

# Blessings

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

June, 2005

## SEEKING INNOCENCE INSTEAD OF GUILT

by Fr. Bob Camuso

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### Upcoming Events

#### Retreat:

**“Healing Relationships”**  
June 24 & 25  
Palisades Retreat Center  
See web page for details

#### Family Picnic

July 17, 1-5 PM  
Seahurst Beach, Burien  
See enclosed flyer

#### Leadership Retreat

September 10, 2005  
9AM – 5PM  
Palisades Retreat Center  
See web page for details

#### Community

#### Meeting Schedule

on website  
[www.sacramentors.org](http://www.sacramentors.org)

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*Just as Jesus knows the innocence in me,  
today I seek the innocence in the people  
and situations I encounter.*

—*The Book of Kindness I, Day Two*

This is one of the most challenging daily concepts in the entire SacraMentors® program. We may like the first part, that “Jesus knows the innocence in me,” but, for many of us, to seek innocence *in others* is not something we like to do. It goes against our instinct.

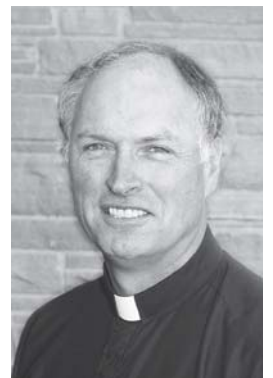
Our natural inclination is to look for guilt in others instead of innocence. This may come from what scientists call the “reptilian brain.” The reptilian part of our brain evolved hundreds of millions of years ago and is more like the entire brain found in reptiles today. It rules such basic emotions as love, hate, fear, lust and satisfaction. When we look for guilt in people, we operate from such primitive emotions. We fear what is not like us in others, and from fear we move to judgment. We judge because we see guilt. Seeing guilt in someone is really a way to protect ourselves, to patrol our personal borders. As long as a person is guilty until proven innocent, we have a mental and emotional cyclone fence in place and the gate is locked.

But Jesus has no fences between us and him. He always looks to see the innocence in us and not our guilt, even when we cross the boundaries of virtue to sin. When we make such choices, Jesus continues to love us and yearns to restore us to the fullness of innocence through his forgiveness. In other words, Jesus loves us as we are and doesn’t judge us the way others judge us.

But, alas, we are not Jesus, even though we’d like to be. It’s not easy to be so generous. Even the saints struggled with seeing innocence in others instead of guilt. An example is St. Therese of Lisieux, who writes,

*It was so obvious that I didn’t love my sisters as God loves them.  
I realize now, that perfect love means putting up with other people’s  
shortcomings, feeling no surprise at their weaknesses, finding encourage-  
ment even in the slightest evidence of good qualities in them.*

—*Autobiography of a Saint*, p. 209



Father Bob Camuso

(cont. page 2)

To love others as God loves them is to accept that we are all wounded, unhealed and broken in some way. Yet, by accepting the wounded parts of others, we actually help to restore them to emotional health. By loving the unhealed parts of others, we help them to heal. By not judging the broken parts in others, their spirits are repaired.

When we see only what attracts us in others, then we make them into false idols, people they are not or will ever be. Before long, they let us down because as surely as the sun will rise, so will their guilt.

In the evolution of human beings, and especially since the time of Christ, we have been equipped to move beyond the limitations of the reptilian brain. This part of our brain is useful when it needs to be, as when we face physical danger. But it is no help if it keeps us from being in relationship with others. We are trapped in our reptilian brain when we react impulsively to someone by seeing guilt instead of innocence.

What finally allows us to transcend the reptilian brain is our love of God and God's love for us. Writer Parker Palmer put it this way:

*There is nothing capable of binding together willful, broken human selves except some transcendent power. And I would add that no reality can lead us into the heart of forgiveness and open us to all people, except a loving, forgiving God.*

*-A Place Called Community, P. 18*

As we love God and accept God's love and forgiveness for us, we find it easier to accept, love and forgive others. To love God and accept God's love for us helps us have a positive attitude toward the world. The world is now seen as benevolent instead of hostile. People are now good despite their failings. Life is now refreshing instead of weary.

When you think about the people you encounter each day, how often do you find yourself seeing guilt instead of innocence? If you see more guilt than innocence in others, maybe it's time to ask God to help you to love more, forgive more, accept more and make others more important than yourself. For as T.S. Eliot once said, "Most of the trouble in the world is caused by people wanting to be important."

Let us then reaffirm the SacraMentors daily concept to seek the innocence in the people we will encounter today. And then observe how powerful this concept can be to heal not only the people in our lives, but ourselves as well. And in this small way, we shall help to heal the world.

FR. BCL

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MISSION STATEMENT

*"To create in parishes  
small faith communities  
of men and of women  
committed to supporting  
each other in living  
a Christian life  
characterized by  
acts of love, kindness,  
appreciation, and  
forgiveness."*

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## SACRAMENTOR BOARD MEMBERS

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My dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

*"I thank Him who has given me strength for this,  
Christ Jesus our Lord, because he judged me faithful by ap-  
pointing me to His service."*

—1 Timothy 1:12

Almost three years ago, God called me to serve as Executive Director for SacraMentors. I must admit that when God first called me, I came up with a host of excuses why I shouldn't and couldn't serve as Executive Director. The Holy Spirit, however, kept asking me, "If not you, who? If not now, when?" So, despite my initial hesitation, I answered God's call to His service. Since then, God has used all of you to bless me in ways I could not have imagined three years ago. It is impossible to adequately describe in words how God has used so many of you to teach me and to draw me closer to Him. Suffice it to say that because of you and SacraMentors, I feel closer to God than I have at any time in my life.

Several months ago, I began to sense that the Holy Spirit was calling me to serve Him and our Church in some other capacity. As such, I have spent the past few months seeking to understand where God is calling me to serve Him and others. Although I am not certain where God is leading me, I have heard the Holy Spirit tell me that it is time for me to leave my current position as Executive Director for SacraMentors. Consequently, last month I informed the SacraMentors Board that I was stepping down from my position, although I agreed to serve until they found a replacement or until we hold our Annual Leadership Retreat on September 10, 2005, whichever occurs first.

As we enter this time of transition, I would ask each of you to do the following. First, please pray for the Holy Spirit to guide and direct the SacraMentors Board as they go through the process of discerning who should serve as Executive Director. Second, please pray that whoever the Spirit is calling to serve will listen to God's voice and answer His call with a resounding, "Yes, Lord!" Third, please pray for me and that God will open my mind and heart to hear where He is calling me to serve Him and His Church.

It would be impossible to thank by name everyone who has helped me these past three years. However, I am especially thankful for all of the love, support and understanding I received from my wife, Denise. Whatever success SacraMentors attained during my tenure as Executive Director is due in significant part to Denise. I have also had the privilege to work with two wonderful boards that were patient and kind towards me, even though there were times when I must have tried their patience. Finally, a special thanks to all of you, my dear SacraMentor brothers and sisters, who supported me with your prayers, friendship and kind words of encouragement. Thank you from the bottom of my heart.

May God's blessings and peace be with each of you,

Jeff

# HOW MY APOSTLE'S GROUP NURTURES ME AND WHY I NURTURE IT

by Linda Moran, St. Charles Borromeo Parish

In January 2002, I noticed a “blurb” in my parish bulletin for an upcoming SacraMentor series, asking the question, “Do you want a closer walk with God?” That question tugged at me as I read more about SacraMentors on the website, spoke to a friend of mine who knows Fr. Bob Camuso, the founder of SacraMentors, and then called a woman SacraMentor from a neighboring parish who was listed as a contact for the upcoming series. I did want a closer walk with God and so I signed up for the February 2002 series at St. Charles, my parish.

I loved the series and I found the lessons I was ready to hear, but little did I realize my closer walk with God was really just beginning. Following the series, we were invited to join a small faith-sharing group, called an Apostle's Group that would meet weekly to continue the sanctification process and provide an opportunity to extend the learning from SacraMentors. Our series was so big we broke into three smaller groups. Our Apostles Group chose to meet at 6:00 pm on Friday nights as that was the only time and day we could all meet. We started with eight of us and three years later we still meet each Friday. Some of our original members are no longer able to meet with us, but they drop in when they can and we stay in touch with several of them by email and when we see each other in church. We've added a few St. Charles parish sisters following their attendance at a SacraMentor series at neighboring parishes and one through the mentoring process.

My Apostle's Group means so much to me. It provides me the spiritual community I've longed for since I moved from my east coast childhood parish to attend graduate school here in the Northwest. It has connected me more to my very large parish, St. Charles. It has also helped me to understand more about Catholicism and to deepen my faith. I learn so much from my sisters and their love and support bless me every day. It has also inspired me to greater service to my community. This program means so much to my Apostles Group, that many of us have felt called to serve as trainers for the SacraMentors program, which we are committed to helping to grow.

As part of my call to be a blessing and to bless, I feel a responsibility to nurture my Apostles Group. To that end, I commit to attend each week, unless a significant commitment or activity prevents me from attending. I stay in touch with my sisters reaching out to them during the week by phone calls or emails. And in turn, they are equally committed and respond in kind. As SacraMentors, we all need to nurture our Apostles Groups and this program. Time and again, I've heard how this program has transformed peoples' lives and brought them closer to God by revealing and affirming to them that they are a child of God

and that a love-based life is so much richer than a fear-based life. This program and our weekly Apostles Group meetings help us to see that our resistances to joining with God keep us from appreciating the many blessings and beauty in our lives and by offering up those resistances with the support of our sisters and brothers our lives seem a bit easier, lighter, and more focused.

So my thanks to you, my sisters and brothers, for being a part of your Apostles Groups. Thank you for making the commitment to attend weekly meetings. If you've been

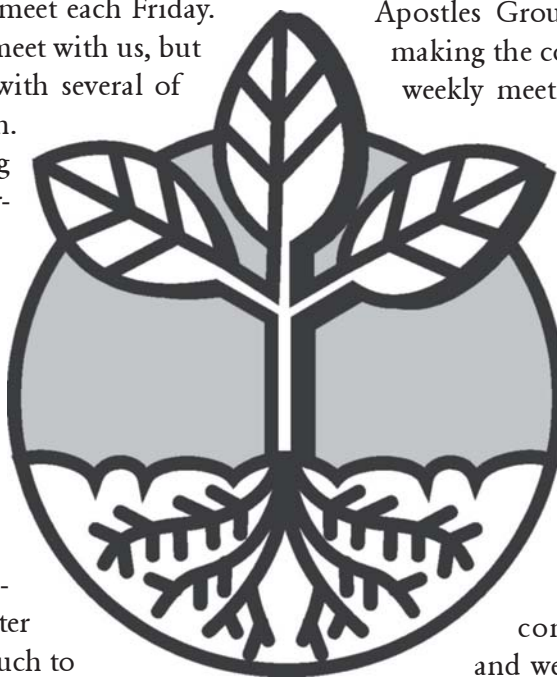
away from your group, consider coming back, you are always welcome.

If your group has somehow slipped away, consider reaching out to your sisters or brothers and getting it started again. If you need

help with that, please

contact SacraMentors and we will help you. Re-

member when two or more are gathered in HIS name, HE is there. I always feel the Holy Spirit at my Apostles Group meeting and that presence, along with my sister's, is a blessing to us and to me, for which I am most grateful.



# Pentecost brings a new spirit to the web

by Steve Egge, St. Andrew Parish



There has been yearning for a new website for SacraMentors for quite some time. The usual comments about the site as it existed, were that the content was good, but it was difficult to get around, often causing frustration. Such is the case when you let the software do what you are incapable of doing.

In early 2004 there was a move to form a web committee to work on the redesign. Cyndie Ulrich teamed up Rikel Getty and came up with some story boards of how the web should function. Cyndie soon became involved with Conversations with Fr. Bob and I didn't have the time or quite frankly the interest to tackle a new project involving new software. My attention was needed at home. A year passed and the spirit became involved. A new team was formed, Rick Fleehtart, Rikel Getty, Clyde Hill, Virginia Stone and myself, gave up our SacraMentum time to meet in a room in the faith formation building during the winter SacraMentum at St. Andrew in January. The energy in the room was intense as we laid out goals and discussed how best to achieve them. Rikel brought his story boards and we were off and running.

Our old site had limited capabilities and a new hosting service was sought. We found one with the space and price for our budget at [www.hostmerit.com](http://www.hostmerit.com). Rick had experience in building websites with MacroMedia's Dreamweaver and brought his familiarity with the product to guide us along. Rick's real gift was his understanding of the PHP programming language and SQL databases. With these tools he brought new capabilities to the web. Clyde provided the organizational leadership and kept us on task, helped move the content from the old site to the new, and did a lot of the database entry. Rikel provided the "artist's eye" for the site, moving us toward a user friendly and inviting site. We have worked incognito under the name of [www.sacramentors.net](http://www.sacramentors.net) for the last 3 months, gradually building and developing the content and navigational system. As it developed, it was clear that despite all of our best efforts in content and capabilities, it remained rather unattractive. A cloud of gloom set upon us until the spirit stepped in disguised under the personage of MaryAnne Reynolds who took the SacraMentors Logo and extended it beautifully into a top and left hand banner that was pleasing to the eye, unique, and even contained spirituality behind the color combinations. That contribution to the effort felt like the "half court game winning shot at the buzzer". With the change came a rush of new energy on content and database formation and entry.

We unveiled the site in time for Pentecost, our original goal. The new site features fly out menu's that are always available, making navigation a snap. A database of events and parish's with maps, contact information, and meeting times was developed, making the maintenance of the site much easier. We have many of the "Conversations with Fr. Bob" radio shows available as streaming audio or you can download them to your portable MP3 player. We consider the site to be in Phase I, and will continue to add future capabilities, such as the ability to donate to SacraMentors online through PayPal, a secure area where

trainers can obtain the latest training tools, and a "store" where SacraMentors items can be purchased. Other improvements will come with time. Come and visit often.

Bringing the old content over, especially the newsletters was like a journey back in time. Rick and I ran across the web mission statement at the same time "To promote SacraMentors to the community at large, provide information about the SacraMentors organization, provide those who are looking for spiritual material with resources, and facilitate communication within the SacraMentors organization.". I think the new site does a good job in fulfilling this statement with the promise for more in the future.

Please visit the site and give us feedback at [webcreate@sacramentors.org](mailto:webcreate@sacramentors.org). Dream with us about capabilities desired. Use the forms available to update your demographics so the leadership can maintain lines of communication. Elect to receive the Newsletter online through the forms available, this will cut down on our mailing costs. Pray for those listed on the Prayer Intentions page. Listen to some great interviews by Fr. Bob while you browse the site.

The site was truly a group effort with the end result being more than the whole. I am truly indebted to my SacraMentor brothers and sisters for their work and the Holy Spirit for guiding us. If you would like to become involved in the further development of the site, or help in its maintenance, please contact us at the above e-mail address.

# The Divine Second Opinion

By Lydia Franzen, St. Michael Parish

It's fairly common for people of faith experiencing unusual physical symptoms to visit their healthcare provider. In the fall of 2004, abnormally heavy and continuous bleeding sent me to my health organization to seek answers and treatment. A pelvic ultrasound revealed several fibroid tumors in my uterus. My body's reaction to this foreign creature was to give it a continuous flow of blood in an attempt to force it out. This internal battle created a severe blood loss within days and by the end of two weeks, I was extremely fatigued and anemic.

During my treatment discussions with my gynecologist, he told me my only viable option was a total abdominal hysterectomy. I thought his words must be for an invisible woman with us in the examining room. Certainly my condition couldn't be this serious for such a drastic procedure, I thought. When I began to acknowledge that my doctor was addressing me with this verdict, I started asking about other procedures, but my doctor gave me reasons why these procedures wouldn't permanently take care of my tumors. According to this doctor, only a hysterectomy would forever stop my bleeding.

The prospect of undergoing major surgery to remove healthy organs that only contained benign tumors was immediately unacceptable to me. Other factors, such as the inconvenience of at least a six-to-eight week post surgery recovery period during December and January, my squeamishness for anything surgery-related and a low threshold for pain only increased my desire to avoid a hysterectomy. I wasn't even to my parked car following the doctor's visit before I was charting my next course of action: seeking a second opinion. I hoped a consultation with another gynecologist, preferably a woman, would expand my treatment options with something less invasive than a hysterectomy. However, my second opinion would come later from someone other than an earthly physician. The Greatest Healer, Our Lord Jesus Christ, would perform a cure that would go far beyond my limited human hopes.

Upon hearing my symptoms, Brenda, one of my SacraMentor Sisters who is also a registered nurse, strongly suggested I investigate a non-surgical procedure called uterine fibroid embolization. Condoleezza Rice, our nation's secretary of state, recently made the news when she successfully underwent this procedure. Based upon what I knew about the embolization procedure and recovery process, I immediately began my health system's referral process for seeing an M.D. who performs this procedure.

At this point, my total focus was on the embolization being my ticket for a non-surgical way to rid me of my symptoms. My husband could see my increasing anticipation. However, he cautioned me to not let my enthusiasm get too high, in the possibility that I wasn't a candidate for this procedure. I understood my husband's concern that I would be crushed if the hysterectomy turned out to be my only option. However, my emotions and physical condition were ragged when my husband and I were having this discussion. I told him in a rather loud, harried voice that it wasn't the embolization that I was wanting, but rather for Our Lord to just shrink my tumors and stop my bleeding. In my heart, I desired my healing to come from Jesus.

(cont. pg 7)

**"Let no one tell you that this body of yours is a stranger to God."**

Saint Cyril of Jerusalem

**"Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us."**

Ephesians 3:20, KJV

**"In my distress I called upon the Lord, and cried out to my God; From His temple, He heard my voice, and my cry to Him reached His ears."**

Psalms 18:7, NAB

**"More things are wrought by prayer than this world dreams of."**

Lord Alfred Tennyson

**"We must pray for more prayer, for it is the world's mightiest healing force."**

Frank C. Laubach



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