



# Blessings

SACRAMENTORS™: A Process of Sanctification for Catholic Men and Women

October 2007

## How to Find Your True Self

by Fr. Bob Camuso

“Who Am I?” is one of the first talks in the SacraMentors series. After looking at some false identities we give ourselves, such as our job, gender, name, age, addiction, motherhood, etc., the talk concludes with what we as SacraMentors believe is our true identity—“I am a beloved child of God.”

But is my true identity different from my true self? I believe it is. That I am a beloved child of God is a given. God created us out of love and will love us whether or not we live out of our false or true self. Yet, we always have a say in whether or not our true self is realized, in spite of the influences that family, environment, church and culture have on us.

Our answer to the “Who am I?” question defines the

self and is one of the three most important questions in life that every person should answer. The other two great questions, “Why am I here?” and “How shall I live?” are questions of finding and maintaining the true self.

How, then, do we find and maintain the true self? First of all, we do so by making good choices in life. Even with God’s help, we finally choose success or failure, an attitude of gratitude or one of being a victim. We always have a choice to do good or evil. In choosing what is good we find and maintain our true self. In choosing evil, we enter the realm of the false self, the self that is drawn to fear and sin and has lost its connection with God.

We can lose our true self

when we make choices out of fear instead of love. How many choices do you make each day out of fear? Do you choose to judge that relative that hurts you out of fear or love? Do you choose to avoid confronting that health problem you have out of fear or love? Do you choose to go to Mass on Sunday out of fear or love? I don’t believe we will ever find our true self if most of the choices we make are made out of fear.

But how do we move from making choices out of fear to choosing out of love? A good start is to surrender our self to God and then trust in God alone to save us. In this regard, consider praying often the “Prayer of Abandonment,” which can be found on the Internet.

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### The purpose

of the SacraMentors movement is to provide men and women with small communities of other men and women, who will support and sustain them in their efforts to live a Christian life which calls them to forgive themselves and others, bless the world,

## Blades and Blessings: First Flight Faith

by Cyndie Ulrich, Executive Director, SacraMentors

“Boeing Tower. This is Chopper Two. Ready for lift-off. Destination Eastern King County, via the Sammamish Plateau.”

“Permission for lift-off granted. Watch for incoming traffic southbound from Payne Field. Have a safe flight, Chopper Two.”

“Affirmative, Boeing Tower. Chopper Two commencing lift-off.”

So began the trip of a lifetime. Properly adorned in headphone and ‘mic,’ I sat strapped into the front passenger’s seat of a 4-seat helicopter. Now don’t get grandiose ideas here...the chopper was the size of a

mosquito-on-growth-hormones. I was brand new to the world of airborne egg beaters. Since learning of the assignment, I had prayed it would be a BIG CHOPPER – think full galley and

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Contemplation is not an elite, lofty endeavor for special, "holy" people. It is for all people, for anyone who enjoys seeking and being with God.

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visit our website at:  
[www.sacramentors.org](http://www.sacramentors.org)

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## September Retreat Focuses on Catholic Contemplative Prayer

by Scott Webster

SacraMentors was very pleased to host a community retreat on September 8<sup>th</sup> at St. Francis of Assisi parish in Burien. The retreat focused on contemplative prayer, as practiced by Catholics. Thirty-five SacraMentor brothers and sisters shared in the half-day retreat, facilitated by Pat Sursley of the Seattle Archdiocese.

Prior to accepting the call to become the director of finance for the Seattle Archdiocese, Sursley studied theology and considered entering a religious order.

Sursley explained that Catholic meditation, or contemplation is not an elite, lofty endeavor for special, "holy" people. It is for all people, for anyone who enjoys being with God.

Sursley discussed the contemplative experiences of saints such as St. Theresa of Avila and St. John of the Cross, who wrote extensively about their contem-

plative experiences. These particular saints, through prayer, and their unstoppable desire for complete union with God, were able to find a way to stop, be still, and *listen*. "To make ourselves really present to God, we must be present to hear," Sursley said.

"Spending 20 minutes focusing quietly on God is, for most people, very difficult," said Sursley. "Our human tendency is to let the mind wander with random thoughts. Don't despair. It's o.k. when this happens," Sursley said. "Let the thoughts go past and strive to stay present to God."

Some improvement can happen with practice. The key to contemplation is making time and persevering. Blessed Teresa of Calcutta is said to have felt success in contemplation if she was able to manage 2 minutes out of twenty in true contemplative communion with God.

One way to stay present and bring our thoughts back to God is to silently repeat a mantra, or special word, while we pray. A sanskrit word, such as: *Abba Father*, can be used.

Sursley's knowledge and wisdom, combined with many years of experience in growing with contemplative prayer, led his audience to a deeper, richer and clearer understanding of Catholic meditation. Those present were blessed by Pat's mentoring to more clearly understand the richness of Catholic contemplative prayer as an additional way in the rich Catholic cannon to help focus our paths to God.

*Scott Webster is a member of the Apostles Group at St. James Cathedral, and is an adjunct lector instructor for the Archdiocese of Seattle. He can be reached at [contemplatio2@yahoo.com](mailto:contemplatio2@yahoo.com).*

## A Call to Submit Articles for *Blessings*

by Scott Webster

This edition of *Blessings* is the second of three that will be published in 2007. Look for the next *Blessings* to come out for Advent and the Christmas season.

For 2008, plans are in the works to publish four editions of *Blessings*. They will come out quarterly, in March, June, September, and December.

We heartily invite more members of our Apostles Groups to consider sending

in articles and submissions for future editions of *Blessings*! Articles and testimonials that focus on how, through God's grace, the SacraMentors process has affected your life, what your Apostle's Group is currently doing towards service in community, a reflection on one of the sayings in *The Book of Kindness*, favorite prayers, poems, even recipes will be gladly considered!

Starting in 2008, we are

shooting for a publication date of the first week of the month. Submissions that are made before the 10th of the month prior will have a good chance of making it into the edition.

If you are interested in submitting an article, testimonial, reflection, or poem for a future quarterly edition of *Blessings*, or if you have any questions, please contact Scott Webster, at [contemplatio2@yahoo.com](mailto:contemplatio2@yahoo.com).

## Egos, Lies, and Old Tapes

By *Maryanne Reynolds*

O.K., I'm a liar.

I've taught the Sacramentor principles for years. I know the material inside out. I even recognize when my ego is chattering in my ear.

So how is it I could so thoroughly miss the ways I messed up the "Who am I" talk? I've said it hundreds of times: Who we are has nothing to do with what we do, what we have or the labels the world thrusts upon us. We are to live in the truth that we are God's beloved children. And that's enough. That's everything.

I thought I knew that.

And then my mother died.

And I no longer knew who I was. Oh, I still said I was God's beloved child. But I realized I always had an addendum attached.

I was God's beloved child who was her mother's caregiver for 5 years, her good girl who shared her home and life with her, whose darling husband and children were profoundly blessed by her addition to the family.

I was God's beloved child who lived through caregiver burnout and emerged better for it, burnished, more willing to let go of the control I thought I had, more able to reaffirm the honor and privilege of the work I was given.

I was God's beloved child who had the opportunity to bless, to extend kindness all day everyday to a woman who was a "near occasion of grace." It was so easy.

I was God's beloved child who liked being an

example of how go honor your mother and father. We were teachers, mom and I, wherever we went. Not by anything we did, but in the quiet witness to cherishing a life.

I was God's beloved child who was an advocate in a medical system too busy to hear the concerns of an elderly woman.

I was God's beloved child who found the grace to bring mama home when it was time to die and stood by her as she said her final goodbye.

I knew I was God's beloved child but I identified it by what became my vocation, my divine purpose.

And then she died.

And I forgot who I was.

Grief work is interesting. It must be like the ocean tides, ebbing and flowing. I had to *decide* to ride it out. The first 3 months seemed easy, all I had was joy. Mom experienced a beautiful, peaceful death, able to say her goodbyes to her loved ones, surrounded by music and beauty and prayers and laughter and tears.

Then I started crying over everything and nothing. I missed her everyday. What we shared is woven into my very soul. People told me how I would feel, how I would have a gaping hole in my heart, a gap, the space she occupied in my life. I was given a better description. When I was pregnant with my children, as much as I looked forward to their birth, I would always experience an ache, a yearning for the time when my life sustained their life.

This could have been brought on by sleep deprivation or hormonal rages. But the truth is—the intimacy of the relationship between mother and child within left an ache under my heart for a life so deeply shared. And so it was with my mom. An ache, a yearning for the time my life sustained hers. The perfect description—during the hard parts of dying, we encouraged her by saying "This is the hard part, mama, like labor. You are being born into heaven."

Luckily for me, during this time of tears and yearning, I became the traveling grandma, babysitting for my grandbabies weekly. One day, stacking blocks with my granddaughter, I was touched by this thought. Just as the disciples recognized Jesus in the breaking of the bread, I suddenly recognized my mama just as she did for me, for my children and all her grandchildren. So in a sweet, simple way, we are all connected.

Now that I am in my "3rd trimester" of grief work, I find myself "nesting"—just as I did in anticipation of bringing a new baby into the family. I am painting and cleaning and organizing, getting rid of things I don't need. Like those ego dismissives that I'm not doing this right. I have to get this grief thing perfect. Silly old ego.

I look forward to whatever it is that will be born in me. I am beginning to understand in a new way now I am God's child. I still miss my mama everyday. I still

*Please see page 6*

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"During the hard parts of dying, we encouraged her by saying 'This is the hard part, mama, like labor. You are being born into heaven.'"

~ *Maryanne Reynolds*

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"I look forward to whatever it is that will be born in me. I am beginning to understand in a new way now I am God's child."

~ *Maryanne Reynolds*

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## DAY 3

Extending  
appreciation to  
people,  
situations and  
things is how I  
can eliminate  
stress and open  
my mind and  
heart to the  
peace and  
security of  
Christ.

~ Book of  
*Kindness I*



## SacraMentors Board Position Opens

by *Trisha Gosciowski*

It was two years ago this month that I was lead to serve on the SacraMentors Board in the role of “Expansion” coordinator. It has been a blessing to me, and a privilege to work with the marvelous people of an organization that has fed me spiritually. As I now rotate off of formally serving the Board, I am writing to recommend it to the next person that may be called. It is an exciting time for the next individual to bring great ideas to the table for direction and expansion as the organization continues into it’s second decade.

The role of “Expansion,” which is now called, more correctly, “Membership,” keeps the full SacraMentors Board focused on the top organizational goals of the organization, such as:

- Supporting and “growing” the existing apostles groups in the Archdiocese of Seattle;
- Assisting current Apostle group members in the Seattle Archdiocese in their spiritual growth;
- Developing tools and programs that will promote the SacraMentors program to more parishes in the Archdiocese of Seattle, and eventually, beyond.

Although it has been a long process to define some key, achievable, objectives the process was necessary.

Now, this key role is open to be filled and have

the work continued, as I have reached the end of my term. I will continue to be involved with SacraMentors in the South Sound Apostles Groups, near to where I live. I hope that the next individual who takes over this post will be ready to build on the foundation the entire Board has put in place over the past eleven years.

A little more detail of the work itself might help someone discern this call. So what is involved in serving the SacraMentors Board? As the Membership Board Member, I attended and participated in regular Board meetings, which usually took place once a month. Given the geographical locations of our Apostles Groups in Western Washington, and the Board members who live throughout the region, the Board meetings are held at a centrally-located location or parish, such as at or near St. Francis of Assisi, in Burien. It is important to attend the Board meetings, and if you think you want to be on the Board, but can not regularly make the Board meetings, it is probably an indication you may be called to serve on a working committee for the Board, of which there are several. At Board meetings, the direction and leadership part of the role comes into play. The three key objective areas that Membership considers are generally kept before the entire Board during the meeting.

In addition to the Board

meetings, I worked with the Executive Director to respond to web messages and requests, toll-free number requests, and requests for presentations by the Executive Director at various parish levels. I also assisted in suggesting tools that could be used at the parish level by the apostles groups in activities, such as ministry fairs, as requested, and attended and supported the Series Trainings whenever possible.

The Membership position is not just a director-level role, but has a hands-on working committee function in supporting whatever plans are laid out at the monthly meeting, creating tools for members to use in mentoring new members, and assisting the members, and assisting the Executive Director as needed.

This is a key position, and really cries out for some one to accept the blessings and service it provides. If you are interested, please contact Cyndie Ulrich, Executive Director, at (877) 585-5500.

Where there is charity and wisdom,  
there is neither fear nor ignorance.

~ *St. Francis of Assisi*

*“Camuso,” continued from page 1*

The next step is to begin to become aware of what is happening within us. Are we aware that many of our choices each day may be made out of fear? To find out, we need to go inside our hearts and minds and honestly look at ourselves. Sometimes we need help, a good counselor, to do that. Someone who can hold up a mirror to us, with love, and say, “Look, do you see who you are becoming? Is that who you want to be? You can still make a better choice. You really can choose out of love instead of fear.”

As we take the inner journey, and over time, we begin to develop a habit of self-examination. We begin to get used to asking ourselves, “How do I feel right now?” “Why am I reacting as I am to this situation before me?” “What do I need right now?” “Am I being honest with myself in how I respond to people I want to please?”

We sometimes need a good counselor to help us. But we also need time alone for self-counsel. We need time for quiet reflection in this busy and noisy world. We need time away from family, friends, TV and

entertainment just to stop and listen to what’s going on inside us. Many people fear silence and solitude. Yet, how can we relax with our true self in the quiet of our soul if we are constantly surrounded by noise and activity?

To find the true self there is much personal work we must accomplish. But is this just about me? Is the true self only about what I desire? Where is God in this? As we come closer to finding our true self by the choices we make, we discover that God is there in abundance within us. We find that our will to make good choices is also God’s will for us. God wants us to find what we most deeply desire and to rejoice in what we find. After all, Jesus said, “I came that you might have life and have it abundantly” (Jn 10:10).

God’s will is in our spirit and soul. God’s will is our conscience and our deepest truth. We know in that secret place within, where we are most true to our self, that what God wants is also what we want. And that nothing satisfies us more deeply than doing the will of God.

Finding our true self, then,

involves reflecting on fundamental questions like, “Why I am here” and “How shall I live?” Finding and maintaining our true self requires that we make choices out of love instead of fear. It asks us to surrender to God and to trust God alone. It requires self-awareness. Am I aware of what is happening to me while it is happening? Sometimes we need a good counselor to help us find our true self. We also need silence and solitude to listen to our deepest longings and the longings of God within us.

Finally, to discover that God’s will is also our will is like arriving home from a long journey. And there’s no place like home, especially when we are at home with the person we really are—our true self, the person God made us to be.

*FR. Bob*

*Father Bob Camuso is pastor at St. Thomas More parish in Lynnwood. He is co-founder of SacraMentors, and can be reached at bobc@stmp.org.*



## DAY 9

Today I look for  
goodness  
in those  
I encounter,  
for I cannot  
overestimate  
their worth.  
They are my  
Father’s beloved  
children, my  
literal brothers  
and sisters.

~ *Book of  
Kindness I*





What does  
love  
look like?

It has the hands  
to help others.  
It has the feet to  
hasten to the  
poor and needy.  
It has eyes to see  
misery and want.  
It has  
the ears to hear  
the sighs and  
sorrows of men.  
That is what  
love looks like.

~ St. Augustine



## Poetry Corner

**Christ,**

Out of your humanity, understand me,  
Out of your divinity, love me,  
Out of your centeredness  
in the universe,  
Draw me to yourself.

Serve as an ideal for me to steer toward,  
But also a perfection I can never reach,  
One who has done what I can never do,  
And is what I can never be.

Christ—Lord Jesus,  
Bring me to the forgiveness  
I can never bring to myself;  
Reconcile me to God  
And to my own being,  
By your own great heart  
And by its passion;  
And by your wounds,  
Which pierce my body, too,  
Help me to feel

The woundedness of the world.

~ Ralph McNees, formerly of All Saints, Puyallup

Submitted by Don Grainer

*“Egos” continued from  
page 3*

listen for her restlessness at night. I still remind myself to share something I've read or learned or enjoyed with her. I still want to make her proud of me. I still want to be like her.

So maybe I'm not a liar. Maybe I didn't lie so much as just didn't understand how very hard it is to live in the place of knowing the dignity we share in being God's beloved children.

And that is enough.  
In fact, it's everything.

*Maryanne Reynolds has a love for writing and has served the organization as a Board member and training series instructor.*

## Contemplative Recipe Corner: *Pumpkin Bread*

3 1/2 cups all-purpose flour  
2 tsp. baking soda  
1 1/2 tsp. salt  
2 tsp. cinnamon  
2 tsp. nutmeg  
3 cups sugar  
4 eggs, beaten  
2 cups of fresh pumpkin (or 16 ounces if using canned pumpkin)  
2/3 cup water → if pumpkin is canned  
1/2 cup water → if pumpkin is fresh or frozen  
1 cup vegetable oil  
1 cup chopped pecans

### **DIRECTIONS:**

Preheat oven to 350 F. Combine flour, soda, salt, cinnamon, nutmeg and sugar in large mixing bowl. Add eggs, water, oil and pumpkin. Stir until blended. Add nuts. Mix well. Pour into two 9x5" loaf pans. Bake 1 hour. Cool slightly and take out of pans to let cool on a rack. This tastes best if you wrap, refrigerate and wait a day to eat it. It keeps well in the refrigerator and can be frozen.

*“First Flight Faith” continued from page 1*

jet engines. The Holy Spirit planned otherwise.

My videographer was harnessed into the seat directly behind me. We were commissioned to take aerial footage and still shots of property in the Snoqualmie Valley and B-roll footage of the surrounding region.

Oh, I forgot to mention - the front and rear doors on our side of the chopper had been removed for filming. I was as close to “free flight” as I’ll probably ever get. I gulped hard, crossed myself, connected with Jesus who, by the way, was sitting calmly in the seat behind the pilot. I looked back at Him, saw His smile and “thumbs up” signal. I decided to believe Him and make it a joy-filled adventure.

We gained 2500 feet altitude quickly and somewhere over Lake Sammamish, the pilot reached over and grabbed my right wrist attempting to find my pulse. “You’re still with us, right?” he joked.

I heard him, but couldn’t respond. I was awestruck. I stared out the door and straight down to Mama Earth far, far below. There was but three inches of cabin space between me and oblivion. I looked to the north and soaked in the beauty of Mt. Baker. I looked back at Puget Sound and the Olympics. I stared east to the Cascades. The air was cool and crisp. It was a crystal clear day. Everything was breathtaking and I was transfixed.

The pilot tapped my arm. “Tell me you’re breathing,”

he said more seriously.

I turned towards him, eyes wide behind my sunglasses. “Breathing? Of course! I’ve never felt so alive in my life!” He grinned.

Yes, I’d been a bit nervous the night before the flight. I took my Michael aside and told him of my love for him and my gratitude of his blessings upon me. Next, I blurted out my wishes regarding my Funeral Mass and the vohppin’ Svedish vake (pronounced as written, it’s the Swedish version of a “whoppin’ Irish wake”) I hoped would happen after the Mass. I called our daughter, Erika; I called our son, Max, sharing the same. Even with Sammi and Mouse, our dog and cat, I shared the same. Was I competing with God? Was I worrying? Yes.

But Grace happened at 3000 feet and 100 knots airspeed.

With each passing minute, and there were 90 of them before touchdown at Boeing Field, I felt more and more connected to the awesome-ness of the Holy Trinity. I became more aware of the grandeur of God’s universe and His amazing gifts.

I mean, really, absolutely everything, *everything*, was out of my control. My only choice was to relax and soak up the splendor.

I flew with an angel’s perspective. The cabin of the chopper was the cupped hands of God, and certainly I was safe in God’s Hands. The doubly-secure restrain-

ing harness was the Communion of Saints, holding me tight in relationship with Christ.

The blades? Christ Himself who gives His power and courage and blessings and love to move us forward in our lives; the tail-rotor, the Holy Spirit giving direction and keeping us on a spiritual even keel.

Our pilot had given us rigorous instruction on how to disembark under any condition – emergency or otherwise. Release harness, move out the door, do not step on the skids – damage might occur to the attached inflatable cushions used to temporarily float the chopper in case of a water landing – walk scrunched over, keep head down, and move forward way beyond *the nose* of the aircraft.

I took all instructions seriously. Thank goodness I did. As we swooped in for a close shot of a hillside in the Snoqualmie Valley, we dipped into a clearing and “lost lift”. Gently, thank God, gently, we put down. We tried several times to find an up-draft to aid ascent, but to no avail.

The pilot looked over at me and, with a wry grin, said “I have to get rid of weight in order to take off. Now, I’m the pilot, so I can’t go. Your cameraman is tethered to the frame and the cameras, so he can’t go.” I was starting to see where his logic was heading. He continued, “So can you tell me who gets to jump out and run to meet us at the field down the hill and

across the road?”

EGO panicked. EGO whined: “Ah-Shoot-Golly-Gosh-Darn-Gee-Whiz-and-Screaming-Zucchini-I-Don’t-Want-To-I’m-Scared-Why-Me?”

True Identity said, “Hey, Jesus! Come on! I want you with me! This is going to be an experience we’ll never forget!”

EGO nagged I wouldn’t remember the safety rules and would end up paying a nasty price for issues of failing memory.

True Identity recalled the opening scenes of M\*A\*SH television episodes where medical staff pour onto the chopper pad to remove injured soldiers from the helicopters. Without consciously thinking, I disembarked...correctly; I ran...hunkered over and head down; I quickly moved...in front of and well away from the nose of the chopper.

Jesus and I ran down the hill while we watched the helicopter effortlessly gain altitude and fly off over our heads to the field in the valley below. We met the chopper at the pre-determined spot, climbed aboard, strapped in and, as the chopper lifted off, I was reminded – yet again – that all things are possible with Christ. Inexplicably amazing, I was not surprised to find that Jesus had come with me *and* had stayed with my compadres in the helicopter, too.

These are just some reflections from the world’s newest chopper nut and her flying buddy, Christ Jesus.

*Cyndie*



It is in the  
ordinary duties  
and labors of  
life that the  
Christian  
can and should  
develop his  
spiritual union  
with God.

~ Thomas Merton



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## Walk and Worship Saturday, October 20

### What

"Walk and Worship" with SacraMentors, friends, and family! Bring a brown bag lunch, and some food to share. We'll walk for 1 hour, and then stop to picnic and pray. Then we'll head back to the parking lot.

### When

Saturday, October 20  
11:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.

### Where

Point Defiance Park – Start walk at Zoo parking lot. Look for gathering of SacraMentors and friends, and/or call Frank Pease at below number when you arrive, if you don't see the group right away.

### Why

To experience fellowship and prayer.

### Driving Directions

From Interstate 5  
Take Exit 132 (Highway 16 West). Exit at 6th Avenue and turn left. Take the next right onto Pearl Street. Follow Pearl Street into Point Defiance Park. Directional signs will lead you to the Zoo parking lot.

### Contact

Frank Pease at [frank\\_pease@hotmail.com](mailto:frank_pease@hotmail.com)  
Cell: (425)941-0775 (the day of the event)

***Hope to see you there!***

Affix  
Postage  
Here

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