



# InterACT

The Newsletter of the Association of Christian Therapists: A fellowship of Health Care Professionals and Associates

### DATEBOOK... Save the Date!

#### ACT International Conference

Oct 6-9, 2011  
"Mental Health, Spiritual Growth & Bodily Well-Being: An Evolving Christian Approach to Wholeness"  
Renaissance Philadelphia  
actheals@degnon.org  
703-556-9222  
Speakers: Theresa Burke, PhD, DAPA, NCP, LPC; Anthony Campo, MD; Damon Owens, BSME, MSME; Mary Jane Ricci, BA, BSN, MSN; Bob Schuchts, PhD, LMFT; Charles Zeiders, PsyD, NCC

#### Regional Meetings Los Angeles "SEW" Group

Support/Empower/Witness  
Los Angeles 4th Sunday  
Contact Rita Cornyn  
sun4kids@aol.com or  
Georgiana Rodiger PhD  
rodigerccen@aol.com

#### San Diego Region

SEW groups:  
Point Loma (2nd Wed.)  
La Mesa (3rd Wed.)  
Carlsbad (3rd Wed.)  
Encinitas (4th Wed.)  
Contact: Carol Ignacio  
actprayer@yahoo.com

#### Travel

Holy Land Trip: 11/21/11  
J. Dodson 905-335-6902

#### InterACT deadline: October 15, 2011

storysunday@optonline.net  
Subject line: InterACT.  
All submissions subject to editing. Photos welcome.



## GARDENS AS THERAPY

"We garden and landscape our homes, because horticulture produces a sense of peace and tranquility in a troubled world," says Richard Mattson, Professor of Horticulture Therapy at Kansas State University. His studies have shown significant changes in brainwave activity, pain sensitivity reduction, and immune system functioning as a result of gardening activities. Other studies have shown that even viewing a garden through a hospital window can reduce pain and speed healing.

Garden therapy is a process that uses plant and horticultural activities to improve an individual's social, educational, sociological and physical well-being. The interaction of plants and people in a calming atmosphere, like a garden or greenhouse, has a positive effect on participants. When your mind and body are less stressed, physical activities are easier to perform.

Therapeutic gardens differ from regular gardens in that they create a special effect. The garden might be for the

visually impaired, mentally ill or developmentally disabled. They often invite a hands-on response. A garden for children could include different textured plants that are non-toxic and safe to the touch. Most recently, Alzheimer's gardens have been shown to be beneficial for those in the early stages of Alzheimer disease. Many of these patients can be easily agitated and having a safe environment to move around in, that is also visually appealing, can be very soothing.

In putting together such a garden, touch, smell, sight and hearing should all be considered. Taste can be added if a vegetable garden is called for. The walk paths need to be wide enough to navigate easily and might even require hand-rails for support. Above all places to sit and enjoy the view are essential. Wherever possible, involve the target audience in the initial planning and planting. As with all therapy gardens the needs of the viewers should be taken into account first.

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### Remembrance

Barbara Ryan

### Remembrance

Marilee Walker

### Gifts of the Holy Spirit

Doug Schoeninger

## Dear ACT Community

"My call to you is to enter into the depth of my Sacred Heart." Submitted by Word Gift Ministry for ACT Leadership Gathering, May 2011.



Twenty-three ACT leaders gathered in May in Chicago to pray, to seek the Lord's guidance and to listen to one another as we engaged in a process of envisioning ACT in a rapidly changing world. Two significant changes we face are the deaths of Barbara Shlemon Ryan and Marilee Walker. There were tears, laughter and much love, as we began our time together remembering and honoring Barbara and Marilee. Each, in her own way, heard a call to enter into the depth of the Sacred Heart of Jesus and to bring His healing to others. One way Barbara responded to this call was the formation of ACT. Both Barbara and Marilee generously gave love and self to leading ACT. Their leadership and healing ministry to ACT model a way to enter into the Heart of Jesus and to go forth ministering to one another. Now Barbara and Marilee truly rest deeply within Jesus' Sacred Heart. I believe they will continue to work, from His Heart, interceding to heal us and to guide ACT in bringing God's love to each other, and our world.

As we continued our envisioning process we discussed challenges that have emerged in the past twenty five years that confront ACT and all organizations. These include a time crunch with everyone busier than ever; a waning of the Charismatic Renewal; increased value expectations for time and money spent; a changing, more demanding workplace; four generations working together, with different ideas of value and service; more professional organizations, prayer groups, and educational opportunities offering increasing competition for time, talent and treasure; and perhaps the most challenging of all are the technological changes as electronic services compete with traditional ones in all areas of our lives. While we are grounded in God and led by our initial commission we live and serve in the midst of all these changing realities. We praise God for the challenges He sends, knowing that His grace will support us.

Initial strategies in addressing these challenges are to focus on ensuring that all our activities, products and services are directed at implementing our vision and mission, improving our online presence, implementing online programming and exploring options to simplify. We can envision the next generation of ACT healers. To see this vision to fruition will necessitate each member going deep into the Heart of Jesus. There we can safely let go of our ways of doing ACT and trust the Holy Spirit's guidance.

*Cheryl*

Cheryl Marsh, APRN, BC  
President, ACT



## EDITOR'S NOTE

Gloria Doino, MA

"You, Lord, are a shield for me, my glory and the one who lifts up my head." Like a Prayer Shawl, Psalm 3 wraps us with comfort as this issue of InterACT mourns the double loss of Barbara Ryan and Marilee Walker- two gifted leaders and dear friends of ACT. In another observance of Grief, Denise Dolff writes on Grieving One's Losses: Healing Following Forgiveness. Thanks, Denise, for your faithfulness to your column. It is always a fine read. Lastly, we are reminded that ACT's International Conference is coming... with its noted speakers, with its informative workshops,

with its special fellowship. "Mental Health, Spiritual Growth & Bodily well-Being: An Evolving Christian Approach to Wholeness" promises to be an exciting conference. Make Philadelphia a must this October 6-9, 2011. Let the Holy Spirit quench your thirst.

## click...

Now online the Spring/Summer issue of the *Journal of Christian Healing*: Vol 27: Issue 1. Read about Christian Holistic Healthcare (the work of the ACT Curriculum Subcommittee), Spirituality in Values-based Leadership, Christian "Whole Life" Coaching, Discipleship and Purpose, A Healing Experience: The Healing Harvester. Review the responses to previous articles. Check out the JCH blog in action.

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# GRIEVING ONE'S LOSSES: HEALING FOLLOWING FORGIVENESS

Denise Dolff, MA

Forgiveness recognizes that ongoing blame serves no constructive purpose. The offense has occurred, what happened cannot be changed, and it is now necessary to grieve what has been lost in order to embrace the present reality and move forward into new life. For many people, the conscious or unconscious desire to avoid confronting this grief has kept them stuck, unable to forgive, unable to heal. Just as the apostles abandoned Jesus at the time of his passion, so, too, many people hide from their grief, and either bury or mask it with other behavior or emotions. However, it is through the process of grieving one's losses that one enters more fully into the paschal mystery, into the death and resurrection of Jesus, with the promise of new life in the Spirit. Choosing to grieve is another way of responding to Jesus' invitation "Come to me, all you who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28).

The period between the Resurrection of Jesus and his Ascension into heaven was a time of transition for the apostles. Still trying to make sense of his death, even following his resurrection, it was a time of letting go of the past and accepting the present. This, also, is the work of grieving one's losses. It is a time for naming and claiming the pain, as did the two disciples on the road to Emmaus as they explained their sadness to the unrecognized Jesus. It is a time for remembrance and reflection, allowing self to experience all the feelings that arise, without self-judgement or blame. It is a time for challenging the myths that have prevented the grieving, myths that suggest once the crying begins, the sadness is so deep, that unlike other feelings, it will never stop; or the myth that grief and crying are signs of weakness, rather than health and strength. It is also a time for discovering the truths about the past, the hurts and the blessings, the ones that were buried along with the grief.

And just as at his Ascension Jesus commended the apostles to wait and pray for the Holy Spirit, the process of grieving one's losses allows time to prepare for new life in the Spirit. Through the process of grieving, transition gives way to new hopes and dreams, to an awareness that not only will there still be a life, but indeed, life never ended. It had always been there, hidden by the grief, but ready and waiting to be received. This realization comes as a fresh anointing of the Holy Spirit, and like the apostles at Pentecost, it comes as healing

and with a new understanding capable of catapulting one fully into God's promise of life.

*Lord Jesus, your word tells us that by our Baptism, we enter into your death and resurrection. Please give us grace, so that we can be more open to those areas of our lives where we have gotten stuck in death and have failed to realize the victory of your resurrection. Give us the courage to name and grieve our losses. Guide us through this process, that we may be open to the new life you have given us by your Holy Spirit. Amen.*

Addendum: Two books helpful with grieving one's losses are [The Holy Longing](#) by Ronald Rolheiser OMI, and [Praying our Goodbyes](#) by Joyce Rupp.

## GRANT ME THE POWER TO CHANGE

Sister Maria Theresa Hronec,  
SS.C.M.



Jesus invites us to "metanoia" -- a change of heart. In the Greek, *change of heart* is the root meaning of repentance. "To live is to change and to be perfect is to have changed often", reminds us John Henry Cardinal Newman.

It is not, however, the external but the inner change of heart and soul that is important. It is by means of change that we live out the paschal mystery and grow closer to the crucified, now risen, Christ. ([Living the Richness of the Cross](#).)

Did not Christ challenge his disciples daily to trust, believe and act with faith? In the same way, Jesus invites us to follow him: "Come follow Me (Mt 19:21)", "Love your enemies. Let them bring out the best in you, not the worst (Mt 5:44)."

Consider God's guiding presence in your own life. How marvelous are the support and direction each of us receives. How amazing are the individuals that walk with us as mentors. These visible guardian angels appear and accompany us in surprising ways. Each one is a part of God's networking plan.

Flash back to the Creation Story and the infinite heights of God's wisdom. All was executed with utmost perfection. "God saw that it was good (Gen 1:25)." God created us for perfection—in happiness and fulfillment.

St. Augustine prays, "You have made us for yourself and the human heart is restless until it rests in you."

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# BARBARA SHLEMON RYAN MEMORIAL

Dear Barbara,  
As present co chairs of the Nurse Specialty Group within the Association of Christian Therapist, my husband Joseph and I, as well as our membership, want to personally and collectively thank you for the many legacies you have blessed us with, as nurses, over the years. Your pioneering effort to create and establish a specialty group for nurses, from many diverse backgrounds, has given us the opportunity to gather together as one body in a forum which allows us a safe harbor to share the joys and struggles of our chosen profession. You have encouraged us to believe in ourselves and to believe that we, too, can be instruments of God's healing power here on earth. You shared your love for our Lord the "Divine Healer" and have shown us the tender and soft touch of Jesus' love for each one of us. Thank you for sharing your gifts and spending your time, talents and treasures with us. You taught us about the power of prayer and how to pray healing prayer with one another, our families, patients and colleagues.



We, your nurses, humbly thank God for the opportunity to journey with you during your difficult times on your pilgrimage here on earth. You taught us what it means to be truly one in the Spirit, as well as how to love, nurture and intercede for one another. Through your example, you taught us to reach out beyond ourselves by taking the extra step of bringing God's healing love and mercy to others. You encouraged us to share it with those God brought into our personal and professional lives each day in our Nursing ministry. Now you have the opportunity to pray with our Father in heaven for the vision and mission of ACT and for the Nurses as a body in ACT.

You have been a humble and faithful servant of our dear Lord, Jesus Christ. You shared with us through story- telling, laughter and by being a mentor how we, too, can be open to God's healing power. You helped to transform our personal and professional lives forever. Barbara, you have been a living sign and instrument of God's Ocean of Mercy here on earth. The many books, and tapes you have produced, along with your workshops and Beloved ministry, have given us the tools and wisdom to move forward toward health, wholeness and becoming better nurses. You reminded us that we are but instruments and that healing comes through the

compassionate heart of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior. Your dedication to ACT, over many years, taught us how to be God's faithful servants as nurses living out God's plan for our lives. Please know that we have been praying and will continue to pray for you and your family. We look to the day when we will be reunited with you in the Heavenly Kingdom.

In recognition of the support you have provided to the Nurses Specialty Group of ACT we are moving forward with developing a "Scholarship" fund for nurses. This intent of this fund is to support our nurses who promote ACT's vision and mission in the community, to recruit new nurses, for attendance at conferences and for the development of spiritual and professional programs. (Mary Jo/Joe Duddie)

Barbara Shlemon Ryan died Friday, April 22, 2011. She was one of the founding members of ACT. Region 17 experienced a special loss with Barbara's death, as she was an active member of that region and a personal friend to many. She celebrated her 75<sup>th</sup> birthday with ACT members at the regional retreat. Little did they know that the Bridegroom would come within a few short weeks to take Barbara home. But like the wise virgins, Barbara's lamp was filled to overflowing. How we shall miss her light.

## Prayer for Healing

Dear Jesus,  
I believe you have  
designed and created me.  
therefore, you can also  
repair and restore me.  
In the comfort of your love  
I pour out to you  
the memories that haunt me,  
the anxieties that bewilder me,  
the fears that stifle me.  
I confess my frustration  
in dealing with the emotional,  
physical and Spiritual pain of my life.  
Help me to image your gentle touch  
as you tenderly enclose me in your arms.

Give me the gift of faith  
to believe in your merciful love each  
step of my earthy journey.  
I trust your tender care will  
yield peace to my mind,  
serenity to my heart,  
renewal to my spirit and  
healing to my body.  
I offer you a sacrifice of praise  
in the midst of my suffering,  
knowing that you promised to never  
leave me nor forsake me. Amen

*Barbara Shlemon Ryan*

## MARILEE'S STORY

Marilee was born in Burlington, Iowa, to Karl Williams Walker and Louise Moore Toup Walker. When she was one year old, her family, including her two-year-old brother, Kennan, moved to California, ultimately settling in Studio City in 1940, in the same home from which she left this life.



At North Hollywood High School, she was active in student government, journalism and cheerleading, and was a volunteer with the U.S. Citizens Defense Corp. during WWII. Marilee received her Bachelor's degree in Clinical Psychology from UCLA in 1950 and did graduate studies there and at Claremont Graduate School. During those years, she became Director of Education & Youth at the First Christian Church in North Hollywood, co-founded its nursery school, and also worked as a psychological consultant.

In 1952, Marilee's close-to-home life took an adventurous direction when she served in Japan for three years during the Korean conflict as a civilian club director for the Special services of the U.S. Armed Forces Southwestern Command. It was a seminal experience that gave her early insights that would influence her lifelong professional and spiritual journey.

Upon her return, she quickly jumped back into her professional calling with internships and later consultancies at several clinical and educational institutions, including the Hope Guild Clinic/Kennedy Child Study Center at St. Johns Hospital (Santa Monica); and Los Angeles County Hospital and USC school of Medicine. In 1962, Marilee opened her private consultancy in family relations and child development in Westwood.

However, something else had newly opened. She relates some years later: "After years of searching in holistic, humanistic and alternative medicine approaches to health and healing, I found a new relationship with the Lord and the Holy Spirit found me".

Also found were the perfect channels for this relationship: Southern California Christian Renewal and Childhelp USA, the nationally recognized child abuse treatment and research agency. Since 1978, Marilee served on its national Coordinating council and was a co-founder (with Chuck Weber) in 1983 of Eagles, a big brother/big sister auxiliary at the Village of Childhelp. Also for 30 years, she was a tireless guiding light to the Association of Christian Therapists (ACT), ultimately holding positions as

Regional Coordinator and member on the national Board of Directors.

With spiritual renewal she found that *"my abiding interests centered on the Son and Holy Spirit working in generational, prenatal and perinatal influences on behavior, parent-child family development, and in Jesus-directed guided imagery and age-regression and the role of forgiveness in health and healing...affecting 85% of my practice."*

Lighting her path, subtly and searchingly at first, but eventually demanding a fully committed surrender, we see that spiritual flame that would go on to set fires in the hearts of many until the very end of her life's work, which could honestly be said to be the moment of her last breath on Palm Sunday.

Finally, she writes, *"MY journey is a legacy of love a gift and grace from God"*. It certainly was dear one. Bless you for taking us along. Written by Neil Frame

Marilee passed away April 17<sup>th</sup>, 2011 surrounded by family and many friends, testimony to the depth and breadth of her loving touch and selfless, untiring service to others. ACT deeply mourns the loss of our sister, Marilee Walker. Her loving presence in ACT will be greatly missed. We thank her for her legacy to ACT; long will it live in our hearts. Her words say it best in the prayer below.

### My Prayer

To be always in the Lord's will, mind, body & spirit  
To be strong, faithful and humble of heart for the  
Lord's ministry  
Health for the journey  
Good stewardship with worldly resources  
Death in God's good graces  
Knowing I have learned how to love, obey and  
have accomplished your will for me in this lifetime

*Marilee*

### *Gardens, from page 1*

"Gardening is universal. It is for all ages and abilities. It crosses all socio-economic and ethnic backgrounds." It benefits young and old and prompts us all to develop a green thumb. Whether working in your own garden or helping others, gardening creates an atmosphere of peace and beauty, providing therapy and healing for all participants. May the blessing of a garden be upon you. (Adapted Spirituality&Health, March/April 2010)

# THE GIFTS AND FRUITS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT IN CLINICAL PRACTICE: A GLIMPSE INTO MARK SHEEHAN, MD'S BOOK, *HEALING PRAYER ON HOLY GROUND*

Douglas Schoeninger, PhD

Recently Mark Sheehan, MD kindly sent us a copy of his book, *Healing Prayer on Holy Ground* (Sheehan and Sheehan, 2011). Mark is a cardiologist, Associate Professor of Medicine at the University of Colorado Health Sciences Center in Denver, CO and an ACT member. The book begins with his own faith story and understanding of prayer and prayer with patients (dependent humility before God). These chapters are followed by patient stories of spiritual transformation during illness and treatment. And finally Dr. Sheehan takes a look at the relationship of faith and health and the importance of patient advocacy and treating persons in the context of treating disease, as viewed from all healthcare positions, from physician and nurses to technicians and administrators.



Dr. Sheehan has learned to approach prayer and prayer for patients with the attitude of dependent humility. He says,

... the... attitudes of dependent humility, coupled with faith, are two crucial ingredients in developing or sustaining a meaningful prayer life. This dependent humility is also essential when we are interceding on someone else's behalf... [and therefore] relates to the dynamic between doctor and patient.... (P.29)

He speaks of his own transition from confidence in his skills as a highly competent physician to being shaken, humbled, at the end of his ability to control outcomes, and reaching out to God.

He describes one such case as follows:

I first encountered Kasey on December 30, 1988, at around 4:45 p.m. That afternoon, .... I had 15 minutes before I could turn new patients over to my partner, who was on call. The next day I was planning on leaving on a Caribbean cruise with my family. Suddenly I was called in to see this young, married, 35-year-old AT&T worker who was in shock. . . I drove *from* my office to Swedish Medical Center and found that Kasey's skin was blue,

she had a heart rate of 180, and her systolic blood pressure was only 60 mm Hg (normal pressure is over 90 mm Hg). She had been admitted with a history of respiratory failure, and while in the hospital she had a respiratory arrest, which required her to have a breathing tube put in. Shortly thereafter she began having serious cardiac arrhythmias (heartbeat irregularities) and a cardiac arrest (due to ventricular tachycardia and ventricular fibrillation). These conditions caused her heart to stop beating, effectively cutting off blood flow from her heart. She received electrical counter shocks to restart her heart.

When I arrived I was unclear about the cause of her respiratory failure and cardiac arrest. I was barking commands and ordering emergency tests, including an echocardiogram, which uses sound waves to image the heart and its function. The test showed that her heart wasn't contracting well. I inserted a Swan-Ganz catheter into her neck vein and passed this catheter into the lung to measure the pressure in the lung so that I might better determine which medicines to give her and which actions to take. This step helped us determine that her cardiac function was not compatible with life. The catheter revealed that she had a cardiac output of one liter per minute (normal is five liters per minute) and a pulmonary capillary wedge pressure of 40 (normal is less than 20). I started her on several special medications. I put a special balloon catheter (intra-aortic balloon) into her right femoral artery to increase her blood pressure and blood flow, and hopefully save her life. At this point I wasn't sure if she had sustained a heart attack or if she needed a heart-lung transplant, or both.

After four hours of working on her I had gotten nowhere. Her blood pressure was still very low and her cardiac output was still not compatible with life. I went into the waiting room and talked to her husband, Jim. I told him that Kasey's prognosis was poor, that I didn't believe she would make it, and I suggested ways he might break the news to their five--year-old son. I went back into the room and brushed the bloody hair off of Kasey's face and prayed in an audible tone: ***"I've done all I can do. The rest is up to you, Lord."*** Then I went home and wept. My wife comforted me, and the next day we left for a restful vacation.

When I came back I was fully expecting Kasey to have died. In fact, she was off the breathing machine and out of the intensive care unit. ... Since she was doing so much better, I signed off on her case. She was ultimately discharged on February 2. (pgs. 44 – 45)

*continued on next page*

# INSIDE ACT

Congratulations to **Jeremy Ashton** on his graduation May 8th with a Master's in Psychology from the College of Saint Joseph in Rutland, Vermont. The degree is

geared to counseling in the area of drug and alcohol abuse programs. Jeremy has often contributed articles to InterACT with a special interest in the ecumenical side of ACT. His wife, fellow ACT member, Maggie

Ashton keeps InterACT in her heart of prayer and is always quick to put in a call in support of articles that she finds worthy of praise. Prayers are asked for Jeremy, as he moves forward to establish an internship that will help him to achieve certification in the state of Vermont. Godspeed, Jeremy. Your many ACT friends rejoice with you. **Region 10** Hamilton Chapter: **Joan Golding** received a plaque of thanksgiving which read: "May the Lord repay you for what you have done. In appreciation for 20 years of service." Blessings, Joan. ACT salutes you as well.

## Gifts, from previous page

My next interaction with her occurred when she mailed me a letter containing her testimony. I found Kasey's testimony to be extremely moving. It validated for me the power of prayer [many had been praying for her] and the accuracy of Scripture.

A week after I received her testimony, she showed up at my office/unannounced. .... She walked in and asked to speak with me without an appointment, which as you might imagine normally requires a long wait, to say the least. Nevertheless, I agreed to meet with her promptly.

The first thing I told her was that I was also a Christian. She told me later this had made it much easier for her to open up to me. .... She recalled that I had inserted one catheter into her neck and another catheter into her groin. She had seen me take off my mask, brush the bloody hair from her face, and say, "I've done all I can do. The rest is up to You, Lord." She later said this gesture had struck her as being tender, remembering that she had been bothered about

how dirty her hair had been. I confirmed that all these physical details had taken place exactly as she remembered. (p. 54)

I agree we need to get out of Jesus' way and let Him do the healing. But doctors are often pressured to avoid bringing up the subject of prayer. Some people in administrative medicine set rules against praying audibly with patients-even when patients give explicit permission. Some of them even make rules about broaching the subject. Even when explicit rules aren't set, such activities are often frowned upon as violating patient boundaries and risking lawsuits. However, when patients are known to have a faith and ask to be prayed for, shouldn't doctors who share this faith be allowed to participate in an activity that they believe yields such benefits, provides such hope, and increases doctor-patient intimacy? (p. 32)

**book pick...** *Healing Prayer on Holy Ground*, Mark Sheenan [www.hpong.com](http://www.hpong.com); cell 720-837-4759, [shiekosu@aol.com](mailto:shiekosu@aol.com) A riveting account of God's presence amidst illness/trauma.

## International Conference

October 6-9, 2011



# Association of Christian Therapists

"Mental Health, Spiritual Growth & Bodily Well-Being:  
An Evolving Christian Approach to Wholeness"

Renaissance Hotel, Philadelphia PA

Physicians • Dentists • Nurses • Clergy & Religious • Chiropractors  
Pastoral Care • Psychotherapists • Counselors • Educators • Allied Health Practitioners

### Invited Speakers

Theresa Burke, MA, PhD, DAPA, NCP, LPC  
Anthony Campo, MD  
Damon Owens, BSME, MSME  
Mary Jean Ricci, BA, BSN, MSN  
Bob Schuchts, PhD, LMFT  
Charles Zeiders, Psy.D., N.C.C.

### Workshops

- Clinical insights into the meaning of incarnation
- Holistic health: prayer, meditation, nutrition, exercise
- Integrating prayer in the clinical/hospital context
- Impact of teamwork in a clinical or medical setting
- Holistic care for the healthcare provider

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## *Grant me the Power to Change, from page 3*

Ronald Rolheiser, OMI, affirms this thought as “Experiencing the reason this universe was made, the giving and receiving of love and affection, pure gift.”

All was meant to continue as good. Unfortunately, the gift of human free will played its part. God programmed us for happiness, yet daily we experience failures. These may be influenced by our early life and/or physical, environmental or relational situations which come into our lives and result in negative choices and images of self.

Now as we come asking for the power to change, we remember that God is in control in the world and in our lives. A primary focus is to develop a new respect for ourselves—to see the self as a child of God. Then we can be honest, forgive ourselves and be more positive and understanding toward our individual problems. This is the true practice of the second greatest commandment—“Love your neighbor as yourself (Mt 19:19).” Only after we have learned to love ourselves, can we share love with our neighbor.

Our spiritual healing and recovery begins with a reaching out to the Source of Power. In the Scriptures, the woman with a bleeding problem believed

“If I only touch him, I will be healed (Mt 9:21).” Blind Bartimaeus called out persistently, “Jesus, Son of David, have pity on me (Mk 10:46).”

As a base line for seeking the power to change, let us use the word POWER for an outline. P – Prayer for ourselves and all whom we encounter daily. O – Observe the positives—our gifts, our desires to receive love, hopes, need for forgiveness for self and others. W—Weaknesses are examined, failings, fears. E—Engage in positive self-image—learn to love and enjoy self as a child of God. R—Reach out to others in love, practice forgiveness toward self and others, return thanks, review progress daily (with a mentor if possible)and rejoice.

Some questions for consideration can be: What are some possibilities for positive change? Of what am I afraid? What triggers my anger? What would I like to change in myself? What do I need to change? How do I learn to love self and believe I am lovable? What is a first step I can take?

At the outset it is best to select one point for development. With prayerful follow-up, more insights and wisdom will be given for advancing.