

Why Is The International Conference So Expensive?

by Cheryl Marsh, MSN, Chairperson, ICC

Cheryl Marsh, PMHCNS-BC, APRN retired from adult psychiatric and mental health nursing in 2013. She was active in ACTheals for over 25 years and served as President, a leader on the regional level and as a conference presenter. She is now Chair of the International Conference Committee.



Cheryl Marsh
International Conference Chair

Many of us have heard grumbling and expressed frustration over the cost of the meal plan at the International Conference and the rising cost of registration fees. I too have been known to grumble and say I could eat for less. That is, until I really began to understand how a conference is put together and paid for. I thought that addressing the financial components of the conference was challenging enough until a woman attending the conference for the first time posed an insightful question. She astutely observed that some people came to the conference for the talks, the educational component and CEU's; some came for the spiritual components, the healing services, quiet time with God, almost like a retreat; and others came for the networking and fellowship. Identifying these various components in the context of one conference, she felt compelled to ask "What is the purpose of the IC?"

She challenged the International Conference Committee (ICC) to answer this question, not out of idle curiosity, but out of a genuine interest to help us provide the best conference that our members can afford. In reflecting on how to answer her concern, I realized that the purpose of the IC and its affordability are intricately related. In order to address the finances we have to be clear on the purpose of the IC.

Taking up this challenge the ICC, identified one purpose with three aspects. *The overarching purpose is that the conference offers the opportunity for ACTheals to live its mission in community once a year. It is a venue for providing the resources and support to enable Christian healthcare professionals, clergy and associates to:*

1. Experience personally the healing power of Jesus Christ, i.e. - the spiritual component;

2. Integrate their professional skills, spiritual development, healing ministry and theological understanding, i.e. - the educational component; and

3. Extend the healing presence, heart and mind of Jesus, i.e.- the fellowship and networking component.

In addition the conference is the occasion for the annual members meeting. Our conference is complex as it works to meet diverse needs. There is indeed a price for this complexity.

We host our conferences in hotels. Hotels are in the business of making money on every event they host. They

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The vision of ACTheals is to be an international, ecumenical association of Christian healthcare professionals, clergy, and associates equipped and extending the healing presence, heart, and mind of Jesus Christ to their patients, clients, colleagues, and institutions, under the power and guidance the Holy Spirit.

The mission of ACTheals is to provide resources and support to enable healthcare professionals, clergy, and associates to: 1) Personally experience the healing power of Jesus Christ; 2) Integrate their professional skills, spiritual development, healing ministry, and theological understanding; and 3) Extend the healing presence, heart, and mind of Jesus Christ through their work and ministry.

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President's Letter

by Denise Dolff, M.A.

Pope Francis has proclaimed a Jubilee Year of Mercy, from December 8, 2015 through December 8, 2016. For us in ACTheals, this is an excellent opportunity to reflect upon the richness of God's Mercy (Ephesians 2:4) and to challenge ourselves to live lives that reflect His Mercy. Luke reminds us that we are to be merciful, as the Father is merciful. (Luke 6:36).

But what exactly is Mercy? Is it the same as forgiveness? Both are certainly undeserved, but Mercy goes one step (or maybe even two or three) beyond forgiveness. For Mercy does not merely acknowledge that the debt owed by the offender is cancelled, it also offers a gift as a concrete seal or indisputable sign, that formally acknowledges that the forgiveness is both real and complete. *God the Father did not merely forgive our sins, but gave up the life of His Son as a historical and undeniable truth that we are forgiven. Additionally, through the sacrifice of Jesus, God adopted us, making us God's own heirs, thereby granting us eternal life. Still more, the Father and Jesus then sent the Holy Spirit to lead and guide us to further Jesus' kingdom on earth. These are acts of pure and undeniable Love and Mercy, above and beyond the parameters of mere forgiveness.*

On the weekend of February 12-14, the ACTheals Leadership Retreat focused on how God is leading us to move "From Maintenance to Mission" as explored through Scripture: Because we possess this ministry through God's mercy, we do not give in to discouragement. ... unbelieving minds have been blinded by the god of the present age so that they do not see the splendor of the gospel showing forth the glory of Christ, the image of God. It is not ourselves we preach but Christ Jesus as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. This treasure we possess in earthen vessels, to make it clear that its surpassing power comes from God and not from us.

(2 Corinthians 4:1, 4-5). It is through God's mercy that ACTheals was called into being, and its mission is being proclaimed.



Denise Dolff, ACTheals President

The title of our 2016 International Conference (September 22 -25, Toronto, Canada) is "*Cultivating Mercy in Healthcare: A Christian Model for Healing.*" But what exactly is Mercy in healthcare, and how does it specifically speak to us in ACTheals? Blessed Abbot Columba Marmion OSB, has said "This Divine Movement, which inclines the Lord to our misery in order to relieve it, is Mercy". *God's desire to heal, as manifested in the life of Jesus, is Mercy. We, who are called to "Redeem My [God's] people" and bring them to God "for health beyond healing" are called to be ministers of Mercy. As we pray for or with our clients, patients, and colleagues, as we witness Christ as Healer in our actions and interactions with them, as we help them to discover the spiritual component of their illness and open them to embrace their authentic identity, we are being ministers of healing and Mercy.*

As we move now through this challenging season of Lent toward the celebration of God's greatest gift of Mercy on Good Friday and Easter Sunday, let us also be mindful of our own call to be among God's chosen ministers of Mercy. Let us be grateful for this commission and challenge ourselves to cultivate Mercy more profoundly in our offices, hospitals, clinics and places of service. Let us also step beyond our circle to invite others to share in this vision and mission, so that God's Mercy and His glory will be revealed to all who do not yet know Him. Blessings.



“It is important for members to know that the PDC and ICC are committed to providing an outstanding experience for all conference attendees at an affordable price.”

– Cheryl Marsh

make money in three ways; the number of guest rooms rented per night of the conference, food and beverage purchases, and rental fees for each meeting room used during the event. We enter into a contract with the hotel that says that we agree to utilize a minimum number of guest rooms each night at a discounted rate, and to purchase a minimum amount of food and beverage (F&B) units. If we meet these minimums, the rental fees for each meeting room used is waived. If we fail to meet both minimums then there is a fee, of about \$500- \$1000 per day per room. ACT uses a large amount of meeting space. We have the main conference room, and about 7 breakout rooms for Adoration and Meditation chapels, bookstore and workshops. It is this large amount of space utilized during the IC that creates the significant F&B minimum. I am told by persons with the knowledge in contracting for events, that if we did not purchase F&B the fees for meeting room rental would be much higher. Basically our F&B minimum pays for all the space we use at the IC. This year we anticipate that expense to be about \$233 per person.

In order to meet expenses, there has been a registration fee and an option to purchase the meal plan. In spite of the F&B minimum being a fixed cost, the number of meal plans purchased never paid that full expense. The registration fees had to pay for the balance. Thus some attendees paid more and received a meal along with the fellowship of sharing the meals and all attendees paid something toward meeting the F&B minimum so the rental fees could be waived. While it is nice to think of the meals as an optional add-on, in reality they are an integral part of the conference expenses. I also believe that sharing a meal is also an integral part of the conference experience. This was evident at the last conference as our management team, Bernie and Nick, gave up their meal tickets and scrambled to find additional tickets for last minute requests.

In addition to the hotel charges there are costs for speakers, clergy, music ministry, liturgy, décor, handouts, audio-video recording, registration, management team, postage and publicity. The Program Development Committee (PDC) and the ICC work diligently to contain and reduce costs. The volunteers on these committees and the local volunteers do not receive special benefits for their service. They pay the same registration, meal and room rates as all attendees. Their generosity is a true gift to ACT.

It is important for members to know that the PDC and ICC are committed to providing an outstanding experience for all conference attendees at an affordable price. However, there is only so much we can do to contain costs while providing

all the components of our current conference. The past rates for registration and meal plans were the minimum required to meet expenses. Each year, with the grace of God, the IC barely breaks even. The free will collection taken up at the IC is not considered income for the conference and goes into the association's general fund.

This brings us back to the original question “What is the purpose of the IC?” It also prompts us to ask a second question “What is affordable?” These questions are beyond the scope of this article and will have to be answered by the membership and Board of Directors going forward. The intent today is to inform members that we hear the grumbling and to respond with information so that everyone is aware of the expenses that go into creating our current conference.



NEW AGE - TRUE HEALING OR ENTRAPMENT?

Saturday, April 23, 2016

9am – 4 pm

St. Lawrence Parish Youth Room

44633 Utica Road, Utica, MI 48317

Registration at 8:40 am.

\$10.00 per person/\$15.00 per couple.

Contact: Antoinette at 313-255-9676,

Kris at fuzziandcompany@gmail.com

**Sponsored by the Michigan/Northern Ohio
ACTheals Region.**

Mr. Jim Brodi, Coordinator of the St. Lawrence Prayer Group is our conference speaker. He is a certified catechist, and a leader in the Little Flock Prayer Group at St. Lawrence Parish. He has Evangelization and Theophostic Ministry training. Ms. Ann Arcieri, LMSW, will assist. She has been an ACTheals member since 1987, Christian Counselor in private practice and an adjunct professor at Sacred Heart Seminary in Detroit, MI. She is involved in prayer group healing as well as Theophostic Ministry.

Please bring your own lunch. A free will offering will be taken for the speaker.

Intercession in Fatima

by Alphiene Anthraper, M.A.

Alphiene Anthraper, M.A. has a colorful Catholic heritage which stems from the early church evangelization in the East. She became a member of ACTHeals in 2015.



Alphiene Anthraper, M.A.

In October 2008, my husband John, and I, made a group tour which began with our attendance at the canonization in Rome of St Alphonsa from India. She was a pious and humble nun identified within her local community for her obscurity - despite the number of answered prayers. The joyous canonization open-air Mass was celebrated on October 12th by Pope Benedict XVI at St Peter's Basilica amidst hundreds of pilgrims from several countries.

After this grand highlight of our trip, the following days comprised visits to other churches and shrines in Rome and Italy. Having had much intercession through Saint Anthony of Padua, I eagerly awaited the visit to his Basilica and the Chapel of Relics, and despite the limited time scheduled to visit the Basilica, we managed to get a beautiful crucifix. After it was blessed we carried it throughout the Basilica and touched it to Saint Anthony's tomb and his relics. [This crucifix ultimately became our treasure from Padua](#) as we ran breathlessly with it to the waiting bus.

It was only in the evening when we reached Fatima in Portugal just in time for the candlelight procession. It seemed mystical as the moonlight enveloped the entire area and cast a beautiful glow over the Shrine of Our Lady of Fatima. Unfortunately, John was too ill that evening and missed everything.


Hundreds of pilgrims were gathered to participate in the procession and the Rosary reflected a heightened global devotion with each decade being recited in a different language. Amidst the Rosary recitation, there was yet another quiet stunning sight at the shrine which seemed to go unnoticed. This was the [synchronized movement of white doves nestled on the roof of the Shrine above Our Lady's statue](#). At each recitation of the Hail Mary, they all arose in unison, and as the Holy Mary was said in response, these doves descended as though they were moving to the sounds of the prayer. Since this transpired throughout the Rosary I alerted those around me to take notice of it, but it did not seem to be evident and has remained a puzzle.

Later that night John showed improvement. This uplift was short-lived as I succumbed to Norovirus the next day. None of the shared medications gave any relief and without any consumption of water, I began cramping up with a severe headache and weakness and knew that I would not make it. We called for a doctor, but none were available. Hotel staff suggested that I go by ambulance to Lisbon, but knowing that the group was scheduled to leave Fatima at 4 am the next day, I declined the option.

In these desperate minutes and without any other recourse, John exclaimed,

"Call God for help. Call St. Alphonsa as we came here for her sake." It then struck me that neither of us had even said a prayer. I then remembered the crucifix from Padua that was with us and immediately raised my mind for assistance from Above.

[Thankfully, the response was immediate. It came with an instantaneous gush of air](#) - like a balloon being released into my open mouth. Though it happened so quickly, I somehow, felt that it was an answer and told John, ["My prayer was heard. I am healed."](#) He did not doubt my statement either, and immediately reached to give me sips of water. It all stayed with me without any nausea and I soon fell asleep. It was only in the early hours of October 20th that I was awakened to leave with the group for Lisbon. It seemed like a dream as I was completely well on the flight home to Dallas, Texas. Upon arrival, news reports that day indicated that there were fatalities due to the fast moving Norovirus in Europe.

This experience has led me to conclude that: 1) the Holy Spirit waits for us to call on Him; 2) the sick do need our prayers; 3) intercessors exist among our family and friends, and 4) healing needs to be recognized with gratitude. 

"...it came with an instantaneous gush of air –"

– Alphiene Anthraper, M.A.

The Holy Spirit in Clinical Practice

by Douglas Schoeninger, PhD



Douglas
Schoeninger, PhD

Douglas W. Schoeninger, Ph.D. is a clinical psychologist and President of the Institute for Christian Healing in Coatesville, PA. An ACTheals member since 1977, his private psychotherapy practice integrates spirituality and prayer as healing resources and is focused on the healing of persons and relationships within an intergenerational perspective. He has extensive

training in Contextual Family Therapy with Ivan Nagy and Barbara Krasner, as well as family tree healing experience with Kenneth McAll.

This brief article is based on a presentation to the Psychotherapist Specialty Group at the ACTheals International Conference, in Orlando, FL, September 2015.

The full article is published in the Fall/Winter 2015 issue of the Journal of Christian Healing found online at www.actheals.org in the Member Center under ACTheals Documents.

Integrating the work of the Holy Spirit in Contextual Family Therapy

By Douglas W Schoeninger, PhD

My Journey in this Integration

I experienced prayer for the baptism of the Holy Spirit at Narberth Presbyterian Church (NPC), Narberth, PA, in 1973 and also experienced healing prayer for the first time. I began training in Contextual Family Therapy (CFT) with Ivan Boszormenyi-Nagy, Barbara Krasner and Margaret Cotroneo in the same year, 1973. I was at that time in the grips of a clinical depression, 1972 – 1976 and seeking help/relief. I experienced some temporary relief from depression after a healing service in 1973 where I received the laying on of hands and prayer for healing (at NPC).

I was hired by Ivan Nagy onto the staff of the Family Psychiatry Department at the Eastern Pennsylvania Psychiatric Institute (EPPI) in 1974. While on staff at EPPI, I began to experiment

with the integration of healing prayer and family therapy and to work out my biblical/theological understanding of CFT.

I experienced a deep resonance with Nagy's explanation of family loyalties and justice dynamics in the book *Invisible Loyalties* (Nagy and Spark, 1973) and how deprivations and wounding are passed generational to generation. My father suffered clinical depression when I was ages 3-7. His father committed suicide when he was 7. At EPPI, I would break into tears when I spoke of grandfather's suicide. Was I grieving my father's loss? Was my depression in part an expression of loyalty to my father and grandfather?

In January 1977, after several years in psychotherapy, a sense arose in me that I did not have to tolerate depression any longer. I was moved to command the spirits of depression, self-hatred, worthlessness, and inadequacy to leave me. Depression left, along with worthlessness and self-loathing. This deliverance gave me freedom to rework the patterns that had led to depression, e.g. a perfectionism born of trying to parent my father.

In 1979 I visited my grandfather's birthplace in Germany with my father and prayed for my grandfather as a boy at the baptismal font where he was baptized and in front of his childhood house, now a clothing store. His mother died when he was 5. I was making connections between depression and grief.

In 1977, I joined the newly founded Institute for Christian Healing (ICH), dedicated to integrating psychotherapy and healing prayer. This has been my clinical home since.

Contextual Family Therapy Goals and Tasks as Discerned through Prayer and Experience

As I studied Contextual Family Therapy, I sensed God's presence and movement in it. I began to pray asking for theological and biblical insight regarding its central tenets.

Ivan Boszormenyi-Nagy, the founder of Contextual Family Therapy, and one of my mentors, grounded his work in Martin Buber's I-Thou understanding and the unique merit and deserved consideration owed to every person. He found correlates for his views in Christian thought, while eschewing any explicit grounding in divinity.

Following are some of the central tasks of Contextual Family Therapy (CFT) as I have incorporated them into my work and the theological/biblical grounding that I find in them. These tasks are highly interrelated.

- To help reveal each person's side, their perspectives/desires/hopes/hurts/fulfillments and the consequences for each of past actions and attitudes, injuries sustained, benefits received, and of decisions under consideration, etc.
- To see each person as a child of God, made magnificent in the image of God. Seek to reveal the genius that each person holds and all need.

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"Oh yes, you shaped me first, inside and out; you formed me in my mother's womb. I thank you High God – you're breathtaking! Body and soul I am wonderfully made! I worship in adoration – what a creation!" (Psalm 139:13-14, MSG [The Message]).

"God's Spirit touches our spirits and confirms who we really are. We know who he is, and we know who we are: Father and children" (Romans 8:16, MSG).

"God spoke: Let us make human beings in our image, make them reflecting our nature..." (Genesis 1:26, MSG).

- **To search God's point of view,** consulting the Holy Spirit and asking family members to listen to the Holy Spirit who knows each person, stands on each person's side, knows all circumstances, including all generations living and departed, and knows the call upon each family, person, and relationship.

"Those who trust God's action in them find that God's Spirit is in them – living and breathing God!" (Romans 8:6, MSG).

- **To call forth just action/fairness.** To rework unfair advantages and disadvantages, e.g. intended and unintended exploitations. To encourage accountability to self and each other, asking each person in an age appropriate way, to speak for self and listen to the others, and then act both on one's own behalf and for the benefit of the others. To respect and ask for respect for age and development, e.g. very young and very old; physical and cognitive challenges; economic limitations; circumstances of deficient resources; etc. Addressing fairness and just consideration for each family member requires imagining and accessing the cries and hopes of the child within each family member, and ancestors as well, as grieving and hoping in the living generations often reflects the griefs and hopes of each member's childhood and the lives and childhoods of the departed generations.

"Contextual therapists operate out of a conviction that all family members gain


from trustworthy relationships, which are the outcome of 1) due crediting, 2) responsible responses, and 3) care about the fair distribution of relational burdens and benefits." (Nagy and Krasner, Between Give and Take, 1986, p. 58).

"If you get rid of unfair practices, quit blaming victims, quit gossiping about other people's sins. [Imagine what is real for the other and for oneself. Make room for each person's side.] If you are generous with the hungry and start giving yourselves to the down-and-out, [Fairness: rebalancing give and take; giving from what you have received.] Your lives will begin to glow in the darkness. Your shadowed lives will be bathed in sunlight" (Isaiah 58:9-11, MSG).

- **To bring to light invisible loyalties,** considering persistent multigenerational and ancestral voices hidden in contemporary loyalties, expectations, deprivations/injuries, and resources.
"You'll use the old rubble of past lives to build a-new, rebuild the foundations from out of the past. You'll be known as those who can fix anything, restore old ruins, rebuild and renovate [recasting/ reworking/building from invisible loyalties]. Make the community livable again" (Isaiah 58:12, MSG).
- **To surface, examine and rework "revolving slates"**, the unmet needs of one generation being placed onto the next generation, assigning the next generations the task of paying for injustices, healing wounds or providing what has been lost in prior generations. Parentification is one example, where children are used to try to meet their parents' unmet needs for parenting.
- **To examine what and who especially needs consideration right now.** Who and what gets lost, or ignored, in the family dialogue? Give special priority to the very young and helpless and to future generations.
- **To honor father and mother.** Honor all that has been given up to this moment and all that needs healing in parents, grandparents, etc.

"Filial respect for the past is most creatively embodied in a person's entitlement to take what has been given in the past, assess its merit, and, finally, recast it into more effective modes of offering future care." (Nagy and Krasner, Between Give and Take, 1986, p. 146)

"Honor your father and mother so that you'll live a long time in the land that God, your God, is giving you" (Exodus 20:12, MSG).

- **To encourage earning entitlement.** Each family member can earn entitlement by promoting a positive relational environment. Earned entitlement gains self-validation. "I am good for others and benefit them." As one earns entitlement, "... He [she] experiences the resulting inner freedom and health, [and] he [she] will not only be capable of living a fuller, more enjoyable and creative life, he [she] will be interested in trying to earn entitlement again" (Nagy and Krasner, Between Give and Take, 1986, p. 109).
- **To engage and encourage multidirectional consideration of consequences.** Imagine the consequences for all family members and their relationships, of therapeutic interventions and actions taken by family members.
- **To foster meaning through dialogue, person to person.** Persons may fail to agree. Still, they may come to know each other better. That is forward movement. Meaning (value, significance) occurs between persons through direct address, when each 'speaks' and 'listens' to the other. 

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The Camino de Santiago de Compostela and Our Journey in ACTheals

by Nancy Morgan

Nancy Morgan, ACTheals President-Elect is a private practice therapist in San Diego, CA. She joined the ACT Board in 2008 and I am currently serving as President Elect.

Last Spring I travelled with great joy on a group pilgrimage led by Father Jerry Thompson to the Camino de Santiago de Compostela in Spain. The movie “The Way” portrays the journey made by an individual. However, this walk was done the more comfortable way. I primarily walked with the group and stayed in hotels each night.

The Camino is one of the first places of Christian pilgrimage. St. James’ body is believed to be entombed in the basilica there. From the early centuries of Christianity, people from all over Europe would walk in pilgrimage to visit the tomb of St. James. Traditionally people would walk from their home, wherever that might be. Today there are several routes that pilgrims take. The minimum to walk and get your official certificate of completion is 100 kilometers. We walked on the “Portuguese Way” that started just north of Fatima in

Portugal and ended 73 miles later in Santiago de Compostela where we got our certificates.

I could write pages about this trip, but want to briefly share with you some experiences that spoke to me about our journey in ACTheals.

Walking 73 miles over hills, through meadows, on sidewalks, on dirt trails, through forests and towns in a slow, quiet pace is meditative and calming. We walked prayerfully and quietly allowing one another to listen to The Lord. We had time to think and reflect. Thoughts marinated in time. You learn that with persistence and patience you can achieve much more than you thought you could.

We visited Pedron toward the end of the Camino walk. It was the town where St. James’ boat landed when he came to minister to the people of Spain. In Pedron we went to a hill above town. It was here that St. James used to preach to the people. Mass was celebrated at this rock formation. It was interesting to note that the rocks surrounded this area like a bowl that caused us to be able to clearly hear Father Jerry’s voice project far up the hill. Amazing... I was able to pray at St. James statue amid the rocks, for ACTheals leadership, members, patients and clients. It was a very emotionally charged time for me as we were coming up on the last day of our walk.

After leaving Santiago de Compostela we went to Zaragoza where we visited the Basilica of Our Lady of the Pillar. Ever wondered about the origin of the name ‘Pilar’ among some Hispanic women? The story goes that in the year 40, St. James was in Zaragoza preaching and teaching about Jesus...



Nancy Morgan
ACTheals President-Elect



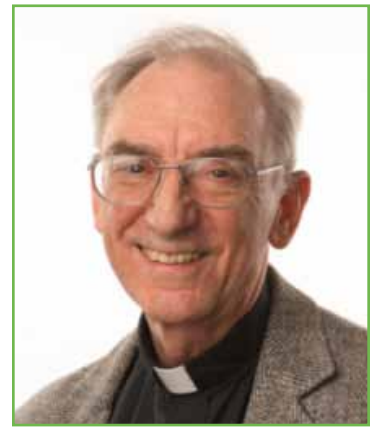
Nancy at St. James statue, Pedron, Spain

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The Communion of Martyrs

For the Ecumenical Relations Committee- by Father Bob Sears, SJ, Ph.D.

Fr. Robert Sears, SJ, PhD is a Jesuit priest, and a former professor of theology at the Jesuit School of Theology in Chicago and the Institute of Pastoral Studies (IPS) of Loyola University, Chicago. His emphasis is on the relationship of psychotherapy and theology. Fr. Bob is currently a spiritual director, counselor and writer on various aspects of healing. He gives workshops and retreats on faith development and healing, especially intergenerational healing. He is actively involved in the Catholic charismatic renewal and is past president of ACTheals (www.actheals.org) an association dedicated to bringing Jesus' healing to healthcare providers and their ministries. His articles and writings are available on his website: www.familytreehealing.com.



Father Bob Sears, SJ, Ph.D.

On the occasion of the Global Christian Forum Consultation, which concluded Nov 4, 2015, Pope Francis said, "I think with great sadness of the escalating discrimination and persecution against Christians in the Middle East, Africa, Asia and elsewhere throughout the world. Your gathering shows that as Christians, we are not indifferent to our suffering brothers and sisters... In various parts of the world, [the witness to Christ, even to the shedding of blood, has become a shared experience of Catholics, Orthodox, Anglicans, Protestants, Evangelicals and Pentecostals, which is deeper and stronger than the differences which still separate our Churches and Ecclesial Communities, \[as we are all worshiping the same God\]](#). The *communio martyrum* (communion of martyrs) is the greatest sign of our journeying together. At the same time, your gathering will give voice to the victims of such injustice and violence, and seek to show the path that will lead the human family out of this tragic situation." The Pope assured the group of his spiritual closeness and voiced his prayer that the "martyrs of today, belonging to many Christian traditions, help us to understand that all the baptized are members of the same Body of Christ, His Church. Let us see this profound truth as a call to persevere on our ecumenical journey towards full and visible communion, growing more and more in love and mutual understanding."

In the Catholic tradition, Pope Francis was not the first Pope to call attention to this. Pope John Paul II had written in his encyclical initiating the Jubilee Year 2000: "The Church of the first millennium was born of the blood of the martyrs: 'Sanguis martyrum - semen christianorum' [Tertullian: 'The Blood of Martyrs is the seed of Christians']". The historical events linked to the figure of Constantine the Great could never have ensured the development of the Church as it occurred during the first millennium if it had not been for the seeds sown by the martyrs and the heritage of sanctity which marked the first Christian generations. [At the end of the second millennium, the Church has once again become a Church of martyrs. The persecutions of believers—priests, Religious and laity—has caused a great sowing of](#)

[martyrdom in different parts of the world.](#) The witness to Christ borne even to the shedding of blood has become a common inheritance of Catholics, Orthodox, Anglicans and Protestants, as Pope Paul VI pointed out in his Homily for the Canonization of the Ugandan Martyrs [Oct. 18, 1964]"

What Pope Francis has called to our attention, the communion of Martyrs, is what the Catholic Church has taught regarding Baptism, which is necessary for salvation (Jn 3:5). [Besides the Baptism of water, the Church has held that those who give their lives for the faith are baptized of blood whether or not they have received water Baptism.](#)¹ God desires all to be saved and come to the truth (1 Tim 2:4), and in the final judgment according to Matthew 25:31-46, the righteous may not know it is Jesus they are serving in caring for the poor, but they still will enter God's kingdom. The resurrection of Jesus has touched the heart of all humans past, present and future with a call to union with God. All are called to be children of God, as brothers and sisters of Jesus and one another.

It is this desire for Christian unity that we encourage one another to embrace in ACTheals. At the Last Supper, Jesus prayed, "I pray not only for them [His disciples] but also for those who will believe in me through their word, so that they may all be one, as you, Father, are in me and I in you, that they also may be in us, that the world may believe that you sent me." (Jn 17:20-21). [In the age of martyrs, we are inspired by the sincerity of their faith regardless of their denomination.](#) We also honor all who desire and act on the truth, while still praying that all would be drawn into the fullness of visible unity of mutual understanding and love that Jesus desired.

(Endnotes)

¹Further, catechumens who die before Baptism and also those who are ignorant of the Gospel of Christ or of his Church yet seek the truth and do God's will as they understand it receive a Baptism of Desire. (See Catechism of the Catholic Church, #s 1258-1260).



Continued from page 7

and was getting very few converts to Christianity. The other Apostles had thousands of converts. As he could count his on his two hands, he was extremely discouraged. Per the story, [Our Lady, \(still living in the year 40\) transported herself to Spain where she spoke to St James while standing on a marble pillar](#). She encouraged him to persevere in his ministry, and assured him that in the future, many people would be Christian because of his ministry. We certainly know that to be true today. The Americas have the largest concentration of Christians in the world today. Spain brought the missionaries to the Americas. Spain has also given us Teresa of Avila, John of the Cross, Ignatius of Loyola and on and on. Praise God that James persisted.

After Our Lady spoke to James, she transported herself back to where she lived at the time. However the pillar remained in Zaragoza, and centuries later, Our Lady's statue was added to rest on the pillar. From the year 40, the pillar has been venerated. With the advance of science through the centuries, the [marble of this pillar was subject to testing. It was determined that the marble was not from Spain and very akin to marble found in the Holy Land.](#)

For me, the take away message is to persevere during challenging times. Trust in God. Know that great things are possible to those who are called to serve in the Name of Jesus.



Our Lady's "marble" Pillar in Zaragoza, Spain

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An Interview with Father Joseph Scerbo, S.A., Ph.D. (Part II)

by Anna Pecoraro, Psy.D.

Does your work concentrate on developing the virtues? If so, which, and how do you do it?

Yes. We need to develop the “energy” in the personality that is deficit. For example, if a person was always doted upon and never came to know his own needs, you have to teach the person how to be able to activate a part in himself and expose it, so that he can choose, that he has a right to choose, and that he has a right to feel. Sometimes, people feel that they shouldn’t express pain. So we have to do some inner work and help this person go to places inside of his being that have been named so he can talk to parts of himself. The full integration of the parts brings this person to be one that the Father has called one to be. I believe, that as Catholics, we should always have a Trinitarian understanding of Inner Healing. First, one’s understanding has to begin with the Holy Spirit. Second, one needs help to enter into Jesus, the Son of God. Third, guidance is needed for each person to become all that the Father is calling him/her to be.

The virtues are powers that allow your “I am” to be revealed. Basically, that’s what a virtue is. It is like an energy. There is a virtue called Hope, another called Courage, another called Charity. You actually develop them from their opposites because you open yourself to Grace that transforms you from what could actually hold you back from being who you really are. You are the light of the world, the salt of the earth. Developing the virtues enables you to shine God’s light to others.

The virtues that are most important to develop vary for each person. Basically, you have the three theological virtues: faith, hope, and charity, which are at the

basis of our faith. Faith is an ability to see God’s love, and to see in others what they don’t see in themselves, and when they’re shown it, they’re able to recognize it. So faith has a horizontal dimension as well as a vertical dimension. The other virtues are love and hope. A virtue such as patience is important for a person who gets angry or has a short fuse. Another is self-development for people who focus exclusively on others while neglecting their own needs.

Can you tell us about how trials can help us to grow?

I have stage IV pancreatic cancer. My life has always been a life of giving, of extending my hands to help others. Now I have to extend my hands and say, “help me.” People hold me now, and I hold their hands as I am walking across the parking lot. Now, different virtues come about through the different circumstances of your life.

We have to thank God for our trials. Thanksgiving is not just about the joys of life but also about the trials that made us look at issues of how to be in contact with life, to feel life and to live life with a passion, such that you can feel God’s pleasure in creating this life. Even though I am on this cancer journey, I continue to find something meaningful in it every day.

Another way of looking at trials is to see things coming together even when they appear to be falling apart. Sometimes things have to dismantle in order for things to move ahead. It’s about the phoenix rising out of the ashes. There’s something about living and dying that’s so much a part of our daily life. If you are on a spiritual path, dying consciously is dying to denial, to avoidance, to miscommunication...

and lack of forgiveness. You’re basically transforming your destiny by being open to something bigger than your name. Some people say another name for God

is beauty. The adventure of life is a gift of God every day, with the passion that we have inside of us, of the possible. We can make a difference, and people do matter. There are good causes to make this possible.

Do you have any advice for people who are undergoing a trial or dealing with a serious loss?

Know that you are not alone. Take care of yourself right now while you are undergoing this trial that is so hard to bear, - whether you have lost someone or received news of a cancer; or simply feel disconnected with someone you love. All of this is calling us to look for some new path to follow. Practice awareness, consciousness, and attentiveness as it is very important in the spiritual path. Be aware. See things as they are. Courage is the ability to embrace what you’ve become aware of. That’s a big step. We’re all masterpieces in progress. We need our trials and challenges in order to grow. Most of all, besides courage, we need to be gentle with ourselves. We also need to be aware and be creative.

Can God’s love be useful in psychotherapy? If so, how?

Oh yes, because I think that God’s love



*Father Joseph Scerbo,
S.A., Ph.D.*

“Courage is the ability to embrace what you’ve become aware of.”

– Father Joseph Scerbo

helps people to transform more quickly and completely. When you hit a block in psychotherapy, particularly a fear of opening a door to a particular issue, when a person is prayed for, you begin to help the person to open that door. Sometimes people don’t want to open a door because they don’t want to feel revenge or anger. That’s the work of therapy. Instead of pushing it away, you help the client to embrace it. And what helps us to embrace is love. And the center of real embrace is love divine.

What about the Virgin Mary?

She is absolutely essential to understand the heart of God. I teach consecration to her heart according to St. Maximilian Kolbe, who died in Auschwitz for a Jewish man who had a family. He has a teaching on Mary. According to him, there are five steps if you want to consecrate yourself to Mary. I have found them useful in my walk with her. Our Blessed Mother is the mother of all of us.

The first step for consecration is

UNDERSTANDING. Understanding what? The answer is to understand her role in your heart. “What role does she have in my heart? The Mother of God?” Yes, the Mother of God, is leading your heart to her son. She knows that we all like the sunlight. We all love the sunlight. And so her job is helping us learn how to surrender, how to allow, how to let God do what he’s doing, and so forth.

The second step is to ACCEPT her acceptance of us. You can really go far with that: “Wow, you mean she accepts me, the personal me? Yes, absolutely. She loves you. She is with us. She is a loving mother. You accept her acceptance of you. Her

hands are open to you. Take her hands and receive her embrace.

The third step is called

IDENTIFICATION. I choose some aspect of the journey of Jesus found in the life experiences meditated upon in the Joyful, Sorrowful, Glorious and Luminous Mysteries of Christ with his Blessed Mother.

The fourth step is INTENSIFICATION.

This step is simply deeper entrance into reflecting upon that moment in the heart of Jesus where he encounters his mother in that particular mystery of the Rosary. If you look at any decade of the rosary, at the mystery of a mother and a son, Mary and Jesus, Mary and Jesus at birth, at the Via Dolorosa, or when Mary is looking at her son carrying the cross. We could use any mystery. First, you identify with Mary and her feelings. How would you feel if that was your son? And then, you switch roles, and you identify with Jesus. How would you feel if that was your mother? And so you begin to feel the inside of the personhood of our blessed mother and the personhood of Jesus. So now, we’re getting to know them.

The fifth step is called BECOMING A


PERSONAL MARY for someone else. In other words. I participate in the movement of another person to become more whole, more healthy, happier and lead them to Jesus. I have a role in the “birth” of another person. How awesome can that be!

The last step is called BECOMING A

COLLECTIVE MARY. There are many different examples of this step. When we celebrate the Mass, we come as the Body of Christ to celebrate the life, passion, death

and resurrection of Jesus in an unbloody manner, and the graces of the Holy Spirit are released through the prayer of Jesus before the Father. St Teresa said “Jesus has no eyes but ours; no ears but ours; no hands but ours. These steps constitute our consecration to Our Lady. These steps are loose, rhythmic and over. The charismatic renewal is about getting through Mary to know God in Christ, in the saints, in science, in the discovery of truth, in all these things. That’s what makes life so wonderful to fight for. And the time of Christ is today.

How can therapists take good care of themselves spiritually and psychologically?

They should first pray such as, “I myself can do nothing, so Lord teach me. Teach me to take care of myself. Let the care that you want me to give myself glorify the Father. Let the care that I need, to continue to live, in the time that you give me, glorify the Father.” First, pray for that. “I want to serve, to be an instrument, to grow in the intimacy of God’s love.” You put it into a conscious desire, then draw it out, dance it out, and write it out. 

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Editor's Note

Dear Friends in Christ – my fellow ACTheals members, subscribers, and advertisers,

Welcome to InterAct Spring 2016. I hope that you would enjoy this issue, share the message of ACTheals and extend an invitation to another seeking a similar healing experience or professional connection.

Peace,

Alphiene Anthraper, Editor, InterAct

alphiene@anthraper.co

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