

S.F.O. Spiritual Letter for August 2008.

Inner Healing as a Key to Overcoming Personal Dysfunction.

Many of us can remember the fire burning within us as we sought to draw closer to God. Part of this was to deepen our religious commitment. For those of us truly afire with the Spirit nothing seemed impossible, indeed all things were possible in Christ. Unfortunately after a period of time this zeal & energy diminish. We don't exactly know why or how it diminished within us, but we now often find ourselves in a dry difficult place. Does any of this resonate with you? Perhaps one of the reasons isn't the people around us as much as the way our past, if left unhealed, can imprison us.

As you may be aware there is a very close relationship between memories of past hurts and the way we look upon our lives in the present. For example even our image of God can be coloured by the negative experiences we may have had in dealing with human authority. A person who grew up with a father who seemed distant is likely to view God as being distant and inaccessible as well.

Behind every wounded memory is a fear. That could be the fear of rejection, the fear of being unloved or uncared for, in any case whatever the fear is, it's buried deep inside and operates automatically. Such fears become strongholds in us that drive aspects of our personality. These strongholds are designed to protect and shield us from further pain or damage, which they do. Unfortunately they also keep us trapped in past hurts and prevent us from developing. They impede our conversion, and therefore also impede our freedom.

It is only when we **give God access** to the recesses of our hearts that we will begin to experience divine healing. Divine healing? Yes, divine healing because, as Sacred Scripture shows, at its root, every wound and every sin flows from a wounded relationship with God. Therefore when we seek to repair these wounds God can restore us. So what are some of the features that we need to be aware of if we are to be restored to that relationship with God, through the Holy Spirit, where our hearts will once again be burning within us?

- We need to admit that we have a problem. This is often apparent when people have problems with us (arguments or gossiping).
- We need to pray and ponder the Sacred Scriptures every day, especially the Gospel accounts of our Lord's passion and suffering. As he forgave those who crucified him, we are touched by the Holy Spirit to forgive those who have done us harm.

- Be aware of, and alert to, the thoughts that go through your mind every day. Compare the thoughts going through your mind with the Gospel accounts. For example when you encounter a certain person that irritates you: be aware of your thoughts towards them. Are they Gospel centered or not?
- Open your heart to true repentance. Just because you go to confession or say that you forgive someone doesn't mean that *metanoia* has taken place in you. *Metanoia* involves a change in the way we think. 'I believe in Jesus now, I want to be with him and like him, I'll not think about so and so like that again!'
- Practice forgiveness through faith in Jesus. After all Jesus in the Gospel of Matthew (Chapter 6) says: 'unless you forgive others their sins against you, your Father in heaven **will not** forgive you!!!!' If you have great difficulty in forgiving people from your heart (not just with your lips) then pray to Jesus for the gift of true forgiveness. As you do this look at a crucifix.
- Pray to God to set you free from the deformity of the past. Healing can be immediate, or it might unfold over time (I've experienced both). In any case God's healing, if sincerely and persistently sought will always come. After all becoming holy is nothing more than becoming whole – the way God meant us to be.
- Seek help if necessary. Get a spiritual director or spiritual friend. One who is Gospel orientated and interested in helping you. That means one who listens to you, not one who does a lot of talking when you are with them.

Allowing God to break down the strongholds of negative and dysfunctional memories within us leads to healing and via this to freedom and renewed life. It defuses and washes out of our system the self centered and destructive attitudes that have developed due to past hurts. Like Francis, it is only when we embrace the liberating message of the Cross that we, like him, will know true healing and true joy. Amen.

May the Lord grant you peace.

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to all Local Assistants of our Order in the Regional Fraternity