

Helping find out who we are

One Catholic Priest has called the Christian Season of Lent a time for "divine therapy." Lent is a time during which the Christian goes on a kind of divine retreat to learn more about basic human instinct. It is basic human instinct that is at the heart of our lives; human instinct deeply influences our lives from birth. Basic human instinct can unconsciously, and sometimes consciously, influence our conduct, our thoughts, our feelings and our beliefs. Lent is a time of personal reflection.



PAUL MELROSE

In Lent we come to know how these basic instincts have influenced our lives. This is a time when we face those emotions from which spiritual and psychological pain derives. Feeling of shame, anger, greed or humiliation can invite us to look at our lives closely from life's earliest moments. Depending on whether our basic instincts were unduly gratified or frustrated gives us a clue to understanding how we have satisfied our wants. Satisfying our instincts too much may lead to an inflated sense of self-exaltation. We'll think our wants should be satisfied all the time and we'll have no sense of the frustrations which arise naturally when we cannot satisfy those wants.

This frustration, which we think is unfair, often leads us to shame or anger. Depression sets in as a strong after-effect to calm those feelings of anger and frustration about which we feel ashamed.

Temptations, and how we handle them, are deeply related to our sense of personal identity — how we think and understand ourselves, what we believe and how we

behave. Our deepest instincts from birth and how they are channeled and shaped strongly influence how we understand ourselves and interact with others. For the Christian, and similarly in other religious traditions, a right relationship with God or with the ultimate is the goal of identity and where the temptation, if you will, should lead.

Temptation away from the good and the moral for many is the work of the tempter, the devil. Each decision that we make and our experience that we have offers the opportunity to set a course, make a choice, and go one way or the other. Each decision presents the opportunity to gain a greater awareness of our self and therefore of our identity. This opportunity can open the door to greater and more mature personhood or to a view that thinks less of oneself and may fall prey to the tempter, seduced by a choice that may over exalt one self in a way that challenges a sense of responsibility.

The greatest temptation is to put one self first. The biggest myth about psychotherapy is that it is totally "me" focused so as to grow narcissism in an overly indulgent manner. Rather, the best in pastoral psychotherapy, and the route, which the Judeo-Christian tradition lays out for its adherents, is to love God, and neighbor and oneself; by doing then, love of self and neighbor is an equal footing.

Temptation so often reveals that deeper instinctual nature of human identity as to place one's self above and over the neighbor. The sense of love and purpose that is the holding environment of the Judeo-Christian tradition becomes limited by the overly attentive or exclusive focus on the self.

There is a place in faith for times and moments of reflection. It may be Lent for the Christian. But both Judaism and Islam hold up special

times of personal contemplation as well. The kinds of temptations that arise can either arise from within the self or evoke responses from the self that may be less mature, limited by the choices, which come up in human experience.

Life experiences which can confuse identity and strain relationships reduce the breadth of perspective needed to be adequately responsible for self and others. These conflicts which lead to negative moral consequences also can open the door to increased personal growth and at the same time the sense of the sacred goal and direction of one's life.

The Christian term for this kind of in depth prayer and attention to one self is repentance. The emotional and behavioral aspects of this are often what leads to a breakthrough in an otherwise stuck relationship, invites movement out of a deep depression to a more solid and hopeful life grounded in faith and purpose, to a reduction of anxiety and anxiety-induced behavior. Jesus showed his willingness to be an ally with his brothers and sisters, fellow human beings, as they traveled life's road with these struggles of temptation.

The church and the religious communities are those allies for their congregants. When the road is of such seriousness or depth the congregational religious leader or the pastoral psychotherapist may be called upon.

The temptations which we face serve to show us much about who we are and invite us to take the road to greater love of other as well as self, which is the road to healing and wholeness.

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WEDDINGS/ENGAGEMENTS

CYRUS-TILTON
Mr. and Mrs. Dennis Cyrus of Farmington Hills announce the engagement of their daughter, Holly, of Woodstock, Ga. to Todd Tilton, of Woodstock, Ga. He is the son of Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Tilton of Tilton Park, Ill.



The bride-to-be is a graduate of Alma College and holds bachelor's degrees in international business and French. She currently works in physical distribution management for McMaster-Carr Supply Company in Atlanta.

Her fiancé is a graduate of the University of Illinois. He earned a bachelor's degree in landscape architecture and is employed as a project manager for Medalist Golf, Inc., in Alhambra, Ga. A June wedding is planned at Antioch Lutheran Church in Farmington Hills.

LINDLEY-GALVIN
Mr. and Mrs. Larry Lindley of Terre Haute, Ind. announce the engagement of their daughter, Sarah Lindley, of Chicago, Ill. to Gary Galvin of Chicago.



He is the son of Mr. and Mrs. William Galvin of Farmington Hills.

The bride-to-be is a graduate of the University of Dayton and is a student at John Marshall Law School in Chicago.

Her fiancé is a graduate of the University of Dayton and is employed by TI Group as an Internet Consultant.

An April wedding is planned in Terre Haute, Ind.

The couple will live in Indianapolis.

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