

A Message from the Executive Director Guest House Institute



Jean Vanier in *Becoming Human* discusses “the liberation of the human heart from the tentacles of chaos and loneliness, and from those fears that provoke us to exclude and reject others. It is a liberation that opens us up and leads us to the discovery of our common humanity.” He addresses the journey from loneliness to a love that transforms, a love that grows in and through belonging, a belonging that can include as well as exclude. The discovery of our common humanity liberates us from self-centered compulsions and inner hurts; it is the discovery that ultimately finds its fulfillment in forgiveness and in loving those who are our enemies. It is the process of truly becoming human.

Vanier proclaims our brokenness and need for healing, and this in a community that embraces those most disadvantaged in order to be healed ourselves!

In considering trauma and addiction, the topic of this special issue of *Guest House Review*, I believe there is an underlying drive inherent in all human beings; that is, the drive to be run amuck by instincts and disorders of desire. As Catholic Christians, we hail from a tradition steeped in the foundations of our primordial parents of whom it is said by Paul, “through one man sin entered the world and with sin death; however, the good news is we have been redeemed and the gift is not like the offense. For if by the offense of the one man all died, much more did the grace of God and the gracious gift of the one man Jesus Christ, abound for all. The gift is entirely different from the sin committed by the one man.” It seems to me that just how we understand, believe, and respond to this “good news” makes for the differences among us.

Eric Fromm said, “Love is the answer to the problem of human existence.” Jesus established the two great commandments as both involving the act of loving, first God, and then our neighbor as

our selves. Johannes Baptist Metz in his *Poverty of Spirit* suggests the need for God to command us to love ourselves, as we tend more towards self rejection and the denial of our human nature. He suggests that we are mostly “closet heretics” in that we do not really believe we are loveable. Love is an active process and certainly relational. We are relational from conception in fact triadic. We describe our God as the Triune God. We further discuss the relationship of each person of the Trinity to the other. They are indivisible. We describe our church as the body of Christ and ourselves as children of God and brothers and sisters in Christ. Paul describes a body that is symbiotic in the sense that when one part of the body ails all of the body is sick. In the process of addiction and recovery one comes to a humbling recognition through the experience of powerlessness and complete loss of control. Like Soren Kierkegaard’s *Sickness Unto Death* one is unhappy with the world, one’s self, and – the most insulting aspect of all – one can do nothing to be rid of one’s self! One feels there is no alternative and so there is a frozen resignation to the misery of the enslavement of the addictive process. I believe that all great lives, as recorded for the edification of the Christian community, involve a coming to terms with the reality of our brokenness. The ability to embrace and love both our selves and others in a life that desperately needs God’s redemptive love is truly a grace to be sought.

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