawal symptoms.

An altered saying. Misery demands company. But I’ve got another one. Sparks lead to fire—the good and bad of that. But until you’ve been burned, you won’t know how or when to recognize a spark

A bit metaphysical, but the cross also has 4 points...the 4 directions. If you want to go farther, it thrusts upward, downward and out from the centre. Contrast this with the Star of David which emphasizes triangles—balance—and interweaving...perhaps even interdependence

Our sigils do tell our stories. And we’re much more pattern-driven as a species than is usually recognized

Exercise 28-1. Career-wise for sure. Can’t (said with ironic smile) get much more there than corporate lawyer in a law firm—even a smaller one. It took me 11 years to figure out how poisonous that paradigm was for me. I still practise corporate law and I still get paid well to do it, but I value much more being given the privilege to advise and counsel my clients and colleagues, to be much more than ‘lawyer’ for them. That level of trust has been satisfying. And, though I’m not someone who ever seeks out accolades (one of many good lessons I learned from my parents), I am still a hedonistic sybarite. I like my fine things. A lot

Now, I don’t think it affected my ability to handle personal suffering too, too much. There were

points, yes, where I was ashamed of failing someone. But I do think that is somewhat natural and, almost, healthy. I'm back on my balance soapbox again. We *will* dwell on our failures. The question is—do we let that become who we are?

Exercise 28-2. I've alluded to it here and there in this study. I think my challenge and adventure now, and not without some fear, is to shake free of the inertia of inaction. To *do* instead of think and talk. But boy—does the water ever look icy and treacherous

Since scapegoating and self-justification are almost inevitable byproducts of the 'republic of me, population me' that so many people live in now (at least so is my thought—and I recognize that *that* observation of the 'so many people' comes with the burden of me passing some judgment), it is hard to break free. Here's the other piece of critical mass. If you choose to scapegoat or self-justify, you (choosing to write your own (fictional) story) are STILL IN CONTROL. We have such a debilitating need to be in control today. Facing up to yourself and taking on the pain and the blame. It is actually maintaining control too, but I think many equate any lessening of themselves with a loss of control

I mentioned—hate and love live on a razor's edge. Pride can become domination. Adoration can become obsession. Admiration can become jealousy. And trust, if broken, can become eternal bitterness

Exercise 29-1. I'll keep it short.

I am thankful and appreciative for the life I have, the gifts of things and abilities and people I have been given. I am thankful to you, God, for being part of the world I live in and rejoice in, and for allowing me to play a part in that world and in my own faith journey. I am thankful and appreciative for the times of physical, mental and emotional suffering, all of which have been accepted invitations to renew my appreciation for what I do have and what I have had, and all of which have offered opportunities to learn about myself

and others to try to be a better me, every day, than I think I am

The opening quotation is pretty close to Herbert's Litany Against Fear

I mentioned that this is a very interesting part of the Jacob story. That—having wrestled with who he knew he ought to be vs who he wants to be, he now accepts the limp as physical imperfection to twine with his acceptance of emotional and intellectual imperfection. In a particular way, a ton of the Old Testament is about the quiet triumph (OK, at times not so quiet) of the weak and of weakness over seeming strength...well, that and a lot of whining by the Israelites in the desert!

You'll remember that something similar was my key learning from Starlight—that my faith journey cannot be done on my own, that I need others with me

I will never, ever forget the tears at my friend Jason's funeral. He was the youngest of the friends I have lost. All of 28 years old, from cancer. I remember as I helped as pallbearer his wife's brother-in-law, Steve, declaring through his tears 'look at all the love here—look at all the love for him!'

We did story time right then and there, just after the ceremony. I spoke my heart. That I felt *lucky*. Lucky to have had this extraordinary human's life intersect with my own, even though it was only a dozen times. I saw him in hospital a couple days before. Held his hand. And his grip was *strong*. Dead now at least 20 years, his picture is in my condo and Jason's courage and acceptance of suffering still lights my way at dark times. No greater gift can one ask

Exercise 30-1. I have crafted a particular definition of love, built off of Robert Heinlein's in Stranger in a Strange Land. It's when someone else's joy is essential to your own, and when someone else's sadness breaks your heart. The anguish of friends who have lost a parent, and my own anguish losing a friend are the things that

cause me the most suffering. This is exacerbated when I can do nothing or very little to help. I hate not being able to help

Exercise 30-2. I have done all of these. I do think one way that I have progressed is to widen somewhat the audience to hear these things, which used to be confined to a very small circle of trust. I do think that has helped in a couple of ways—I open myself to insights from people who are, in a way, observing me with a fresher eye than my close friends. And I also seem to be able to open up more freely than I used to and even articulate feelings a little better.

Exercise 30-3. I have learned not to impose—to leave an open door without crashing through. For me this is a big ask, but I have chosen to trust in the strength of my relationship with a suffering friend and to let them find their steps to me. That approach was validated last weekend when Alexa’s widower, David, 2 weeks after her death, emailed me to say he was coming over to join my friends and I for Mahjongg. I flatter myself that he recognized that getting himself un-isolated was important but also that I had built a strength of relationship where he felt he could risk the visit. I said to him ‘healing happens at different times and rates and places. And one of those can be here’. And then I hugged him

I also think that there is a path to follow here. You can have an individualized life journey with goals and purposes and results, but it should be much more founded in the benefit-to-community-and-others, to valuing what others value at least as much as what you value. We come back to my definition of maturity---doing things right a little more often and doing the right thing a little more often---and the subdefinition---that my right isn’t some other good person’s wrong.

He’s right. You can start with something small

Exercise 31-1. To answer this question, I think the best way to put it is that individualistic society influenced me at a conscious level---what my dad did for work, my accomplishments in school and

music, being picked 2nd for a game of soccer—when I only played *defence*, that sort of thing---and collective society influenced me at an unconscious level. I may have mentioned before, when I was growing up, I had the United Nations for friends. My ball hockey buds...a black kid, an Armenian dude, a Greek guy, a Chinese fellow, an Anglican boy, a Latvian kid, a Muslim guy---and we all went, parents included, to each other’s birthday parties. So I was rather lucky to grow up without conscious prejudice. That said, *all* of us were reasonably well off. I didn’t have much exposure or contact to impoverished society, or indigenous society or addicted society when I grew up.

Exercise 31-2, not sure I can answer this either, it’s such a sweeping question. I think, though, that I grew out of any competitiveness relatively early...certainly by high school. One thing I will say—I always had a creative bent, a healthy dose of imagination, and I do think that fostered a more open-minded approach to a faith journey for me. Imagination is almost invariably paired with curiosity, and---as I come back to this again in these notes---if you are a curious person, you will ask questions instead of seek answers. If you ask questions in a certain frame of mind, you engineer the conditions whereby you open yourself to input from others to a) provide some answers, b) provide some opinions and counterpoints, and the basis for a conversation, c) ask more questions, which *you* get to ponder.

It’s quite plain to me as well that I had the foundation for all this from my parents. They respected each other---every day of their lives. They respected my sister and me, at every stage of their lives. And it was clear they cared for and respected their friends and family. It’s pretty difficult to swim in that river and not get (properly) wet. I am a very caring person. I learned the outward part of that from my father and the more subtle part of that from my mom.

Exercise 31-3. I’m not sure I’m ready, but I would like to get closer to being so---to reach out in a real way to a group or groups that I have “left by the wayside”. I understand that, in a way, this

involves reorienting priorities from the things that give me myself pleasure, with the trust that a different stratus of pleasure may ensue. Because it would involve me reallocating the most precious resource I have. My time.

I don't know how many of us---not sure I can myself---can divorce ourselves from this equation: "Have I mattered? Do I matter? Will I matter?" It's tough. There are a lot of reasons to fear death---you're "abandoning" family and friends who need you. You're fearful of what *is* next for your soul. You're not sure you've finished making the difference you were meant to make. Ultimately, I believe being ready for your death, accepting it, is the ultimate expression of faith and requires the ultimate...,what I'll call "surrender to trust"

He is again coming close to the Litany Against Fear

Exercise 32-1. I see both. I see the opportunity to restart and refresh, and experience the loss of something or someone which, in its way, is scarcity perhaps. It's a hard question to answer

Exercise 32-2. Will have to skip this---don't have the passages handy. But on the whole, I come back to the unforgettable words of my friend Jim. "In accepting death I am rediscovering life"

Exercise 32-3. I do try to set an example---of mentoring, of listening, of encouraging. Sometimes I will freely admit that my enthusiasm gets away from me. But a lot of what this question is about is what I have been doing right here with all of you. I am sharing more personally than I ever have before. Whether we want to or not, we pull veils across our lives. It's a question of whether you pull so *many* veils across that you turn them into a wall. To set an example of, I guess, "trusting my vulnerability"---I think that can make a strong statement. To live a bit more what I say so often to friends who seem to need it, what I've already stated earlier in the notes---you have so *much* of yourself to believe in. So very much. All *you* have to do is believe.

I've never thought much about whether the creation of the trinity was intrinsically the foundation of fundamentalism and exclusion. The Father, the Son, the Holy Ghost. Where are *we*? When we think or speak of participative divinity, there doesn't seem to be room.

Look! He's talking about veils too!

I'll agree with that general thought---that perhaps you notice the light less if you see it all the time.

Exercise 33-1. The moments where I remember to be grateful for lessons learned and friends enjoyed. To be grateful for what I *can* do and *have* done instead of for what I can't do and haven't done---living more "always enough" and less "never enough". At points in my professional life, to give myself the grace to hit the restart button. And most of all, to remember to value myself, which is a very different thing from self-absorption or self-adulation or narcissism.

Exercise 33-2. For mine, though I'm an itinerant journaler, journaling often helps. Sometimes it can be music I write. Sometimes it's a place I've been that may lie latent and sleeping and comes into focus when I need it to. There's no question that some of them also happen after I confide in and compare experiences with close friends. I will go a bit further---I don't know that I actively seek this, but I do think at some level that I do thirst for other views---and others' views---of myself that I haven't considered. It is possible that someone else sees through veils that I've constructed for myself. I am open, very much, to knowing about that.

Exercise 33-3. Just keeping on keeping on. It's much who I am and have been for a while. And yet, there are still moments---moments when I 'turn my nose up' at a place or circumstance. Moments where I turn away instead of turn toward someone in need. Probably the easiest to readily identify is beggars who come up the roadway at an intersection. I rarely roll down the window. But I no longer never do it. Yet, most of

the time I want to live a life where I actively seek to find commonalities. I did so a few days ago, meeting Trish's boyfriend....a stranger who I hope now to call a friend. I have been doing it for a few months, with our new legal hire Jessica, who I have gladly mentored and who I traveled to Montreal to see in person---and who ran up to me, as essentially a stranger, arms open for a hug. Here's the simplest way I can put it. THE MORE PEOPLE I HUG, THE BETTER THE WORLD SEEMS TO BE---AT LEAST TO ME.

Habbakuk and Ezekiel basically summarize it. Oh, there are tons of instances where a sinner is stoned to death or God smites him or her down. But cruelty? Torture? I'd have to look long and hard in the bible to find that. Oh, sure, there's Lamentations and Jeremiah. But to me, that is the prophet describing, and even then, I don't get the sense of true torture or cruelty. Certainly not that God is "justly satisfied" or revels in it.

"as long as you operate inside any scarcity model, there will never be enough God or grace to go around'. That is a quote worthy of some thought.

I do have to skip these exercises---I really honestly have not enough frame of reference.

I don't think I've had any instance where I have reacquainted myself with any trepidation---maybe if my former close friend Heather ever reaches out to me, that may happen then. But I also endeavour not to have expectations of who they are and what they will say. People do change, and sometimes the change doesn't work. I long ago learned a painful but valuable lesson, that friendships do have a life cycle, and while some of them may span decades, you have to be ready to let a friendship die if that's what it is meant to do---if the person is no longer interested, or no longer interesting.

Exercises 35-1 and 35-2. What happens more often is that the degree and intensity of the friendship or relationship changes. My friend Gary and my sister Caroline, both of whom I care

for, each would be subject matter here, but even for this group I need to keep those locked up

Exercise 35-3. I think so---just look up at my notes for exercise 23-2. I hope my understanding of God continues to be a journey without a destination. What I put in that exercise is something that works for me, that I am happy with---now. Ultimately---and this is important for everyone---my relationship with God is, much like my relationship with people, a fluid and dynamic thing that probably changes at an at-least-infinitesimal level every minute.

Isn't Paul the perfect human? Endowed with gifts and---yes, I'll use the word---endowed with faults.

I'm afraid I haven't read Paul enough to know whether he is Christianity's Rashi or Maimonides---to know whether the core of his work is to offer additional commentary and interpretation on Jesus' own words, to further broaden and contextualize the teachings.

Ooo---I had forgotten that Father Rohr references addiction. Awesome!

Exercise 36-1. These aren't getting any easier, you know. I don't know---I guess my most "obvious" sins are the sins of gluttony (I really eat more than I should) and laziness. But I am also occasionally obstinate, uncharitable (especially to bad drivers on the road) and turn a blind eye to groups in need. As I said above, I much prefer tilting this to a more positive and even action-and-purpose orientation, stating instead "I wish I was better at..."

Anyway---family and upbringing. Hmmm, not family. My mom was a health nut and both of them worked hard, as has my sister. For upbringing, what I can put a little finger on is that I have never known want or lack. That brings its own "cost" with it. Am I reacting from a place of hurt, scarcity or fear? No, I don't think so. I'm reacting from a place of honesty, self-reflection and even ACCEPTANCE. I aggressively do not try to be my perfect. There is no such thing. Our

flaws are a part of our humanity, so there is no use denying them. It is a question of a) whether you continue to learn from them and b) whether they achieve ascendancy in your personality or not. That is, to me, the real battle. Am I conscious of them? Off and on. If I can write about it here, I'm not blind to them. But could there be other "sins" I'm not aware of, or am I unaware of a) the "intensity level" of those I've listed and b) the harmful effect on others? Yes, certainly---I could probably stand to be more aware.

Exercise 36-2. Another difficult one. For synagogue, I think what is being asked has only happened in flashes or brief spurts. It is not something I feel is continuously invested in by the majority of my congregation, me included. I will put this a different way than Father Rohr and Patrick have done here. The organizations I have felt drawn to and have been a part of have not so much stood up to corporate evil as they have endeavoured to spread and enhance corporate good. The Neighbourhood Interfaith group. The music organizations that I've been a part of as a board member. Doctors without Borders that I have occasionally supported. Friends who have done the Ride for Cancer. ACTS and my other book group. My interactions with all these have given me ambit to help increase joy and good in the world. I hope that makes sense to reshape it this way.

Exercise 36-3. Tricky too. I don't want to throw the bathwater out with the baby. I'll take you all the way up to my answer to Exercise 2-2. It is important for me to have a sense of my "doing right" and even "how right I am", but it has to be couched within the good to society and, especially, that my right isn't some other person's wrong. I do, however, actively shun any position in which I feel I am moving towards "proclamatory right". Yet another of my sayings. "If I shout loud enough, I don't have to listen, do I?" My own view (perhaps judgment-tinged, I'm willing to admit) is that those who fall into a fundamentalist mindset, they hear-and-obey but they don't do a lot of listening. **The difference between listening and hearing is that when you listen, you (thank you, Brenda!) PAUSE TO**

CONSIDER. Hearing does not engage thought or critical thinking. Listening does. I don't want to "just do it" to the exclusion of everything else either. That's why balance is so important to me. That's why having a 6-word Mission-and-Vision statement is so important to me. That's why my eulogy is so important to me. All of them are measuring points that I can assess my thoughts and actions and see if those need to change. All of them require me to always----be----thinking.

Yes, hello authors! Nice to meet you! The "lives of certainty". The getting answers instead of asking questions. How I have banged the drum on this over the last little while.

And one of the consequences of a binary approach to life? It is as they set out here. It explicitly invites the binary equation of "in-out". Of inclusion and—actively—exclusion. With us or against us. No grey. Full imbalance.

So this is a really important learning. If I *do* come up with definitions for things like faith, those definitions inherently need to have an ability to be altered or changed. To be flexible and adaptable so that they themselves don't lock me into a tracked existence.

In today's society, this contemplative approach is a super-tough ask. Because, again, in Achievementopolis, no stress is put on and no value is ascribed to blending anything from the past into your present and future, no stress is put on and no value is ascribed to looking back.

Exercise 37-1. Well, yes. "if you don't like white wine, you're an ignoramus. If you do like white wine, you're a worthy boon companion". Big grin. I do have another saying, that I use in jest a lot. "You're not wrong. You're just an inferior kind of right". BUT---it's useful for me to think of this saying because it helps me keep on guard from actually believing something like that.

On a serious note? I try hard to live a life without biases, but a) books like White Fragility and Caste, and books like Inconvenient Indian, Namwayut and How to Pronounce Knife have forced me to

face the fact that I have many unconscious biases, most of which I still can't articulate, but which come down to white privilege. And biases *always* are expressed in binary thinking. I also am becoming painfully aware of my outlook on those who have been mentally and emotionally scarred by Covid---in terms of not having been able to find their emotional vaccine and emerge from what has become habituated isolationism. I experience pity for them without going to the grey zone of trying to reach out and be more helpful. Deeply underlying that---am I afraid of rejection of my efforts? Maybe. I need to think about that.

Exercise 37-2. I can tell you about one concrete example that happened just last week. I was visiting our office in Calgary and visiting with one of the consultants who I've worked on a project with recently. The project, a Request for Proposal, has been a very difficult one where the entity really doesn't have any idea what they're doing and have taken some...ignorant steps. The consultant showed me a draft of an email he was going to send off. I counselled him to delete what was essentially a derogatory sentence of that email. Understand, he wrote it out of irritation and frustration. He did so.

I'm sorry to be a bit cynical, but I think the resistance to the meditative practices he speaks of is that they are actual work, rather than following the herd.

Exercise 38-1. I may have said, I like this as one of the most impactful part of the learnings here. The "countdown" to "be". I enjoyed the meditation session of about 45 minutes that I did at my summer retreat. There is a lot to paring away the distractions of the world. At the same time, it wasn't something that had an intrinsic appeal or feel for me. Part of it may be that I have a fairly steady-state personality and am relatively phlegmatic---it takes more than a lot to ruffle me. I've mentioned too---for me, playing music or swimming function as meditation exercises for me, allowing me to let my mind sort of wander and float free. A long solo drive can work too.

Really, what you want to do is let the "air" of the wonder of the outside world in, and let the "air" of your ego-centred view out. Instead of the universe revolving around us, it is rather a thing to instead revolve around the universe. "I would rather be the smallest part of the biggest thing than the biggest part of the smallest person".

It's a good point---your practices can vary with the season or with where you are.

The first thing, as they've said, of course, is that you have to *want* to. You have to be willing to look at yourself and into yourself. This is a gate that can be a large barrier for some.

Exercise 39-1. Some of what I mentioned in the exercise in the reflection before. I very much enjoyed doing environmental art at the retreat where I took a sheet of paper, a couple of pencil crayons and chose a tree to sit down under and just draw..whatever came to mind. And write whatever came to mind. It was very, very intriguing.

Exercise 39-2---sorry, I can't quite catch what this question is meant for.

Well, you all know I love the title of this final reflection.

I think one of the great struggles of today is to commit to evolving as a person. In an age where certainty is questioned, evolution can be painful and scary. Even if it is probably mostly necessary, there is such a desire to "hold on to what we have" instead of "reaching for what we might become".

Exercise 40-1. The tricycle. Well, for me/us, tradition is much more associated with the culture of Jewish vs. scripture which is associated with the religion of Judaism, if that makes sense. And experience? That is the blending agent, which brings them both together, and maybe sets the table for going beyond. I think for sure that tradition came first---my first memories would

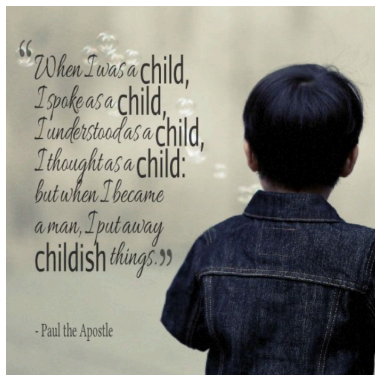
have to be of the Hanukkah candles and songs and the Passover meal and—of course—the hunt for the hidden matzah! Scripture was something I probably started making important around my Bar Mitzvah—age 13. It is when you really concentrate on it for the first time. And I did. My portion was 1 Kings 1 and I made a point of emphasizing certain parts of my sung portion to go along with what the dramatic parts in the English were. I did want to understand the meaning of scripture, and it has remained an important part of my faith journey to this day. And then there's experience, which has been

such a fundamental part. Experience—and the willingness *to* experience, has let in the Christian faith—through my discussions with all of you. Has let in some Hindu practices---through my experience at my friend's wedding and talking with his family. Has let in a little Islam, through reading and watching certain programs. And has let me fashion for myself my faith ideology, if you will---the continuous discovery of the wonder of my humanity.

Thank you all for reading and for allowing me to share. (and thank you for sharing.) Travel safely.

7. Final Thoughts:

- a. Reason, given its own 'wheel,' takes over.
- b. Inside, we believe we are good at the deepest level.
- c. Mirroring and attachment make such a difference for children (all of us)... we are seen, we exist, we're attached. Gaze becomes a Sacred Gaze.
- d. We are all at a different starting place but don't be trapped by scripture and tradition. Some of us refuse to grow up and what is needed is adult Christianity.
- e. Women have 5 X the vocabulary to describe inner experience. Men over time can catch up with tradition and scripture.
- f. We try to understand often using archetypal experiences Scripture is a mystery like the infinite mystery of God.
- g. We begin with understanding ourselves, then our community and then our world.



Happy reading and journaling!

Thoughtfully yours,

Brenda (have a great week!)

