

THE FACES OF COMMUNITY

GOD REVEALS HIMSELF ONE FACE AT A TIME

A PLANK'S OPINION

- Marc Grosberg

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## 1. INTRODUCTION - *Vanity Of Vanities*

Imagine I actually spent almost two years worried about what to say today

Would it be intelligent enough?

Will I make a fool of myself?

Am I qualified to speak to this Community?

Where will I find the time to avoid all of the above?

Sr. Paul...

I literally resisted for one entire year and then dodged facing the impending reality for most of the second and in the process put poor Sr. Paul to the test.

That is all just Vanity!

Put Simply. I have been asked by Sr. Paul to show my face to this community, to reveal some of the inner thoughts that cause my heart to burn. And to do this in the confidence that this is indeed a community and therefore whatever I reveal will be accepted with love, reverberated among us and reflected to me through you – like an echo - in a transforming way as only love can do.

Put this way my speaking here reminds me of sharing openly after Centering Prayer.

I can live with that...

So let us begin.....

## 2. THE FOUNDATION COMMUNITY – Woven together by the journey

I don't know about you...but I never signed a membership form. Nor did I pay an entrance fee or receive a booklet entitled 'Foundation Rule by Sr. Paul.' I don't even have a tie, badge or jersey to show as a symbol of my belonging.

The Foundation is many things; a location, 36 Cascade Main Road. A place where 'self development' courses are offered, a collection of Centering Prayer groups, a group of people touched by Sr. Paul etc. All these things, and more, happen at or through the Foundation. However it seems to me that the Foundation is much more than any collection of these diverse activities.

At its core, the Foundation is a community of companions, travelling on a similar journey.

The essence of this community lies in the journey. ...walked upon individually - but facilitated and supported as a group.

We are a group of persons attracted by a common thread: a taste for truth; a deep yearning to connect with God, to become more like Him, to become one with Him.

“How our hearts burn within us” when we share and discover this truth.

This community is a very diverse one; it is not a field with one type of cultivated flower, remember there is no 'rule'. The Foundation is more like the forest of Ortinola, where each different tree grows toward the light... in its own way, at its own pace. Or like a symphony with very distinctive, different notes played by diverse instruments. We are individually as different as Peter was from Paul, and even as different as Wednesday Port-of-Spain Centering Prayer group is to

Freeport Centering Prayer group. Like all of God's creation there is great beauty in our diversity.

However, not to lose focus, it is precisely because each of us is on a specific and personal journey of transformation toward the one truth that we are a community.

We are woven together by the common journey.

Put another way, as we journey, "Deep calls unto Deep" Ps 42:7

The journey itself binds us together as community. And since the One we journey toward is love itself, as we get closer to Him we become closer to one another.

### 3. FACES – Surface / Surface Self – True Self

This journey is both inward (to find our true selves) and outward (to reveal this true self to the world).

The journey we are on individually as person and collectively as community is inward in nature. We seek to journey from the surface self to the true self and ultimately to the Divine Indwelling. Because it is an inner journey – it can take place anywhere; home, Ortinola, Rampanalgas and at any time of day or night and in different formats; courses, retreats, centering prayer groups. There is no set rule book or blueprint – only that we be open to the presence and action of God within.

This journey, though, is always lived and reflected in daily life. It is part of the pre-destined nature of our lives as persons created in the image and likeness of God, that the journey takes place in the middle of our lives, in the midst of the world.

The Foundation facilitates, through its activities, our retreating inward to find our true self. However the process can only be tested, refined and proven when we continue this journey outward by revealing our true selves and facing the world.

Put another way the treasures we unearth while doing the inner work have no value unless and until they are polished by our revealing them through daily living, showing our faces to the world.

This is the rhythm of the journey we are on as ‘community’ – like the breathing in and breathing out of life.

And this rhythm enriches our very selves, our community... the world.

In this way we are truly participating in the Revelation of God’s Face in the World.

The Inward Journey always leads to Outward Revelation.

#### 4. GOD’S WAY – *The Universal in the Particular*

God has chosen to reveal himself, His universal love in the particularity of our created world.

Up to this point I have tried to share that the Foundation for Human Development is indeed a community and to describe this community as a group of persons on a similar journey to find and be transformed by the divine indwelling whose chosen mission is to reveal God’s face to the world.

Now I want to focus on some of God's specific revelations of his face in particular history as an illustration of our mission as Foundation: journeying toward God in the world.

(A) *Incarnation – Embodiment of God in the World*

“In the sixth month, the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a town of Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man named Joseph, of the house of David, and the virgin's name was Mary.” Lk1:26

We have a template – Mary

It seems to me that Mary made space in herself for God, for His word.

God asked her for this space and Mary consented to the action and presence of God within.

“Let it be done to me according to thy Word.”

It did not end there with the one event – she continued to make room for God throughout her life “pondering these things in her heart.”

Therefore she is the template of how we live this mission to reveal God's countenance – to become the embodiment of his word – bringing his presence wherever we go: to the lost child in Jerusalem, to the wedding, to the cross: To all the activities and events of our daily lives.

How is this divine mission possible in my simple ‘Nazareth’ life? She asked, as we might.

The Angel says: “Nothing is impossible to God”. (Luke 1:37)

(B) *Resurrection And Personal Transformation*

The Resurrection is not a grand event by any worldly standard. As in almost all of God's revelations, it is revealed personally, often in small groups and inner spaces like the upper room.

I recently had new insight about the apostles. In John 21 after the Resurrection, they went FISHING! Perhaps they were not cowardly...or lazy...or slow to grasp. Perhaps, having been with Jesus for three years, they understood that Jesus expected them to be exactly who they were – fishermen.

When Jesus found them he did not tell them “What are you doing, fishing? After all I have taught you?” He, in fact, assisted with their catch and ate their fish. It is from their particular daily work and lives that he called them and missioned them.

God's transformation is always personal.

God uses us where we are at, in the particularity of who we are.... in our daily lives.

God transforms us from within our daily lives so that our daily lives maybe transformed.

God can transform us from fishermen to fishers-of-men.

##### 5. OUR MISSION: *Revealing God's face in the world*

As part of our own transformation, we are called to become part of God's revealing himself.

So how do I do this in my daily life? I do not have the answers just some insights into how we can become God's face in the world.

*(a) The Evangelization of Daily Life*

Perhaps we have become falsely enamored with the lives of the Big Saints. Not many of us are called to feed the poor in Calcutta or to evangelize in distant lands. Each of us though is called to evangelize our daily life. To show love and charity to those we encounter daily. Those we meet randomly who need our help – the proverbial ‘old lady who needs to cross the road.’

But even this is a bit romantic and heroic....

What about those we encounter again and again? This is often the most difficult evangelization where real courage and humility is required. The neighbor, or boss, or co-worker, or gas station attendant who is ‘always rude’ or that person who we are close to, maybe who we live with, that has a particular habit that gets ‘under our skin’.

To let go of the box we have put someone in, the pattern we allow our relationships to get locked into, to stop thinking ill or speaking ill of them, to show that person love and charity where it is not merited and unlikely to be requited or maybe even noticed.

This, it seems to me, is the true and deep evangelization we as Foundation are called to because it requires that we first be transformed and then have the courage to reveal our transformed face.

*(b) Daily Martyrdom - Choosing God in Hard Times*

Martyrdom is all about choices.

It is unlikely that any of us will be called upon to choose between keeping our heads and betraying our beliefs.

The daily martyrdom I am highlighting is choosing to be open to God's presence in times of hardship. Choosing not to allow hardship or pain or frustration to become a space where I exclude God.

This martyrdom is an active martyrdom.

I choose not to expect everything to go my way.

I choose not to walk around glumly when things go wrong.

I choose to love and trust God in times of hardship.

I choose to thank the Lord for every setback, trial and frustration.

I choose to surrender to Him and His will as he separates me from my surface self expectations.

I choose - in humility and openness - to see the hand of God leading me – not into temptation – but through the valley of death.

In every single place where temptation tells me to exclude the light of God's face and turn away... there God is facing us... not leading us into temptation, but, by our surrender, delivering us from evil.

This is slow martyrdom of being stripped of all our pretences and false expectations.

## 6. A PRAYER – “Lead Me”...

If silence is God's chosen language, then on Holy Saturday He talked plenty! I think most of you know that I feel there is a deep connection between the

Foundation and Holy Saturday and I have literally found myself within that connection.

There is something about the complete surrender of Jesus into the hands of the Father and that moment being ‘held in place in silence’ by the Holy Spirit for all of Holy Saturday that fills me with awe.

I cannot do it justice with words and the few of you who have endured the Holy Saturday meditation will know that it is mostly silence.

Recently I have seen Holy Saturday in the Our Father, in the words Lead Me.

LEAD ME.

There is an implied truth here; the one doing the leading has been there before.

We are being led to a place/through a place that has already been illuminated; that has already been seen by another.

He knows it and therefore we are safe.

LEAD ME is an act of blind faith and trust, an act of surrender.

It is a Holy Saturday moment “not my will but thine.”

We are called to faith beyond death.

We are journeying through many particular and specific “deaths” to get there.

We are called to faith that we will become one with the universal God only by living his presence in the particular moments of our daily life.

So we keep on journeying, stripping away in the present all our limited expectations of what it may mean to be one with God.

LEAD ME ON THIS JOURNEY

## 7. CONCLUSION – Seeing God Face to Face

What does it mean to encounter God face to face?

“For God so loved the world that he sent his only Son” (Jn 3:16) into the world to reveal his face.

Jesus says to Phillip, “Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father.” Jn 14:9

What face do I show in the roles that I play on a daily basis – as spouse, boss, father, citizen, customer, driver, friend, community member?

I believe that individually and as a Foundation we are missioned to bring the face of God to the now of our lives. Our lives in all their particularity, moment by moment – at school, church, work, home.....

What does it mean to encounter God – face to face?

For us, as community, it means a continuous journey inward to discover our true selves, created in the image and likeness of God. Only then as the very journey demands: to turn our attention outward, to reveal this face to the world in particular encounters we have each day.

It means to seek the face of the living God.

His very image and likeness within ourselves

Then to reveal and share this image with the world.

To seek the face of the living God within

To be the face of the living God without

God reveals Himself one face at a time.

This is seeing God – face to face – in the world.

God – the universal truth – reveals himself one face at a time - in specific ways at particular moments through unique persons, through each one of us.

In the end, I guess, it is quite simple, we are God's face in all the various communities of our lives.

May God lead us on this journey.

A Metaphor - *THE GREEN LOG OF ST JOHN OF THE CROSS*

We start off like green logs

Resistant when placed in the fire

Our transformation takes time

We groan and crackle in the fire until we dry out

Then we burst into flames and become one with the fire

So we must take each tear, each frustration, each set back as a preparation by God for bursting into the fire of his love.

The Foundation is particular adept at walking us through this drying out process this deep transformation of the slippery wet log into a blazing ember.

All in God's time,...with His Divine Patience.

## GOD'S MATH

The math of love just does not add up.

Say we own 100 sheep and we have 99 in the pen safe and sound.

SO, we leave them?? To journey into the wilderness to find the 1 lost sheep!

The world says...

This is not normal logic / politics / economics ... For example:

In Democracy – majority rules. The 99 say “Protect us and lose the 1!”

In Capitalism – least lost = most profit. Cut your losses and move on.

In Creation – the basic law of self-preservation is that the leader of the herd will allow the lion to eat one calf from the flock in order to protect the rest.

So this way of thinking is radically different to the world in which we live.

The Good Shepherd...

He leaves the entire flock to find the lost 1!

In fact – even more radically, he will lay down his life for that 1 sheep.

How can the life of one sheep be worth the loss of life of the shepherd?

God's Math – The Math of Love...it does not add up...

ONE can save all.

Through the particular action of a person in this moment enters the universal love of God.

A Poem - OCEANS

You call me out upon the waters, the great unknown  
I feel my fear  
And there I find you in the mystery, in oceans deep  
My faith will stand

I will call upon your name  
And keep my eyes above the waves  
When oceans rise, my soul will rest in your embrace  
For, I am yours and you are mine.

Your grace abounds in deepest waters  
You sovereign hand, will be my guide  
Where my feet fail and fear surrounds me  
You never fail and you won't start now  
Spirit, lead me deeper where my faith is without borders  
Let me walk upon the waters whenever you will call me  
Take me deeper than my feet could ever wander  
And my faith will be made stronger  
In the presence of my Savior  
Where my faith is without borders  
(like your love)

Matt Crocher, Joel Houston, Solomon Ligthelm