

Spirited Stories and Quotes

From Fr. John Powers, C.P – Passionist

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goggle – spirited stories Fr. John Powers

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Sources and Footnotes continued to be researched.

INTRODUCTION

The **S O U L** is made of **STORIES**

S – Stories **O** – Of **U** – Us/You **L**iving,

Learning, **L**oving, **L**aughing, **L**osing, **L**ying, **L**onging,
and **L**etting Go, and again, **L**etting Go, and again **L**etting Go,
and again, and again, and finally **Letting Go Into God**

DAVAR AKHEYR = ANOTHER WORD, STORY, THING

I STORY, THEREFORE I AM.

I'M A WOUNDED STORYTELLER.

THE SOUND OF GOD IS STORY.

THE ANGEL OF STORY IS NARRATUS-NARRATAS.

I AM A MEMBER OF THE TONGUE TRIBE.

I PRACTICE NARRATIVITY, INCARN-NARRATION.

I'M A STORI-FIER, A PARA-BOLIZER.

I MOONLIGHT AS A DAY DREAMER.

TELL YOUR STORY UNTIL YOU TELL IT TRUE.

IT'S A PURGA-STORY.

PARABLES WILL GET YOU KILLED.

INDEX

1. Once Upon A Time - p. 1
2. The Truth – p. 7
3. The Story Box – p. 8
4. Heaven’s Gate – p. 9
5. A Bill of Rights for The Deceased – p. 10
6. One Hundred Gold Coins – p. 11
7. Have You Found Jesus? – p. 13
8. The Greener Grass – p. 14
9. Sisyphus Mountain – p. 15
10. The One- and Ten-Dollar Bills – p. 17
11. The Hookless Line – p. 17
12. The Flapping Flag – p. 19
13. Still Amazing Grace – p. 20
14. The River Twice – p. 21
15. The Land of Laughter – p. 22
16. Shall I Take Away the Pain? - p. 22
17. Simon Said – p. 23
18. A Recipe for Bread – p. 24
19. The Songster – 26
20. A Silent Debate – p. 28
21. The Ring of Words – p. 30
22. The Cross-Maker – p. 33
23. Tell Someone – p. 35
24. Change Course – p. 35
25. Tell it Again – p. 36
26. The Gift Exchange – p. 36
27. The Smell of Bread – p. 37
28. Talk Really Stunk – p. 39
29. Angelic Music – p. 41

30. It All Depends – p. 43
31. The Beautiful Heart – p. 44
32. Put Her Down – p. 46
33. Smelly and The Gossipites – p. 47
34. Shoes and Socks – p. 52
35. The Door – p. 53
36. The Lawn of Dandelions – p. 53
37. The Leaning Tree – p. 54
38. Throw it Out – p. 57
39. The List – p. 59
40. The Sermon – p. 60
41. The Devil Retires – p. 61
42. Uppers and Downers – p. 62
43. The Wish – p. 65
44. I Believe God Is.... p. 68
45. I Promise Today To – p. 69
46. Down the Aisle – p. 70
47. What I've Learned – p. 71
48. Grace Filled – p. 74
49. The Listener – p. 77
50. Conscience Versus Authority – p. 79
51. Standing on One Foot – p. 79
52. Leaving Home – p. 80
53. Uncommonly Honest Confession – p. 81
54. Sounds of Story and Ways of Discovery – p. 81
55. To Him Who Waits – p. 82
56. The Stupid – p. 82
57. My Choices – p. 82
58. The Lion Who Forgot How to Roar – p. 83

1. ONCE UPON A STORY

By Fr. John Powers, C.P.

In a colorful kingdom as far away as our imaginations can carry us, there lived a tall king, a tyrant, terrified of only one thing: the secret that the short fellow, Story, knew about him.

The king knew how powerful Story had grown, how just one such as Story had the potential to transform an entire nation with his truth. This truly scared the tyrant.

Desiring to protect his crown, his power, his secret, the tyrant decided to have Story arrested and imprisoned. The King had tried for years to control Story with threats of closeting him away, but Story could not be dominated by fear. So, worried as he was, the tyrant was willing to risk open rebellion by the people to silence this Story character.

To most people, Story had the face of a child, was often mistaken for an innocent; but to the King, Story had the wisdom and stamina of a seasoned troublemaker. As far as the King was concerned, Story was a dangerous thorn in his side, and had to go.

The tyrant simply refused to believe that trouble was just opportunity dressed in ragged clothes, so Story had to be trapped and enslaved. After all, reasoned the King, was it not better for one like Story to be locked away, repudiated, even killed, than for all such as Story to rise and bring disaster?

Still, it was true that Story knew the tyrant's innermost secret, and that telling it could destroy the King's authority and power. But then it is nature of Story, after all is said and done: to store secrets, and to save memories — telling them into some storified form.

Because Story went where he willed, spinning stealthily through the Kingdom, day and night and week upon week, the King charged his best soldiers to capture his elusive nemesis, this lord of common folk lore.

The tyrant's soldiers of fortune — and of fear and denial — set traps throughout the Kingdom to capture the talented and slippery Story. Once cornered on the edge of the village of Myth, the soldiers dragged Story before the king.

"Do you aspire and conspire to more power and influence than my own?" the tyrant demanded.

Story knew exactly how to reply: with silence.

"I command you to answer me!" the King cried angrily. "Do you or do you not," he continued, "preach subversion of the *status quo*, offer new and uncommon images to motivate the people, teach odd and alternative solutions, remind the masses of everlasting and ever-troubling truth — all expressly contrary to my wishes? Do you not conspire to inspire?" "answer me. answer me," the King screamed, livid with rage.

Story held his tongue, knowing that, no matter his answer, it would fall on deaf ears.

"Strip him of his parable power," the King commanded. "Tear off his cloak of fantasy and divide it amongst you. Burn his fabled shirt, whip him with a strap of reality, and drag him off to the farthest edge of the kingdom. Hide him in a cave so dark and dank that no one will ever dare enter.

"Chain Story," the tyrant went on, "to the largest stone in the deepest abyss, and leave him there forever. Let's see if Story can save himself. Let's see how long he will last without someone to hear his words, his songs, his poetry. Surely, without a listener, Story will have no more happily ever after."

Story, of course, struggled for freedom all the way to the cave, for he knew that, without his truth, the soul of every man, woman and child — even the very soul of the earth — would surely starve.

Story was, before anything was said or done, food for the soul. Story nurtured nature. The very essence of the soul is Story, with a purpose to tell itself into the light, to make its way in liberty, freely among the folk.

Isn't life, between all that's said and done — Story in and Story out?

With Story secreted and chained in a cave, the Kingdom became de-storied. Romance, irony, tragedy and comedy were quelled and dying. With gossip, songs, poetry, fables, dreams, lore, folk tales, myths and parables suppressed, the people of the Kingdom became dejected and sad. The longer Story was enslaved in silence, the more the souls of the citizenry of the now colorless Kingdom were draped in drab depression.

If the truth be told, as it eventually was, everyone in the kingdom already knew the king's supposedly terrifying secret. In fact, the biggest secret in the Kingdom was that *everyone* held the same deeply seated dread: the great fear that if others knew *their* inner story, they would be rejected; laughed out of the Kingdom, abandoned and bereft.

The towering tyrant King, seeing that less and less was being said or done in the kingdom, sat alone on his throne in sweats of fear. Had he silenced Story for much longer than a mere once-upon-a-time? And, in so doing, had he stripped the Kingdom of its life and vitality? Would there be a planting and harvest this year? Would children be born, work get done, and wishes of the cruel King be carried out — or would Story deprivation destroy even the king's wishes and wants?

Little did the king know, however, that Story could not be defeated by silence. Story and Silence are great friends. You can't have one without the other. A pause, a waiting moment, a hesitation is part of the telling.

Finally, after enough tics and tocks had passed, an Elder- wise woman in the Village decided that, no matter what the King might say or do, it was time for Story to rise for telling again. Ultimately, the future of Story in the Kingdom of Us was in the grizzled hands of an old woman.

There was in the kingdom a kindly old grandmother that every mother, father, brother, sister, neighbor, stranger, friend, enemy — or even a cruel king — could love.

She was a wise woman, seasoned by time and experience, with a long and living memory. In fact, this gentle grandmother could remember so well that she knew why the Great Creator had made human beings with an itch on the top of the head; a small indentation in the middle of the upper lip (called a philtrum); a hip on either side; and arms that could be raised up high in the air.

The itch, she knew, was placed on the head so that those in the kingdom would ask questions and scratch out the answers. The small indentation in the upper lip, well, that was a place to put a finger and pause in pondering over questions and answers. The hips on either side were for supporting the hands when you took a firm and final stance; and the arms could be raised, in declaration, higher than your shoulders? We'll see about that shortly.

The grandmother scratched her graying head, waited, waited, and waiting for a bit too long, just to heighten the expectation and then decided to take the firmest of firm stands against the King's reign of fear.

"This, Story, "she almost chanted, "that the terrified tyrant has repudiated and silenced will become the cornerstone Story; he will become the Savior Story and the Telling Truth. Come, follow me! It is time to act!"

At that, all the gathered folk paraded to the edge of the Kingdom. They traveled to set Story free once and for all time — for even longer than either a once-upon-a-time or a-happily-ever-after, that is.

Finally, standing outside the cave of Story's silence, the grandmother placed her hands on her hips once again. She explained for all her kin and kind how the Seasoned Ones in her family — her grandma, grandpa, mom, dad, uncles, and aunts — could make Story appear to speak once again.

All they had to do, she told the gathered multitude, was raise their hands aloft, high into the air, and proclaim the words that rang with the voices of beginnings.

The intrepid grandmother was the first to step up. After too much had been said and not enough yet done, she stepped up to the entrance of the cave and threw her gnarled hands toward the sky. In an ancient but powerful voice, she proclaimed a remembered beginning.

"In a long-ago moment," she intoned.

After the grandmother, one Villager after another stepped forward, scratched the top of his or her head, placed a finger on a lip to ponder, reached deep into their memory, placed their hands on hips, and raised their arms and proclaimed their very own way of setting story free. proclamation:

A clockmaker in the Kingdom pronounced: "In the time between tic and toc.

A writer stammered, saying: "Once upon an empty page."

A war veteran cadenced a call: "In the days before all war-a, peace was waged on every shore; "sound off, one two, sound off three four."

A therapist suggested: "In a time before fear rejected pain and turned it into suffering, there was a truth that set us free for life."

A singer stood before the cave and chanted: "In earlier days, when music was incarnated, when everyone knew the varied notes to sing."

A child stepped up to take a try at resurrecting Story. The little girl whispered: "Before me there was." Still others rose to testify: "Once upon

a future," "At the beginning of began." "Way back when, between then and now." "In the earliest inklings.", and "Before Kings were crowned."

More and more neighbors stepped forward to daringly whisper or shout, "Just after once-upon-a-time, but before happily-ever-after." "Long before time passed." When once there was — and once there was not." "At the dawn of all, when drums first found their beat, and fire its heat." "In the days when wishing still wondered out loud." "Before today got its start," and the most important, essential, supreme, and original pronouncement "In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God."

Then, all together, the neighbors, friends, enemies, family, kin and kind of the Kingdom reached down together into their shared memories, raised their hands as high as they could lift them and proclaimed the beginning that everyone faithfully remembered...

"Once Upon A Time."

With a rumbling from deep within the soul of the earth, the cave of silence shook — and the opportunity was seized.

Out stepped Story wrapped only in dust and dirt.

"Quick," the venerable Grandmother said, "cover Story in fiction, in confabulations, songs, parables and Midrash. Clothe Story with the most novel apparels.

"Of course," the mighty Grandmother said, "Story will be invisible to those who need to see to believe but for those who already believe, Story will speak with a whisper, in songs, sign language, and actions.

Well, after all is nearly said and done — which is the last time that phrase will be uttered in this story, for, as you well know, it's not how much you've said or done, but the truth you are willing to tell that matters.

Well, as I scratch my head, put my finger into the philtrum above my lip, put my hands on my hips, and raise my arms I into the air, I can only tell your Majesty that life gives you a choice.

“Listen to your story, your true story, the tale you are afraid to tell anyone, then scratch your head, put the finger across your lips, put hands on hips, raise your arms and speak your truth with love.

“If you, O Kings, speak your truth with love, the people will listen and, perhaps believe, perhaps.”

2. THE TRUTH

Adapted by Fr. John Powers, C.P.

One day it seems this fellow name Truth was taking a walk in the country when he came upon a beautiful lake. Since it was a rather warm day Truth decided to go for a swim, so Truth took off his cloths, hung them on a bush and jumped in the water.

As Truth was enjoying a swim, along came another fellow whose name was Falsehood. Spying Truths fine cloths on the bush Falsehood had an idea. Falsehood decided to switch clothing with Truth. Falsehood took off his cloths, hung them on the same bush, put on Truths cloths and stole away.

Truth finished swimming, came ashore, and saw what had happened. Truth, however, refused to put on Falsehoods clothing. Which is why we call him the “Naked truth.”

3. THE STORY-BOX

by Fr. John Powers, C.P.

Once upon the here and now there lived an ancient tribe in the deepest and darkest part of the jungle the villagers of an ancient tribe were sitting still for hours, for hours almost every day, listening to the tales of the old Storyteller.

Much to their shock and surprise the villagers turned one day to find standing before them a wealthy and well-dressed traveler. After greeting the storyteller and the tribal member, the wealthy stranger decided to buy the tribe an incredibly special gift.

It took some time, but the rich man had electricity run into the village and then purchased the largest television set he could find, placing it right in the middle of the village.

The villagers having never seen a television before wandered over to sit before the noisy box to watch and listen to the stories it told. Hour after hour the tribe members sat mesmerized by how many tales the magic machine knew. Without blinking the story-box spun soap operas, sitcoms, mysteries, and short and long dramatic tales.

The rich man left the village happy, believing he had gifted the tribe with an almost eternal storyteller.

After only a few months, however, the rich man visited the tribe again and much to his surprise saw that the television set, although still spitting out its stories, sat off and alone while the people were again sitting before and listening intently to the wise village storyteller.

Confused and disappointed, the rich man went to the tribal Chief to ask why the people weren't watching the television.

The chief again thanked the rich man for having given the tribe the gift of the story box but then said, "The people preferred the stories that the Storyteller spins."

"But why?" the wealthy man asked the chief, "the television knows many more stories than the Storyteller knows?"

"You're right," the chief said. "The story box does know far more stories than the Storyteller, but the Storyteller knows us."

4. HEAVEN'S GATE

Adapted by Fr. John Powers, C.P.

Once upon the first Holy Saturday night after Jesus was crucified and laid to rest in a sepulcher tomb, but before Jesus' resurrection, the Devil decided that this was the perfect opportunity to try and fake his way through the Heavenly Gates. The Devil got all dressed in white and marched to the Heavenly Gates acting as if he were the about-to-be-risen Lord himself.

When the Gatekeeper saw what looked like the risen Lord coming toward the Gates, he went out to meet him.

"How can I help you?" the Gatekeeper asked.

In response to the Gatekeeper's question the Devil chanted a portion of a bible poem Psalm 24. "'Open up ancient gates! Open ancient doors! Let the King of Glory enter!"

The Gatekeeper responded to the Devil's chant by asking a question from the same Psalm, "Who is the King of Glory?"

The Devil threw his hands in the air in frustration and said, "I am the King of Glory, open the gates."

The Gatekeeper looked closely at the angelically dressed Devil and said. "I'm sorry, but I can't let you into Heaven. You're obviously not Jesus, the King of Glory."

"How do you know?" the Devil demanded.

The Gatekeeper stood tall and said, "Because you have no wounds in your hands."

5. A BILL OF RIGHTS FOR THE DECEASED

by Fr. John Powers, C.P.

1. The right to be remembered.
2. The right to be remembered as they truly were not as we wish they had been.
3. The right to be prayed for and prayed through, for they are where God is.
4. The right to be judged by God alone, for only God knows the hearts intent.

Believing, in faith, that those who have died are wherever God is, so we can believe, in faith, that they are surely with us still.

6. ONE HUNDRED GOLD COINS

Adapted by Fr. John Powers, C.P.

Once upon the day before tomorrow, as Seymour was walking down the road, he came upon a small leather bag lying in the dirt. He picked the bag up, opened it, and much to his shock and joy found that the bag was filled with gold coins.

Seymour, having fallen on extremely hard times, was a poor man. Now, however, he was rich beyond measure. Seymour took the bag of gold coins home, sat down with his wife, and counted out one hundred coins.

The next day Seymour went into the village to do a bit of window shopping. As he walked through the village square, Seymour saw a large sign posted for all to see. The sign read. "Lost one bag of gold coins, reward for return," signed the richest man in whole village. As Seymour walked home, he couldn't help but think, "That rich man is so wealthy he wouldn't even miss this money, and me, I'm poor."

Despite Seymour's struggle he knew that the right thing to do was to return the money. Seymour took the bag of coins to the rich man's house. After knocking on the rich man's door and stepping into the house Seymour held out the bag of one hundred gold coins.

The rich man grabbed the bag sat down and started to count. When the rich man finished counting the one hundred gold coins, he looked up to find Seymour staring at the coins.

"What do you want?" The rich man demanded.

Seymour whispered in reply, "The sign posted in the village said that there was a reward for the return of the coins. I was hoping for the promised reward."

"Are you a fool?" The rich man said. "I didn't become rich by handing out rewards, get lost!"

“But in justice you owe me a reward,” Seymour said.

The rich man, having just thought of a way to cheat Seymour out of the reward, said, “You think you deserve a reward. I’ll have you know that when I lost this bag there were two hundred gold coins in it. Now there are only one hundred coins. You stole a hundred of my gold coins. You’re nothing but a thief.”

Seymour stood up straight and said, “I’m not a thief. There were only one hundred gold coins in that bag. I just saw you count them.

“I know,” the rich man said, “I know that there were only one hundred gold coins in the bag, but I’m going to tell everyone in the village that there really were two hundred coins and that you’re a thief.”

Seymour grew angry saying, “There were only one hundred gold coins in that bag when I found it, not two hundred. I’m not a thief. We’re going to have to take this matter to the King.”

After hearing both sides of the story, the King, being able to discern the hearts intent, knew that the rich man was trying to cheat Seymour.

Looking at the rich man, the King asked, “You lost a bag of two hundred gold coins?” The rich man answered, “Yes.”

The King then turned to Seymour and asked, “Did you find a bag of only one hundred gold coins?” “Yes,” Seymour replied.

Looking back at the rich man the King said, “Obviously, the bag you lost is not the one Seymour found, so return to Seymour the bag of one hundred gold coins.”

Story adapted from an ancient Chinese tale about the angles in the life of Jiang Taigong (11th century BC) and from a famous Chinese Koan, “Taigong diaoyu, uanzhe shanggou” meaning, “A willing victim let’s himself be caught.”

7. HAVE YOU FOUND JESUS?

Adapted by Fr. John Powers, C.P.

One hot dry day George was lost and wandering here, there, and over. Suddenly, as George came around a corner, he saw a line of men and women standing in a line along the bank fast moving river.

As George slid down the hill, he saw what he was told was a Minister, dunking one person after another in and out of the water and then asking each one a question.

George, sweating from the heat, decided to stand in the line to be dunked as well.

Although George didn't know what the Minister asked each person as he lifted them out of the water, but he decided to take his turn and be dunked at last.

As George finally stepped into the water and up to the Minister he was taken by the shoulders and eased into the water, as all those had before him.

As George was lifted out of the water by the Minister, he was asked, he presumed, the same question that was asked of all of those before him.

"Have you found Jesus"?

George immediately answered. "No."

With that, The Minister again took George by the shoulders and dunked him again, asking the same question to which he responded "No".

The Minister dunked him again and again, asking each time he lifted George out of the water, "Have you found Jesus."

Again, and again George was dunked and asked the same question by the Minister.

Every time George was asked the same question by the Minister, his answer was the same until, until he had a different answer.

Frustrated the minister dunked him one more time and asked the same question this time yelling, "Have you found Jesus. yet"

With anger dripping from his chin George simply spit out the question, "Are you sure this is where Jesus fell in?"

8. THE GREENER GRASS

by Fr. John Powers, C.P.

Once upon a backyard, Simon was again cutting, fertilizing, edging, and weeding his lawn. Simon was obsessed with taking care of the grass. He wanted every blade manicured to perfection.

Despite all his work, however, Simon could not get his lawn to look as green, evenly cut, and neatly edged as the lawn on the other side of his back-yard fence. His neighbor's lawn was so beautiful that it was the envy of the neighborhood.

One day as Simon was cutting the grass along his backyard fence his friend Seymour stopped by.

"Simon," Seymour asked, "when are you going to give up this compulsion you have to make your lawn look as perfect as you think your neighbor's lawn is? This is nuts. Give it a rest."

"But, Seymour," Simon sighed as he said, "look at that lawn on the other side of the fence. It's greener than green and cut exactly and precisely. I want my lawn to look as green as the grass on the other side of that fence."

"But, Simon," Seymour said, "the grass on the other side of the fence is Astro turf."

9. SISYPHUS MOUNTAIN

by Fr. John Powers, C.P.

Once, long before yesterday, Seymour was walking around Sisyphus Mountain on his way home after helping a neighbor build a barn, when suddenly out of nowhere, a huge boulder came crashing down the mountain, heading directly at Seymour.

Not wishing to impede the progress of the boulder, Seymour stepped swiftly out of the way of the rumbling mass. The boulder finally rolled to a stop just a few feet from Seymour's feet.

Sometime later, as Seymour leaned against the aggressive, but now resting boulder, he saw a man descending the last few yards of the mountains slope.

Seymour immediately recognized that the man was Sisyphus, the Greek King who the Gods were pushing for trying to steal the fire of immortality, something that belonged only to the God's

Seymour introduced himself, patted the huge rock, and said to Sisyphus, "This boulder must belong to you?"

"Yes," Sisyphus answered, "as you have probably heard, the God's have demanded that I push this mountain of a rock over the top of this mountain as a punishment for my crime of trying to become as immortal as they are. The problem is," he continued, "that, every time I get the boulder almost to the mountain's peak, it slips away and rolls back down the mountain.

One of these days," Sisyphus whispered to Seymour, "when the Gods aren't looking, I'll get the Rock over the mountain one way or another."

"Well," Seymour said, "it seems as if you've got a little down time right now so why don't we sit and story for a while; perhaps we can figure out a way to show the God's that you've learned your lesson, that you're humble enough to be the kind of man who deserves to be just a King.

"No," Sisyphus said, "no down time, I don't have time to rest. I've got to get behind my fated task. And what" Sisyphus demanded of Seymour, "makes you, a simple workman, think you can find a way to get this boulder over the mountain top?"

"That is true," Seymour answered, "I am a workman, but I am not simple. I have" Seymour continued, "found that the best answer to a difficult task may be the tried and true, the simplest."

For example," Seymour continued, "perhaps you could try to roll the boulder around the mountain."

"Sadly," Sisyphus said, "my path is to get this bolder over the mountain, not around."

"Well," Seymour said," like most of us who have a heavy load to carry in life you may have another answer to your problem."

"What do you mean?" Sisyphus asked.

"Well," Sisyphus said as he took a hammer out of his bag of tools, "you could carry the huge boulder over the mountain a piece at a time." In fact, Sisyphus," Seymour concluded, "I'll help you break your boulder into smaller pieces if you like."

"Well," Sisyphus hummed. "Let me think about that for a while. One piece at a time, one step at a time. Let's see what the God's think of your answer."

"Well," Seymour hummed along, saying, "The God's may think you've learned your lesson and are truly worthy of being a simple King."

10. THE ONE AND TEN-DOLLAR BILLS

Adapted by Fr. John Powers, C.P.

A one-dollar bill and a ten-dollar bill die and go to heaven. While standing in line, waiting to get into Paradise, the one-dollar bill asks the ten-dollar bill, "So, tell me, what was is like living as a ten-dollar bill?"

"Well," the ten-dollar bill answered, "I ate in some of the finest restaurants and saw some of the most popular Broadway Shows, but now it's my turn to ask you the same question. What was your life on earth like as a one-dollar bill?"

"Well," the one-dollar bill replied, "all I ever saw was church, church, church."

11. THE HOOK-LESS LINE

Adapted by Fr. John Powers, C.P.

Once upon a mid-day clearly, Seymour went fishing. He prepared his old fishing rod and line and made his way to the well in the center of the village of US. Sitting on the stone edge of the well, feet dangling high above the water, Seymour cast a hook-less line down, down, down into the well.

Scores of villagers saw Seymour drop his empty and hook-less line into the well but didn't stop to question the odd fisherman. Seymour was well known for his own line of reasoning and they thought it best to ignore him.

A few daring villagers, however, did stop to watch Seymour fish in the well without a hook on his fishing line. Eventually they asked the inevitable questions. "Why, Seymour, are you fishing in a well and why are you fishing without a hook on your line?"

Seymour answered both questions with a simple, "You'll see."

Hours, nights, and days passed as Seymour sat on the edge of that well with his hook-less line floating on top of the water.

The story about Seymour's hook-less fishing line spread throughout the kingdom.

Eventually the King heard the fish tale about Seymour, saying, "I can't believe there's actually someone so foolish in my kingdom that he thinks fish swim in wells and can be caught without a hook. I must meet this fool for myself," the King concluded.

When the King arrived in the village square, the number of bystanders had grown into a crowd. The King processed dramatically through the gathering, watched Seymour fish in the well with a hook-less fishing line and then in a huff asked the question that no one else had asked.

"What, Seymour," the King asked, "do you think you can catch by fishing in a well without a hook on your line?"

"Well," Seymour said, "I thought I might catch a King."

Story adapted from an ancient Chinese tale about the angles in the life of Jiang Tiangong (11th century BC) and from a famous Chinese Kaon, "Tiangong Diaoyu, Uanzhe Shanggou," meaning, "A willing victim let's himself be caught

12. THE FLAPPING FLAG

by Fr. John Powers, C.P.

Not long after once upon a time there was a newly elected president of a newly established country. The President decided that his first order of business should be to have a flag made which the people could salute. So, the President asked a local tailor to design and sew a national flag.

The tailor had never designed or sewed a flag before, but he set to the task. He designed and sewed the best flag he could and took it to the state flag committee. They rejected it. He designed and sewed another flag. They rejected that one too. He tried again and again but every flag he took to the state flag committee they rejected.

Finally, in utter frustration the tailor went home, took a dirty sheet off his bed, wrote one word on one side and another word on the other side and took it to the state flag committee.

They loved it. A large celebration was held late one night to raise the new flag over the national assembly building.

A huge crowd gathered. Fireworks were shot into the sky. The flag was raised. The crowd roared. By the light of the fireworks it was easy to read what the tailor had scrawled on each side of the flapping flag.

On one side of the flag was written the word "US" and on the other side of the flag was written the word "THEM."

13. STILL AMAZING GRACE

by Fr. John Powers, C.P.

SING TO TUNE OF 'AMAZING GRACE'

Into the dark I must descend, -- With hope new life I'll find,
Accepting shadows life does send,-- God's grace will ever shine.

Imperfect as I stand this day, -- Before each neighbor mine.
I know I walk with feet of clay, -- Along with kin and kind.

When, hungry, lonely, angry, tired, -- When over-whelmed by fear,
I'll share my story, strength and hope, -- For truly I've been there.

Grace teaches that I must let go, -- Of all to which I cling,
For freedom is God's gift I know,-- Pray, grace, let freedom ring.

God grant to me serenity, -- To accept what I cannot change.
The courage to change the things I can, -- The difference to understand.

14. THE RIVER TWICE

by Fr. John Powers, C.P.

Once upon a daytime, Seymour was walking along the river that ran through the Village of Us.

As Seymour walked around a large tree hanging over the river, he came upon his friend Simon with his boots off and his pant legs rolled.

Much to Seymour's surprise, Simon, up stepping into and out of the river again and again, slipping each time on the rocks as he climbed his way into and out of the slow-moving water.

Seymour, intrigued by Simon's odd behavior stepped up to him and asked, "Simon, why are you climbing in and out of the river?"

"I'm testing a theory," Simon answered, "from the great Greek philosopher Heraclitus who said, "You can't step into the same river twice." Obviously," Simon continued, "Heraclitus was wrong. I've been climbing into and out of this river for hours."

"But Simon," Seymour said, "Heraclitus was actually right. You can't step into the same river twice because the water is always flowing. The water changes so the river is new each time you step into and out of it."

After a long pause and sigh Simon finally said, "Oh, I understand now. I get it. Of course, Heraclitus was right all along. You can't step into the same river twice because the river is always flowing by."

"But Simon," Seymour said, "don't forget that even though you can't step into the same river twice you can slip on the same slick rocks over and over again."

15. THE LAND OF LAUGHTER

Adapted by Fr. John Powers C.P.

The master was in an expansive mood, so his disciples sought to learn from him the stages he had passed through in his quest for the divine. "God first led me by the hand," he said, "into the land of action, and there I dwelt for several years. Then he returned and led me to the land of sorrows; there I lived until my heart was purged of every inordinate attachment. That is when I found myself in the land of love, whose burning flames consumed whatever was left in me of self. This brought me to the land of silence, where the mysteries of life and death were borne before my wondering eyes."

"Was that the final stage of your quest?" They asked.

"No," the master said. "One day God said, 'today I shall take you to the innermost sanctuary of the temple, to the heart of God himself.' And I was led to the land of laughter."

16. SHALL I TAKE AWAY THE PAIN?

Adapted by Fr. John Powers, C.P.

The cry of human anguish went up to God. "Lord, take away the pain. The shadow that darkens the world you have made; the close coiling chain that strangles the heart: the burden that weighs on the wings that soar— Lord, take away the pain from the world you have made that it may love you all the more!"

Then answered the Lord to the cry of the world: "Shall I take away pain, and with it the power of the soul to endure, made strong by strain? Shall I take away compassion that knits heart to heart, and sacrifice high? Will you lose all your heroes that rise from the fire white brows to the sky? Shall I take away love that redeems with a price, and smiles with its loss? Can you spare from your lives what would cling unto mine, the Christ on his cross?"

17 . SIMON SAID!

Adapted by Fr. John Powers, C.P.

Once upon a Holy Day the very Reverend Anthony arrived to serve as the new Pastor of the oldest churches in the land. His joy was obvious as he began to preach.

Andrew's joy didn't last long, however. As the prayers continued some of those in the front pew knelt down, while others remained standing.

Oddly, it wasn't long, as the Reverend Simon continued to pray, before the Stander-uppers began to grumble at the Kneel-downers to "STAND UP, STAND UP, STAND UP".

To the challenge the Kneel-downers grumbled even louder at the Standuppers to "KNEEL DOWN, KNEEL DOWN, KNEEEEEEL DOWNNNNN."

The grumbling continued as the demands grew even louder and louder, "STAND UP. KNEEL DOWN, NO STAND UP, NO KNEEL DOWN, STAND UP, KNEEL DOWN".

After the service of prayer and grumbling was over the Reverend Andrew took a member of the Stand Uppers and a representative of the Kneel downers to meet with the oldest member of the congregation, Misses Wise, to settle the disturbing dispute.

"Misses Wise," The Reverend Andrew said, "can you tell us what the oldest tradition of our congregation is when we pray at the holy moment? Is it our tradition to stand?"

"No," Misses Wise answered."

"Ahhh, the Reverend Andrew said. "Then it must be the tradition of our congregation to kneel at the holy moment?"

To that Misses Wise said, "No, that's not our tradition either."

"But, but, but," the very confused Reverend Andrew said. "It must be one or the other, standing up or kneeling down. It must be one or the other. Please, Misses Wise, tell me. All the stand-uppers and kneel-downers are doing is arguing and fighting, fighting and arguing during the service, fighting, arguing, fighting, and arguing."

"Ahhh," Misses Wise said softly, "That's our tradition."

Simon simply sighed.

18. A RECIPE FOR BREAD

Adapted by Fr. John Powers, C.P.

Once upon a kingdom there was a King who rarely, if ever, left his castle. For years he stayed cooped up and alone in the safety of his stone walled castle hungry for company.

One day, the King decided to take a horse ride throughout the Kingdom alone.

The King had his horse saddled and led to the castle gates where he mounted it and road off. With every passing hour the King travelled deeper and deeper into the dense and darkening forest. Finally, the king realized that he was lost.

For three days the King wandered aimlessly. He was wet and dirty, tired and lonely and very hungry.

Suddenly the King saw a small house off in the distance. He knocked on the door hoping to get something to eat or at least directions back to the castle.

An elderly couple opened the door and warmly welcomed the tired and worn traveler into their home, and even though the King didn't tell them who he was the couple welcomed him as though he were a King.

"You look hungry," The elder woman said to the traveler, "sit yourself down at our table and join us for something to eat. It will lift your body and spirit."

As the King sat down the woman took a warm loaf of whole wheat bread out of the oven, cut off a thick slice and handed it to the traveler.

"Thank you," The King said, as he lifted the bread to take a bite. After eating the first slice of bread the King asked for another and then another and then still another slice. After finishing the third slice the King smiled and said, "This is the most delicious bread I've ever eaten in my life."

"Thank you," The elderly woman said, "the recipe has been in our family for generations."

The King ate the entire loaf of bread before he finally revealed his true identity, and not only asked for directions back to his castle, almost begged for the recipe of what he thought was the finest bread in his great Kingdom.

The elder-wise couple were happy to share the receipt for the bread as they pointed the way for the King to find his way home.

When the King finally arrived at the castle, he immediately gave the receipt for the bread to his baker for the baking.

After sitting alone for far too long the baker emerged from the kitchen with a steaming loaf of bread on a golden tray.

The King immediately took a slice of the bread and tasted it. With the crumbs falling from the bread the King leaned over with disappointment. The bread tasted nothing like the older couple had baked. Something was missing.

The King's baker tried again and again, following the recipe exactly as it was written. Loaf and loaf were baked and tasted but each loaf was missing something.

Finally, the King decided to travel back to the couple's home to make sure he had the correct recipe.

The couple assured the King that the recipe they'd given him was the same recipe that they had used to bake for him after he arrived at their home so hungry, tired, and dirty.

"But," the King said, "My baker couldn't duplicate the taste. What's missing?"

"Well," the woman asked, "did you invite someone to share the bread with you?"

"No," the King answered. "I didn't want anyone else to taste it."

"Oh, now I know what was missing," the woman said.

"What was missing, the King demanded to know.?"

"What was missing," the woman answered, "was that you didn't invite someone who was as tired, lost, lonely, and hungry as you were when you sat at our table."

Sources and Variants; the sources are Shabbat, 119a and Midrash, Genesis Rabbah, 11:4. The two Talmudic sources can be found in Bialik and Ravnitzky's *The Book of Legends*, 491:64 and 492:65. The Missing Ingredient is in Barbara Diamond Goldin's, *The Child's Book of Midrash*. "The Secret Ingredient," is in Molly Cone's *Stories of Jewish Symbols*.

19. THE SONGSTER

by Fr. John Powers, C.P.

Once upon a three-quarter time there was a talented up-and-coming singer who was not only invited to sing at the King's yearly concert but was also, surprisingly, invited to learn and sing a song which the King had composed. The songster knew that singing before the King could make or break his career.

The King's song was a difficult one to learn and sing with its broad range of low, high sharp notes, but the songster practiced the art of trial and error, practicing, he hoped, all the way to perfection.

No matter how much the songster practiced, however, there was one note, a B flat, the last note of the song that he struggled with repeatedly. The note seemed beyond his reach. Still he kept practicing preparing to sing at the King's annual concert.

As the orchestra began to play, the songster took center stage and bowed before the King. Although the songster sang with style and grace, he was still very worried about successfully singing the final crescendo note.

The songster continued singing, scaling the notes higher and higher closer and closer to the last note. Finally, he took a deep diaphragmatic belly breath, dramatically threw his hands out toward the audience and opened his mouth to sing the last note when his voice suddenly cracked squeaking out the wrong note.

The songster was humiliated, disgraced but still he respectfully bowed before the king and exited stage left. He sat in his dressing room with his head in his hands and wept, certain that he'd never sing in public again.

While the songster wallowed in sadness for months, his friends, fans, and singing coach tried to convince him to do what he loved to do, to sing again.

Finally, the songster was persuaded to come out of hiding and try again.

At the first rehearsal the songster sang the last note of the song perfectly. During the second singing the songster's voice cracked. The more the songster tried and failed, however, the more he was determined to try again. Finally, after singing the crescendo note correctly more often than not, the songster cleared his throat and accepted a concert date.

Although terrified of what might happen, the songster stepped into the center stage spotlight at his comeback performance and sang with all his heart.

Sadly, the songster's voice cracked. At the next concert, however, he sang the note with precision. At the next concert, his voice squeaked. Still he kept trying and ultimately made the fateful decision to try and sing the King's song at every concert he performed whether his voice cracked or not.

The songster was amazed almost beyond belief when the tickets to his concerts started to sell out faster than a three--minute waltz. It seems people came to the concerts just to hear whether he could sing the highest note.

Eventually the songster died still unable to sing the King's song perfectly every time. Family, friends, fans, and even the King attended the songster's funeral. As the service ended and much to the congregation's surprise, the King stood up and without accompaniment began to sing his composition.

As the King sang, the audience wondered whether even the King could sing the crescendo note to perfection. As the King scaled to the highest note, he took a deep diaphragmatic belly breath, just as the songster had, lifted his arms dramatically, opened his mouth, but then closed it again choosing silence instead of singing the crescendo note. The King then gently smiled and bowed his head in honor of the man who had the courage to practice, who made the song his very own.

20. A SILENT DEBATE

Adapted by Fr. John Powers, C.P.

Once upon an afternoon the King of the Kingdom of US, having grown sick, tired, and angry about all the bickering, arguing, and fighting between the various Christian churches, decided to throw all the Christians out of his kingdom. In utter frustration the King called the leading Priests, Ministers, and Reverends together and yelled, "Out, out! All Christians are banished from my Kingdom."

The Church leaders, begging and pleading for mercy, said, "Please, Your Majesty, we'll do anything if you'll allow us to stay in the Kingdom."

After some thought, the King said, "I'll let the Christians stay in my Kingdom if you find someone courageous enough to debate me in sign-language, using only hand gestures, no words."

Although perplexed by the King's demand for a silent debate, the Church leaders decided to ask Seymour, one of the wisest and bravest men in the Kingdom, to debate the King in sign language.

Seymour was, of course, terrified that he might lose the debate but still he chose to try.

The King and Seymour met for the great silent debate in the village square surrounded by hundreds of believers.

"Seymour," the King said, "I'm going to give you three signs, hand gestures, to which you must respond with the correct sign. No words can be spoken in this debate. Do you understand, Seymour?" the King asked.

"Yes," Seymour said hesitantly.

The King began the silent debate by throwing out two fingers toward Seymour. In response Seymour immediately threw one finger right up in front of his nose.

"I can't believe it," the King said, "your answer was correct. Here's the second sign."

The King then threw his hand into the air with his five fingers outstretched and wiggling. Seymour answered by putting up his fist.

“Correct again,” the King said. “Here is the third sign. If you answer this sign correctly, the Christians can stay in the kingdom.”

The King then reached into his robe and pulled out an old crusted, greenish piece of bread.

To that sign, Seymour pulled out an egg.

“Amazing,” the King said, “you’ve answered all three signs correctly. You’ve beaten me at my own game. The Christians can stay in the Kingdom.”

That night at the King’s castle, with his royal court members gathered around, the King explained the theological debate he’d exchanged with Seymour.

First the King said, “I threw two fingers out to say that there are two Kings, the one in heaven and the one on earth—me. Seymour then put up one finger to say that there was only one King, the one of both heaven and earth.”

The King continued to explain the hand gesture debate to his ministers. “I then put my hand out with my fingers separated to show that the Christian churches are all divided like the fingers of a hand. Seymour then put up his fist to show that they are all one in the hand of God.”

“Finally,” the King said, “I took out a very stale piece of bread to show that these churches have gotten old and moldy. Surprisingly, Seymour then responded by taking out an egg to show me that the Christian churches are still fresh and young, young and fresh.”

Well, that night Seymour’s friends, family, and the leaders of the various Christian churches threw a party to honor Seymour for winning the silent debate with the King and saving them from banishment.

At the party one of the Seymour’s friends asked, “What was that debate all about?”

Seymour just shrugged his shoulders and said. “I don’t have the foggiest idea. All I know is that when the King threw his two fingers out toward my face, he was trying to poke me in the eyes, so I threw one finger up in front of my nose to stop him. Then when the King put his hand out to grab me, I put up my fist to stop him. Finally, the King must have gotten hungry because he took out his lunch and I took out mine.”

21. THE RING OF WORDS

Adapted by Fr John Powers, C.P.

Once upon a story that could have happened, there was a King who suffered with long spells of deep sadness. The King tried everything he could to change his sadness into gladness, but sadness always got the better of him. The King wondered if he would ever be happy again.

One day, however, the King heard there was an ancient ring-keeper on the highest mountain in the Kingdom who had a magical ring that could turn his sadness into gladness. The King would do anything he could to acquire that ring so that he could slip it on his finger and rejoice that he'd never feel sad again.

The King didn't have to go far to find someone to climb the high mountain to get his hands on that ring. He would demand one of his servants, Seymour, to climb the slippery slope, to find the ring-keeper and get that ring no matter what the cost. "Happiness beyond measure and as long as, well, forever," the King mumbled to himself.

Seymour was a willing servant and immediately set out to climb the steep mountain the King called, "Ring Mountain" He was a hard-working man, but he took his time, slowly, slowly climbing the mountain. No running up the Mountain for him. Slow and easy was his pace.

When Seymour arrived at the top of the mountain, he stopped to look back down the mountain he'd just climbed, saying right out loud for anyone to hear. "Every up has a down and every down has an up. So, it is with life,"

"Your absolutely correct Seymour," an older than old man said as he stepped out from behind an old Oak Tree. "I am the Ring Keeper," the old man announced, as he raised his right hand, removed the magical ring from his finger and simply gave it to Seymour.

As Seymour stood in silence, the Ring Keeper continued saying, "Please give this ring to the King with my blessings and tell him that this ring does more than turn sadness into gladness. Now go," the Ring-keeper said, "the King anxiously awaits your return."

When Seymour held the silver circle up in the bright sunlight, he noticed that there were words etched into the curve of the ring. Seymour could easily translate the phrase on the ring but pronouncing the words correctly was another matter entirely. Still Seymour tried, saying aloud, "Gam zeh ya'avor," which means, "**This too shall pass.**"

It didn't take long before Seymour was again standing before the King with the ring held high. Much to Seymour's surprise the King look even sadder than he'd had seen before he traveled the ups and downs of the mountain. The King's wrinkles were deeper, and the edges of his lips drooped even lower.

"I've found the ring that can turn your sadness into gladness," Seymour said as he handed the King the ring. "And, Seymour continued, "the ring-keeper sends his blessings."

"Thank you." the King said, as he took the ring and squeezed it onto his thick finger.

Much to Seymour's surprise King's face began to lift, his lips began to quiver, and his rising gladness turned into a smile.

"You have fulfilled your task, Seymour," the King said. "The ring has turned my sadness into gladness. Come back in three days, and I will give you a great reward."

"Before I leave Your Majesty," Seymour said, "I must tell you that according to the Ring-Keeper, the ring does much more than turn sadness into gladness."

The King, however, ignored Seymour's comment.

When Seymour returned three days later, he was surprised to see that the King's head and shoulders hung low, that his smile had disappeared into his wrinkled face, and that his gladness had surely turned into sadness.

At the very sight of Seymour, however, the King's head snapped up, and his face turned red. "I told you," yelled the King, "to find the ring that turned sadness into gladness, not gladness into sadness.

This ring," the King bellowed, "is useless if it can't keep sadness away forever. I'm furious with you, Seymour, for bringing me this false ring, angrier than I've ever been before."

In response to the king's anger, Seymour simply said, "Your Highness, as is written on the ring, **this too shall pass**, or to put it another way, **every mountain has its ups and downs.**"

Abraham Lincoln, 'Address Before the Wisconsin State Agricultural Society, Milwaukee, Wisconsin' (September 30, 1859 Archer Taylor, "This Too Will Pass (Jason 910Q)", pp.345-350 in *Volksüberlieferung: Festschrift für Kurt Ranke*. F. Harkort, K. C. Peeters, and R. Wildhaber, eds. Göttingen, Schwartz, 1968 -Many versions of the folktale have been recorded by the Israel Folklore Archive at the University of Haifa. - Louis Ginzber's *The Legends of the Jews* IV 91009-1938). King Solomon's Ring" in Judith Ish-Kishor's *Tales from the Wise Men of Israel* (1962). -Dov Noy includes a Turkish version from the Israel Folktale Archives in his *Folktales of Israel* (1961).- *Wisdom Tales from Around the World* by Heather Forest, August House, Little Rock Arkansas, (1996)-*The Hungry Cloths and other Jewish Folktales* retold by Peninnah Schram, Sterling Publications Inc, New York, (2008). -www.myhebrewring.com
www.israelblessing.com

22. THE CROSS-MAKER

by Fr. John Powers, C.P.

My name isn't important. All you need know is that I am a cross-maker. Along with many other carpenters in the city of Jerusalem, I was pressed into the service of carving the crossbeams used for crucifixion by the brutish Romans.

What could I do? I had to feed my family. Although I knew full well how the Romans used these beams, I couldn't do anything to prevent it. So, each morning I'd go up into the hills to cut down strong pieces of timber and drag them home for carving. Once they were chiseled, I'd piled them high in the Romans' courtyard.

I hated the work, but the money put food on the table. How these beams were used was not my concern, not mine to question. My responsibility was to take care of my wife and children.

Oh, when I think back on the days of my apprenticeship, when I first took up the trade of a carpenter, I can recall the joy I felt when carving a table from coarse pieces of heavy wood. I've always thought myself a skilled carpenter. Not the best, perhaps, but one in love with the craft.

It's an art, you know, to mold and fashion from rough beams a smooth and well-fitted piece of furniture. It takes an eye of care and hands of compassion. This may sound strange to those of you who don't know the feel of wood, but to be a true carpenter you must respect the grain and bend of each and every beam you cut, or it won't fit well.

I sound like a dreamer, and I was, so many years ago. Then reality hit me with the cruelty of a world gone mad. My ideals seemed to fall away like the bark of a dying tree. With each problem and setback in life, I became more and more angry and pessimistic. Even the love of my craft

seemed to crack slowly into splinters of callous indifference. My art became a means of suffering, and I didn't seem to care.

My friends, it's one thing to say, "I didn't know," when finding fault with one's actions. It's another thing entirely to know that one's actions contribute to the heavy burdens which another must carry and then to say, "I don't care, I don't care." Not knowing is ignorance and can be understood; not caring is the very evil Christ came to overcome.

You may wonder why I, Christ's cross maker, have come to speak with you today. I speak out of regret and remorse because I watched this holy man carry upon his shoulders what I'd chiseled with fear and hewed with indifference, and I became sick with shame.

So, I beg you, my friends, to watch Jesus Christ crucified today, as innocent children go hungry, as mindless violence increases, as backbiting and gossip marginalize, and as the helpless are mired in bureaucratic idiocy. Watch Jesus nailed to the cross of today's violence as the powerless are victimized by the terror of poverty and rejection.

Watch closely as Christ carries his cross today and ask yourself whether, by your silent indifference, you've helped to carve that cross, because I guarantee you, no one carves a cross for another to shoulder without one day having to carry it himself. I said no one carves a cross for another to carry without one day having to carry the consequences.

23. TELL SOMEONE

Adapted by Fr. John Powers, C.P.

“Fernando Silva ran a children’s hospital in Managua. On Christmas Eve, he worked late into the night. Firecrackers were exploding and fireworks lit up the sky when Fernando decided it was time to leave. They were expecting him at home to celebrate the holiday.

He took one last look around, checking to see that everything was in order, when he suddenly heard cottony footsteps behind him. He turned to find one of the sick children walking behind him.

In the half-light Fernando recognized the lonely, sad child. He saw that the boy’s face was already lined with death while his eyes seemed to be asking for forgiveness, or perhaps permission.

When Fernando knelt before the boy, the little one took his hand and said, “Tell someone I’m here. Please, “tell someone I’m here”

24.. CHANGE COURSE

Adapted by Fr John Powers, C.P.

Once upon a midnight dreary just off the coast of Cape Cod, Massachusetts, the Captain of a battleship spotted a light bearing directly and steadily at his ship. The captain immediately ordered his ship’s lookout to signal the other ship to “change course 20 degrees so we won’t collide.”

A signal flashed back, “I’m a Seaman second class. You change course 20 degrees.”

The Captain, getting angrier and angrier, ordered that another signal be sent saying, “change course 20 degrees. I’m a battleship.”

The signal came flashing back, “You change course 20 degrees. I’m a lighthouse.”

Adaptation of Max Lucado, "Laws of the Lighthouse," Word Publishing, 1992, p. 149.

25. TELL IT AGAIN

Adapted by Fr. John Powers, C.P.

Once upon a park bench Simon and his brother Seymour sat in silence for far too long. Finally, Simon spoke up, "Seymour, tell me that story you told me yesterday, and the day before that, and the day before that."

Seymour quickly responded, "Why do you want to hear that story again? You've heard it every day for weeks. You couldn't possibly enjoy hearing it again."

Simon quickly answered, "I don't want you to tell it again because I enjoy hearing it. I want you to tell it again because you enjoy telling it."

26. THE GIFT EXCHANGE

Adapted by Fr. John Powers, C.P.

Once upon an almost every morning a brave mother of four would walk the five-mile journey from her poor shack to the Village of Us to beg for enough bread to feed her hungry children. The mother stood in the village square with her head bowed and with a basket in her hands praying and pleading for a few coins.

Seymour, a villager who often passed through the village square had a little bit more than enough money to live would, when walking through the village square, stop to give the brave beggar woman a coin or two.

One day, however, as Seymour reached into his pockets for a few coins to place in the woman's basket, he discovered that his pockets were empty, that he'd left home without any money.

As Seymour stepped up to the beggar woman, he bowed his head and said, "I'm so sorry, my sister, but I left home without a coin in my pockets. There is nothing I can give you today."

The woman lifted her head, looked into Seymour's eyes, and said, "You've already given me a very generous gift. You called me Sister."

A few weeks later, after seeing the poor mother standing again in the Village square, Seymour reached into his pocket, took out a few coins and started to drop the coins into the woman's basket.

"My brother," the woman said, as she put up her hand to stop him from dropping the coins in the basket. "I cannot accept your gift today, she said. I'd like to give you a gift."

The beggar woman reached behind her and took out a beautiful little basket that she and her children had woven for Seymour. "My children and I," she said, "made this basket for you so that you could keep your coins in a safe place."

Seymour smiled, took the basket from the brave woman, and said, "Sister, I know you walk many miles when you come to the city to beg. I'd like to thank you for this gift by giving you a ride home in my carriage."

The woman put her hands together and said, "Thank you, but my long walk is part of my gift to you."

27. THE SMELL OF BREAD

Adapted by Fr. John Powers, C.P.

In the evening time of almost every day, a brave beggar woman would stand at the door of the village bakery counting the few coins she'd begged for in the village square that day, hoping she'd collected enough to purchase a loaf of bread to feed her four hungry children.

On some days, the brave mother would have just enough money to buy a loaf of day-old bread, but sadly, more often than not, she'd have to go home empty handed.

On these days of poverty, all she could do was stand at the bakery door, as it was opened and closed, savoring the delightful aroma of the baked bread, while at the same time feeling guilty for not being able to feed her own children.

The baker, a crusty old man, seeing the beggar woman regularly just standing at the door of his bakery for the smell of his bread began to get angry thinking, "Not only do I own the bread I bake but I also own the smell of it."

"Hey," the baker yelled at the poor woman one day, as she briefly stuck her head into the bakery for a deep sniff, "If you're not going to buy a loaf of my bread today, then you've got to pay me for the smell of it."

At first the brave mother thought the baker was joking—until she was served with a summons to appear in the King's court.

The baker vehemently argued before the King that his rights were being violated by this beggar woman who took pleasure in the smells that resulted from his hard work and that she was, therefore, a thief. "She owes me payment," the baker said, "for every single sniff she took of my bread."

The King, after listening to both sides of the story, passed judgment on the case saying to the poor woman, "Since you've confessed to taking and enjoying long sniffs of the baker's bread you must pay the price. Give the baker," the King said, "whatever coins you've collected today as you begged in the village square."

The baker, with a sly smirk of delight on his face, took the only coin the humble woman had and rubbed it between his fingers thinking; "Now he thought, I can demand payment from anyone who simply wanders by my shop and takes a sniff of my bread. I'll be rich beyond measure."

The King, however, was not yet finished with his judgment. "Now," the King said to the baker, "give the coin this woman just gave you back to her because all you get for the smell of your bread is the feel of money."

28. TALK REALLY STUNK

Adapted by Fr. John Powers, C.P.

After delivering a half-hour talk in a Parish Church to a group of perhaps two hundred people on the topic of humility, I was asked not only to join those who gathered in the Parish Center for coffee and cookies but to also greet them as they entered the church hall.

When I was shaking a number of people's hands and hearing comments like, "Nice talk, Father," "Good talk, Father," and, "Loved your talk, Father," a little boy, of perhaps six or seven years of age appeared in line, stepped up to me, put his hand out for a shake, and said, "Talk really stunk, Father,"

Although a bit surprised by the little boy's comment, I smiled and continued greeting the people again hearing comments like, "Great talk, Father," "Wonderful talk, Father," and "Thanks for coming, Father."

The young boy, however, was not finished with his comments because there he stood in line again. This time he stepped up to me, took my hand, and said, "Jokes weren't even funny, Father."

To be honest, I was a bit upset by the boy's criticism of my sense of humor because I've always been rather proud of the fact that I could tell a pretty good joke, but I just continued smiling and shaking hands.

"Good words Preacher," "Thanks, Father," and "I hope you'll come back again, Father," people said.

It was then that I noticed that the devilish little boy was standing in line again, inching his way toward me with, I presumed, another harsh remark.

And, sure enough, he stood before me, put his hand out and said, "Never invite you back here again, Father."

Now I was getting angry. Still I smiled for the few people left in line to say, "Marvelous talk Father," and "Great message Father," but then, as you might expect, there stood my little nemesis, the last person in line.

Just as the boy stepped up to me and was about to make, I was sure, another nasty remark, I noticed a woman come rushing across from the other side of the room. I presumed it was his mother. She interrupted the little boy and said,

"Father don't pay any attention to anything he says. He just repeats everything he hears."

29 ANGELIC MUSIC

Adapted by Fr. John Powers C.P.

Once upon a wide realm, the King, a lifelong lover of music and singing, commanded his Minister of Music to search the kingdom for the most sublimely angelic music heard this side of Heaven.

To the King's command the music Minister said, "I'm sure, your Majesty, that I can find the most gifted musicians in the Kingdom, but I must confess that I may not be able to discern what is the most angelic of music or singing. How will I know," the Minister asked, "if what I hear is near divine?"

"You'll know it when you hear it," is all the King would say.

The Minister traveled through hamlets, villages, towns, and cities in search of those who could play the most radiant and celestial sounds.

In the first few weeks of the Minister's quest, he'd heard hundreds of musicians, among them a young girl playing the solo parts of a beautiful violin concerto, a man whistling a popular tune as he strolled along, the poetic hip-hop rhymes of a rapper, a small boy playing a kazoo, a soprano, alto, tenor, and baritone practicing to sing in a grand opera, a classical guitarist working the strings, a Capella choir, the magnificent sounds of a cathedral pipe organ, a barbershop quartet harmonizing so perfectly you'd swear you could hear a fifth note, a woman playing an African thumb piano, the chanting of monks and nuns, an ensemble of harpists playing a touching melody, a parading band keeping a stepping beat, the blast of a Shofar horn being blown in a synagogue, and many more than can be listed in this telling.

Sadly, however, after the many months of hearing so much extraordinary music played, the Minister still did not believe he'd heard the most angelic music this side of Heaven.

The Minister, weary from all the listening, finally found himself in the Village of Us, where he decided to ask the first person he met if they'd ever heard the most angelic music this side of Heaven."

"I have," Seymour answered.

"What!" the Minister almost yelled.

"I've heard the most sacred sound ever made." Seymour said, "and all you have to do to hear it yourself is to follow me."

As the sun dipped down behind the hills, Seymour confidently led the music Minister on a five-mile walk to an old dilapidated shack where a poor beggar woman and her four hungry children lived.

Seymour guided the minister to bend low as they approached a window of the shack. As they slowly stood up against the shack's splintering wooden wall, Seymour put his finger up to his lips for silence.

Within only moments the minister's eyes widened, ears twitched, and soul was stirred at the sound of the most hallowed, divine, and angelic music he'd ever heard. It was the clinking of the spoons and forks, dishes and cups of a mother and her four very hungry children as they ate a simple meal.

Inspired by and Adapted from: Folktales of Israel, edited by Dov Noy, University of Chicago Press, Chicago IL, 1963, p. 172, with references to origins of type. Greatest Jewish Stories: Legends and Folktales, p. 283-28

30. IT ALL DEPENDS

Adapted by Fr John Powers, C.P.

Once upon the main street in the Village of US, Seymour and Simon stood on the sidewalk, in a packed crowd, ten people deep, watching as a parade passed by.

The people were cheering, the horns were blaring, and the noise was banging away on the ear drums.

Amid the riotous racket, Seymour turned to Simon and said, "Do you hear a woman quietly begging for a few coins to feed her children?"

"What?" Simon yelled as he cupped his hand behind his ear.

"With take Seymour hollered back at Simon, can you hear a woman begging for a few coins."

"I don't see a beggar woman anywhere," Simon shouted, "and anyway how could you possibly hear someone begging in the middle of all this noise?"

Seymour then slowly turned around, looked down the street, and saw a beggar woman with a small basket inching her way through the crowd. Seymour took Simon by the shoulders and turned him in the direction of the beggar woman.

"That's amazing!" Simon bellowed over the blasting noise of the parade. "You must have superhuman hearing. What's your trick, Seymour?" he pleaded.

"No trick," Seymour hollered, "my hearing is as ordinary as anyone else's."

"Then, Simon screamed, "Why were you able to hear her begging and I couldn't?"

Seymour leaned close to Simon's ear and said, "Because life depends on what you think is important, Watch, I'll show you," he said.

Seymour then reached into his pocket, pulled out a handful of change, and **(Drop Coins)** dropped the coins onto the sidewalk.

With the clinking and clanking of the coins, the bands stopped playing, the crowd stopped clapping, and every head quickly turned to the sound of money clinking.

"See," Seymour said, "It all depends on what you think is important."

Simon then quickly bent over to pick up what coins he could before others got to them. Simon then walked over to the woman and put them in her basket

31. THE BEAUTIFUL HEART

Adapted by Fr John Powers, C.P.

Once upon a noontime a young man was standing in the middle of the Village square proclaiming that he had the most beautiful heart in the whole Village. To prove how beautiful his heart was the young man pulled his chest open so all who gathered could see how radiant and unscarred his heart really was.

"Yes," they all agreed, "It's truly the most beautiful heart we've ever seen. There isn't a mark or a flaw on it," They said.

The young man was proud and boasted more loudly about his beautiful heart.

Suddenly, an old man appeared at the front of the crowd and said, "Why your heart isn't nearly as beautiful as mine."

The crowd and the young man looked at the old man's heart. It was beating strongly, but full of scars. It had places where pieces had been removed and other pieces put in. Some of the pieces, however, didn't quite fit, and there were jagged edges. In fact, in some places there were deep gouges where whole pieces were missing.

As the people stared at the old man's heart someone asked, "How can you say that your heart is more beautiful than his?"

The young man looked at the old man's heart and saw its state and laughed, "You must be joking," he said, "your heart can't compare to mine. My heart is perfect while yours is a mess of scars and holes."

"Sometimes, however, the old man continued, "I've given away a piece of my heart, but then the other person doesn't give me a piece of theirs. These are the empty gouges. You take a chance when you love someone."

"Although," the old man continued, "the gouges are painful, I'll keep my chest open to remind me of the love I still have for those people stay open because they remind me of the love I still have for these people. Someday I hope that those to whom I've given a piece of my heart will return a piece of theirs and fill the empty spaces, but

I can wait. "So now," the old man asked the young man with the beautiful heart, "do you see what true beauty is?"

The young man stood silently with tears running down his cheeks. He then walked up to the old man, reached into his own perfect young and beautiful heart, and ripped a piece out. He offered it to the old man with trembling hands.

The old man took his offering, placed it in his heart and then took a piece from his old scarred heart and placed it into the wound in the young man's heart. It fit, but not perfectly, as there were some jagged edges.

Love is always perfectly imperfect.

32. PUT HER DOWN

Adapted by Fr. John Powers, C.P.

Once upon an afternoon, Seymour and Simon were walking toward Paradise Diner for lunch when the skies opened raining the proverbial cats, dogs, pots, pans, and buckets.

It rained so hard that water began jogging and running down the streets meeting at intersections to form puddles that could not be curbed.

As Seymour and Simon sloshed their way through the rising water they came to the crossroads of Main Street and Not So Main Street where they saw a woman dressed in a long gown standing on the opposite side of the street ankle deep in water, It looked to Seymour and Simon as though the beautifully dressed woman was trying to decide whether to step into the fast flowing water.

Seeing the woman's dilemma Seymour immediately began wading through the water to come to her aid.

After offering to help the woman Seymour gently picked her up in his arms and waded through the splashing waters and carrying her to the other corner.

After placing the woman down on the other side of the street and was thanked for his kindness she and Seymour went their separate ways.

Not long after the intersection adventure Seymour and Simon were drying off while eating a hearty meal in their regular booth at Paradise Diner.

Finally, with his mouth full of food, Simon mumbled, "Seymour, I was shocked with your behavior today. How could you have, you a supposedly happily married man, have taken that beautiful woman into your arms? What would your wife and neighbors have thought if they saw that strange woman clinging to your neck? Seymour, you disgraced your wife and marriage."

Seymour put down his fork and looking directly into his friends' eyes simply said, "Simon, I put her down hours ago, why can't you?"

33. SMELLY AND THE GOSSIPITES

by Fr. John Powers, C.P.

Once upon a park bench in the village of Us, just across from the largest church in the Village of US, sat a dirty young man known only as "Smelly." No one in the Village knew Smelly's real name. They only knew that he lived near the Village dump.

Once upon a weekend worship day Smelly visited the Church for the great Sunday service. He sat in the back of the Church hoping no would notice him.

It didn't take long, however, before some of the Church members, known as the "Gossipites," complained to the Preacher that Smelly stunk to high heaven and should be asked to leave the church immediately.

The Preacher listened to the "Gossipites," griping and whining, and paused for a moment before he said, "All are welcomed in the Church of the Village of Us.

After hearing rumors that the "Gossipites" had complained to the Preacher and wanted him thrown out of the church Smelly decided to move his worship to the Village square park bench just on the other side of the street from the Church doors.

Every week Smelly sat on the park pew straining to hear the Preacher preach, while doing the best he could to joined in the worshippers singing and praying. Smelly liked to sing, saying out loud, "At least I don't stink at singing," He thought.

The Preacher, more than once, after shaking hands with the worshippers outside the Church, would cross the street and invite Smelly to

return to a Church pew telling him that he was as welcomed as anyone else.

To each of the Preachers invitations Smelly would smile, thank the preacher for his kindness but would decline.

Smelly became a familiar presence, as he sat on his park pew, while worshipers climbed the stairs to the Church proper. One worshipper, however, took special notice of Smelly's park pew presence. It was a nine-year-old boy named Seymour.

After weeks of passing Smelly by on his way to sit in the Church with his parents, Seymour finally spoke up asking.

"Mom, why, doesn't Smelly come into the church with the rest of us?"

"Well," Seymour's mother said hesitantly, "Because the Church 'Gossipites' think he stinks too much and shouldn't be allowed in the Church.

"That's mean," young Seymour said.

"I know," his mother said. "Our Preacher tried to convince Smelly to return to a Church pew but Smelly has decided that it's better to worship outside rather than face the unwelcoming Gossipites."

As nine-year-old Seymour and his mother climbed the Church steps Seymour spoke up again asking. "Mom, can I sit and worship with Smelly today. He's sitting all alone in his park pew and no one should be alone when they pray on worship day?"

"I don't see why not." Seymour's Mom said, "I've met Smelly and he's a gentle and nice man. He helps any and all without their asking. Just be nice to Smelly and don't wander off." Seymour's mother said.

When Seymour made his way to the park pew bench Smelly simply slid over to make room for Seymour, his young friend.

Remarkably, it didn't take long before other Church members decided to worship with Smelly as well.

When the next Church Sunday arrived, there were other worshippers who exchanged their Church pews for the park pews, bringing along folding chairs as well. They too prayed and sang along with the insiders, along even with the Gossipites.

As the park pew worshippers grew in numbers the Church "Gossipites," started to call the group sitting with Smelly the "Smellerites." It seems, however, that the park pew worshippers grew in proportion to the meanness of the "Gossipites."

A few years past as the so called "Smellerites," worshiped the best they could from their park pews across the street from the Church.

Suddenly, one worship day, however, Smelly wasn't in his proper park pew place. Smelly was missing the worship service.

When Seymour asked his mother where his friend Smelly had gone, he was told that Smelly had just disappeared, that he'd moved out of the Village and that no one knew where he'd gone.

Sadly, it didn't take long before the so-called "Smellerites," began to inch their way back into the church pews.

As the year's past rumors spread in the Village about Smelly's whereabouts. Some said he'd been seen sitting in a park pew in front of a Church in another Village, while others said they had seen a man who looked a bit like Smelly but was too well dressed to be. No one, however, really knew where Smelly had gone.

As the years rolled by. Seymour, of course grew strong, and eventually got married and he and his wife had children of his own.

As Seymour's children grew, enough to attend the weekly Church service, Seymour and his wife would often tell their children about the prayerful man who'd taught their dad how to pray, sing and worship while they sat on a Park pew just across the street from the Church.

Now, after many years of preaching the word the gentle and kind Preacher decided to retire. A celebration was held to thank the good Preacher for his holy encouragement and faithful service.

After preaching his last sermon the people of the Church rose to their feet with great applause, except for a few of the "Gossipites," who thought the Preacher had been soft-hearted, not hard enough on the "Smellerites."

As the applause found its end the Preacher smiled and said, "Before I take my leave, I'd like to give you a gift. Let me introduce to you your new "Preacher. He has studied for many years to be a great Preacher, I guarantee. His name is Preacher Neil. Some of you may remember him by another name."

"Oh my God," Seymour cried out right out loud, as the newly robed Preacher stepped out from behind the curtain. "Our Preacher is Smelly," he said for all to hear. "He must have gone, studied and been proclaimed a Preacher man."

Except for the "Gossipites," the body of the Church worshippers jumped to their feet and applauded long and hard in thanks for their new Preacher, Neil/Smelly. They were sure Smelly would lead them with wisdom and compassion.

Only day's later Seymour, much to his surprise, spied the Preacher Neil sitting on the very same park pew he'd sat on, as so-called Smelly, so many years before.

With that Seymour, walked over to the Preacher and sat right next to him, asking gently, "What Smelly, no I mean Preacher Neil, what are you going to do about the so called Gossipites in the church, the ones who'd rejected you years ago."

Smelly paused at the question, put his finger to his lips, into what is called the philtrum, and whispered, "All are welcomed in the Church of Us and are taught to love our neighbor as ourselves. May the Lord bless and keep them" Preacher Neil said.

"But, but," I stammered.

"There is no "buts" about it, Seymour, the Preacher said. They may have not shown me much love, but we are all called to love them." The Preacher, Smelly, then added. "We won't reject them as they did me, so many years ago. Instead," he concluded, "We will love and accept them as they are, that will Seymour drive them crazy."

Much, much to everyone's surprise, on the next worship day, Seymour and everyone in the church discovered the park bench had been carried into the church so that Preacher Smelly have a familiar place to sit.

34. SHOES AND SOCKS

Adapted by Fr. John Powers, C.P.

It was a cold December day in New York City where a little boy stood in front of a shoe store on Broadway, barefoot and shivering. He peered intently through the plate glass window.

As the boy stood on tip toes to look at the shoes, a woman gently walked up to him and asked, "Little fellow, why are you looking into that window so earnestly.

"I was asking God to give me a pair of shoes," the boy replied.

The lady studied him for a moment, then quietly took him by the hand. Together they walked into the shoe store. Inside, she asked the clerk to bring a half-dozen pair of socks and a fitting pair of shoes for the boy. Then she asked for a basin of water and a towel. The clerk brought them quickly.

The woman took the little boy to the rear of the store, removed her gloves then knelt and began to wash the boys feet. She dried them with the towel just as the clerk appeared with the socks. The woman placed a pair of socks on the boy's feet and selected a pair of shoes in his size. She bundled the remaining socks and handed him the package.

As they left the store the woman patted the boy on the head. "I hope you feel more comfortable now," she smiled.

As the kindly women turned to go the wide-eyed little boy caught her by the hand. He looked up into her face and asked, "*Are you God's wife?*"

35. THE DOOR

Adapted by Fr. John Powers, C.P.

There is the image of a man who imagines' himself to be a prisoner in a cell. He stands at the other end of this small dark, barren room, on his toes, with arms outstretched, his hands grasping for support onto the bars of the window, the rooms only apparent source of light.

If he holds on tightly to the bars, he thought, straining his head just so, he could see a few small lights glimmering in the distance. These little lights were his only source of hope. He will not risk losing it.

And so, he continued to strain toward the little lights, holding tightly to the bars. So committed was his effort not to lose sight of the glimmer of life-giving light that it never occurred to him to let go and explore the rest of the cell.

So it is, that because he feared to risk exploring the dark cell, he never discovered that the door at the other end was open, that he was free. He had always been free to walk out into the brightness of the day, if only he would choose to let go."

36. THE LAWN OF DANDELIONS

A man who took great pride in his lawn discovered one day a crop of dandelions growing wildly in his lawn. Although he tried everything, he could not rid the lawn of the dandelions he finally, in desperation, wrote to the agriculture department of the state university to beg for advice.

"I've tried everything I could to kill the dandelions. what do I do"?

Finally, as the dandelions grew wilder, he finally received an answer to his plea." "The experts wrote "we suggest you learn to love them."

Anthony DeMello, *Song of The Bird* p. 65

37. THE LEANING TREE

Adapted by Fr. John Powers, C.P.

While visiting a Nebraska home for orphaned children I met Matthew a young boy, age ten or eleven.

Matthew seemed wrapped in sadness. His shoulders were hanging as though life was too heavy to carry. He walked with an almost slow crawl.

It wasn't long before, after meeting with the Orphanage Director, that I learned why Matthew seemed so sad.

As I walked with the orphanage Director and across the great lawn, I asked him about young Matthew, expressing my concern for this sad eyed boy.

As the Director and I continued to walk, he quietly said, as he pointed, "See anything unusual about that elm tree?" He asked.

I studied the Elm tree for a moment and realized it was leaning into the prevailing Nebraska northwest wind. Before I could comment, the Director explained.

"Matthew's father lives in Omaha, but I'm concerned that he doesn't really care about, love, or feel any responsibility for his son.

"Oh, the Director continued, "Matthew's father will send a birthday card some years with a dollar in it, and on a rare occasion he'll call Matthew, but, the visits and cards have come to a halt.

Finally, the Director continued, "last summer the rare telephone call came. Of course, Matthew begged and begged his dad to visit him at the orphanage."

"When the father said that he was busy all week but that he'd try to visit Matthew on Sunday, Matthew was thrilled."

“Young Matthew was so excited that he told the entire staff and all the boys that his father was coming to see him on Sunday!”

“The week went by, of course too slowly for Matthew, however. Matthew didn’t sleep a wink or a nod Saturday night.

After an early breakfast,” the Director continued, “Matthew ran down the walk to a strategic spot where he would be able to see his father coming. He sat down and leaned heavily against the little elm.

“Matthew waited all day refusing,” the Director continued, “to come in for meals. When it grew dark, Matthew reluctantly returned to his dormitory room. He’d say, “Maybe Dad got lost or was sick. He’ll probably call tomorrow.”

“When, the call didn’t come that day,” the Director continued, “the next Sunday next, or the next, Matthew thought his dad might, just might come to visit him the next Sunday.”

“From that point on Matthew started to sit every Sunday leaning against the growing elm. Sunday after Sunday he sat with the support of his friend, the elm.”

“As the days grew shorter, and the cold settled on the land, Matthew gave up until the next spring when he would again sit and lean against the elm waiting, and then again the next Spring waiting and even the next, year after year waiting, until he was finally old enough to leave the orphanage to create a new life, without ever having seen his father.”

“It’s that tree,” the Director said,” as he pointed at the now almost fully grown but leaning Elm. Such a brave boy our Matthew, but sad.”

“That’s why,” the Director of the Orphanage said, “the old Elm leans heavily into the Northwest winds.”

Years later, as the time passed too quickly, I had another opportunity to visit the Orphanage, this time at the Director's invitation to celebrate his retirement party on the great lawn.

As the celebrating crowd lingered, I happened to speak with the elder-wise Director.

"I've got something to add to the story I told you years ago about the Matthew and the leaning elm tree," he said.

As the Director and I crossed the great lawn and over the slight rise I saw something I never expected.

I saw Matthew, swinging a little boy around the old elm that now leaned bravely into the Northeast wind.

"That," the Director said, "is Matthews son," and the other two children are over there with his wife. It seems Matthew has grown up into a mighty elm. Oh," the Director concluded,

"Matthew may lean a bit now and then, but his children will have a father like no other."

38. THROW IT OUT

Adapted by Fr. John Powers, C.P.

Joseph was a good tailor, good enough to have so much work that he had little time to fix the tears and holes in his own cloths.

For years, Joseph wore the same overcoat to work every day.

One night, while sitting with his wife at dinner, Joseph complained saying, "Sarah, look my favorite coat is torn and ruined."

"Joseph" Sarah said, "why don't you just throw it out."

Joseph answered simply saying, "Why should I throw it out? After all, I'm a tailor." Joseph then took off the heavy coat, cut and stitched and sewed himself a nice jacket to wear to work each day.

As time passed an accident ripped the sleeve of the jacket.

That night, when Joseph complained about the rip in his sleeve, Sarah said. "Joseph, why don't you take the Jacket off and throw it out!"

Joseph, of course, responded again, "Why should I throw it out? After all I am a tailor." Joseph took off the jacket and cut, stitched, and sewed himself a fine vest to wear to work each day.

Time went on of course, and suddenly, there was a rip in the pocket of the vest Joseph had made, so that night he said, "Oh, Sarah, my favorite vest is ruined." Sarah answered saying, "Please, Joseph, take the vest off and throw it out!"

"Throw it out," Joseph answered. "Why should I throw it out. I'm a fine tailor after all." With that, Joseph took off the vest and cut and stitched and sewed himself a scarf to wear every day to work.

Of course, within a few months the scarf was also frayed. "Sarah, look," Joseph said, "my scarf has holes in it."

Sarah begged again, "Joseph, please, throw it out!"

"Throw it out." Joseph said. " Why should I throw it out? After all, I'm a tailor." He took the scarf off and cut and stitched and sewed himself a fine necktie. Of course, it wasn't long before Joseph noticed the stains and spots on the tie. It was too dirty and worn to wear.

When he came home that night he complained, "Sarah, my tie is ruined." His wife said, "Well then just throw it out!"

"Throw it out." Joseph said, "Is that all you can say. Why should I throw it out? After all, I'm a tailor." Joseph took off his necktie, cut and stitched and sewed himself a fine handkerchief.

At every meal Joseph tucked the handkerchief under his chin. It wasn't long before the handkerchief was covered with stains. One day he looked at the handkerchief and said, "Sarah, "look my handkerchief is ruined."

"Joseph," Sarah yelled, "take the handkerchief and throw it out!"

"Why should it *throw it out?* After all I'm the best tailor in the Village. I'll think of something I can do with this dirty old handkerchief."

Sarah smiled at Joseph and said, "Ahh Joseph I know you are a great tailor but I'm absolutely sure that you can't make something out of this nothing."

Joseph looked at Sarah and said, "Now Sarah, you know that I'm not only a fine tailor, but I'm also a storyteller."

Joseph then took out a pencil, sat down and wrote this story I've just told you.

Perhaps the telling of this story will prove to you that sometimes you can make something out of what seems like nothing.

39. THE LIST

Adapted by Fr. John Powers, C.P.

Once upon the timelessness of the afterlife, Beatrice, a wise and noble woman, after a long-suffering illness, died and discovered that she was standing in line before the pearly gates still wearing her hospital gown.

Just as she was slipping into death, however, Beatrice heard a voice telling her that, for judgment sake, she had to bring into the afterlife a list of the greatest accomplishments in her life.

It just so happened that on the day Beatrice died in the hospital a well-dressed middle age man also died. He too found himself standing in the celestial judgment line, surprisingly right behind Beatrice. He too was told that he was to bring a list of the greatest accomplishments in his life. His kept his list, however, in expensive leather-bound journal.

The rich man was proud of the many great achievements. He'd started a small business, grew it into a large corporation, sold it and made a killing. He had three homes, degrees from the finest colleges in the country, the prestige of a political position and had sent his children to the finest private schools in the world.

The rich man was sure his list of accomplishments would impress whoever was making the heavenly judgments.

As the rich man stood in the line he noticed that just in front of him in line was a woman who had also brought a sort of book, most likely with a list of her greatest accomplishments.

Much to his surprise Beatrice's book, however, was much thicker than his. In fact, it was twice the size of his book. There were even little yellow post-its stickers sticking, here and there, out of the sides of the book.

The rich man wondered. How could this poor woman have achieved so much more than I had?

Suddenly Beatrice turned around and introduced herself to the wealthy man, "My name is Bea and I see you've brought along the book of your greatest accomplishments."

"I have," the rich man said. "However, I see that your book is much thicker than mine. Can you tell me some of your great accomplishments?"

"Oh, this," Beatrice said, holding up her thick book, "This is the list of all the names of the people I loved."

The rich man suddenly realized he'd brought the wrong list.

40. THE SERMON!

Adapted by Fr. John Powers, C.P.

After the Sunday service the Preacher was waiting at the door of the Church shaking hands with some of those who'd attended the service.

One after another of the worshipers stopped to shake the preacher's hand. The first was a man who said, "Thank You Preacher." The next person said, "Good Sermon Preacher".

The next person in line was someone the preacher knew well. She, he knew would have an encouraging comment to make about his sermon.

This Sunday was like so many others. The good woman stepped up to the Preacher and said, "Good sermon Preacher."

"Well," the Preacher said, "all I did was share the words that God gave me. It was the Spirit of God that really spoke through me".

"Well, Preacher," the woman said, "it wasn't that good."

41. THE DEVIL RETIRES

Adapted by Fr. John Powers, C.P.

One hot day the Devil of all demons decided to retire. After gathering all his little demons together he announced that he was not only retiring but that he was going to have a garage sale to sell all his evil tools, all the things he'd used to turn the hearts of people to sin., all the things he'd used over the years to turn people hearts to sin.

Out on the driveway in front of the garage and on the burned-out lawn the devil had placed all his tools of temptation, greed, pride, avarice, sloth, gluttony, anger, all for the going, going, gone price.

Of course, all the little demons slithered out from under there rocks to see what they could purchase. Everything sold quickly, of course.

One of the slimy little demons, however, was not satisfied with the sale so he went up to the Devil and said. "I know you pretty well. Well enough to know that you are hiding something, that you haven't put all your evil tools up for sale. I want to purchase whatever it is that you are hiding in your pocket."

"You are a cunning little demon." the Devil said.

The Devil then pulled out of his pocket his most precious tool. He held it up for the little demon to see and said, "I was keeping this just in case I decided to come out of retirement. This tool is all you'd need to start a thriving business in evil doing."

He held up the tool of apathetic silence. The 'I don't care,' kind of silence.

42. UPPERS AND DOWNERS

Adapted by Fr. John Powers, C.P.

A new (Preacher, Priest, Minister you choose) was assigned, after his Seminary training, to a large Church where he'd preach and pray along with a faithful congregation.

The Preacher, after his first Church service, was especially happy with the sermon he'd preached from the pulpit that Sunday.

As the service continued, however, when the Preacher was about to pray some of the Holiest Words in the service, the strangest thing happened, something the Preacher had never expected or seen before.

As the Preacher began to pray the holiest prayer some of the people in the front pew of the Church stood up and some of the people, in the same pew, knelt.

Despite the odd sight of seeing the Kneel-Downers and Stand-uppers right in front of him, the Preacher continued to pray the holy words.

What happened next was even more confusing, however, to the point that it made the Preacher truly angry.

As the Preacher was proclaiming the Prayer the kneel-downers in the front row began grumbling at the Stand-uppers to "Kneel down, Kneel down, Kneel down, Kneel down, Kneel down."

In reaction to the Kneel-downers demand to kneel down, the Stand-uppers began in an even harsher grumbling, loud enough for almost all to hear, that the Kneel-downers should, "Stand up, Stand up, Stand up."

Of course, the Preacher was shocked to hear what sounded like a war of words being waged right in front of him. This was supposed to be a Holy Service, yet it felt like a holy war.

When the service was over the Preacher was so furious that he demanded to speak to one of the Stand-uppers and one of the Kneel-downers.

"Why," the Preacher asked the representatives of the Stand-uppers and the Kneel-downers, "were you fighting over whether you should stand up or kneel down during the holiest moment of the Church Service.

"Well, Preacher," a Stand-upper said, "our Church tradition is that we are supposed to stand at the holy moment."

"No, it's not," a Kneel-downer complained. "The oldest tradition in our Church is that we should kneel down during the Holy Moment."

"I don't understand," the Preacher said, "it's got to be one or the other. So, to settle this argument," he continued, "let's take this argument to the oldest member of the Church."

And so, a member of the Stand-uppers and a member of the Kneel-downers went along with the Preacher to visit Martha, the oldest member of the Church. Martha was almost one-hundred years old and now lived in a Nursing Home.

After greeting the Elder-wise Martha, The Preacher said, "Martha, I need your help."

"Martha," the Preacher continued, "during the Holiest moment of our Church service some of the people in the pews are kneeling down and grumbling at the people who are standing up, while those who are standing up are grumbling that everyone should be kneeling down."

"So," the Preacher continued. "Martha, as an elder-wise member of the Church, perhaps you could settle the argument between the Stand-Uppers and Kneel Downers in the Congregation."

"Is it then, Martha, the tradition in our Church that you should kneel down at the Holy moment?"

“No,” Martha said for all to hear.”

“Oh,” the Preacher said, “then Martha it must be that during the Holy moment the people are supposed to stand up. Is that right?”

“No,” Martha said, “Standing up is not our tradition either.”

“How can it be,” the confused Preacher asked “that neither standing up or kneeling down is the Church tradition?”

“Martha,” didn’t you ever see the kneel-downers and stand-uppers in the Church arguing and fighting about whether they should stand up or kneel down when they worshiped? Martha, all there doing is fighting.”

“Ahh,” Martha sighed, “Arguing and fighting, that’s our tradition.”

43. THE WISH

by Fr. John Powers, C.P.

Once upon a dusty path Seymour tripped over what looked like, what some storytellers would call, a Genie lamp. Seymour picked up the lamp and gave it a good rub. Of course, smoke billowed out of the lamp to form a Genie who looked as old as ancient. To Seymour's surprise, however, the Genie who was dressed in rags, covered with dirt and wore a crooked turban.

When the smoke finally settled, the Genie folded his boney arms across his chest and said, "Surprise, I'm here to grant you one wish!"

Seymour paused for a moment and said, "I'm a bit confused. I thought Genies granted three wishes?"

"We usually do grant three wishes," the Genie said, "but there's been a crisis with our Bank of Wishes. We're not as wealthy with wishes as we once were." The Genie said, "I can grant only one wish now."

"That isn't fair," Seymour said, "but I'll take what I can get."

"There's also another change in Genie wish-craft," the Genie said hesitantly. "There's now a condition about what you can wish for."

"A condition?" Seymour asked.

"Yes," the Genie answered. "Now listen closely. You can make any wish you want Seymour, but whatever you wish for is going to be given to everyone else in the world, but you won't get what you wish for."

"Now I'm more confused." Seymour said. "If I understand you correctly, Genie, I can't wish for anything for myself. Instead, whatever I wish for everyone else in the world gets it but I don't, that I don't"

"Correct," the Genie said."

"I 'm going to have to think about this," Seymour said, as he took a step off the road to sit on a large rock.

Seymour sat on that rock, with his elbow on his knee and hand up to his chin and thought about what he should wish for everyone else in the world that he wouldn't get.

First Seymour thought that he should wish that everyone be granted peace, but then he realized that peace was especially important to him. He didn't want to be the only person in the world to live with a chaotic heart and mind.

Seymour thought many times about wishing for money. "A million dollars to each one," but then thought, "I'd be the poorest of all."

At one-point Seymour was sure he'd thought of just the right wish. "I'll ask the Genie to make everyone think that I'm the most wonderful man all the world.

"But on second thought, Seymour said, "How would I ever know whether someone really liked or loved me?"

Then Seymour thought of a rather complicated wish and told the Genie, "What if I wish that everyone else in the world got one wish? Then I'll get whatever they each wish for. "

"Not possible," the Genie said. The Genie bank would go bankrupt and fall into a deep depression. And," the Genie continued, "that's a very selfish eish if you think about it a bit."

"Well," Seymour said, "I don't want to be so greedy, so I'll wish for something just for everyone else, a genuine gift.

And so, as it came to pass Seymour just Seymour sat on the uncomfortable rock for a long thinking.

Of course, Seymour being a humble man, didn't hesitate to ask everyone who passed by what they would wish for everyone in the world, even if they wouldn't get it.

One young man recommended that Seymour wish for everyone to have a long and then an even longer life.

"Are you crazy, Seymour said. "If I wish for that, I'd die sooner rather than later."

Seymour sat on the rock on the side of the road for what seemed like forever, until a seven-year-old boy, Lester by name, walked up to Seymour, and said. "I've got the answer to your wish-craft question."

"You're too young to have the answer to this very complicated question," Seymour said, "but you can try a bit of wish-craft if you want.

To that Lester answered. "The answer is simple. I'd wish that everyone in the world get half of my allowance. That way I'll keep the other half. Great answer for a sixth grader named Lester.

WHAT WOULD YOU WISH FOR EVERYONE ELSE IN THE WORLD BUT YOU WOULD'NT GET?

SO, TO YOU THE READER, WHAT WOULD BE YOUR WISH?

44. I BELIVE GOD IS...

Full of surprises. --- Faithful to every promise. --- Eternally young.
Within every person regardless of race, faith, or economic class. ---
Sensitive to those who fail, sin, and make mistakes. --- The foundation of
all. --- Always on the side of truth. --- Still being crucified today. Utterly
beyond adequate description. --- Laughing at funny human formalities and
rituals. --- Always ready to meet us more than halfway. --- Pleased when
people simply try. --- More than our narrow picture of perfection. --- Alive
in this world. --- The mysterious "something" that helps us survive the loss
of a loved ones. --- More than the sum of human achievement or wishes.---
Beyond all, --- A personal reality. --- Not just an impersonal force. ---
Concerned with justice more than good order. --- The creator who
continues to create today. --- Still teaching those willing to learn how to
love. --- Understanding when habits addict us. --- Suffering in all who
suffer. --- Challenging all those who desire to have power over others. ---
Self-revealing through all that is most human. --- Light enough to brighten
any darkness, --- and Still Rising.

***PLEASE ADD TO THIS LIST ANSWERING THE QUESTION
"WHO OR WHAT IS GOD TO YOU?"***

45. I PROMISE TODAY TO

by Fr. John Powers, C.P.

- Tell the truth rather than own it.
- Be a learner rather than a teacher.
- Be courageous rather than just be unafraid.
- Have faith rather than just get religion.
- Make plans rather than make excuses.
- Care for someone rather than control anyone.
- Be honest rather than right.
- Be humble enough not to humiliate anyone else.
- Follow a dream rather than be driven by fantasy.
- Take responsibility rather than making excuses.
- Be charitable rather than greedy.
- Look forward rather than being stuck in yesterday.
- Have real equality rather than false superiority.
- Make friends rather than resent or take revenge on enemies.
- Author a good life rather than only a good book.
- Forgive rather than just forget.
- To listen more than speak.
- Remember that memory is a trickster.
- Remember that when we call someone permanently disabled that we are only temporarily abled and that they simply have differ-abilities.
- To live humbly with the humiliations in life.
- To remember not to fight with people who aren't there.
- That the only thing that doesn't change is change.
- That ministry is love made visible.
- That everyone is haunted by something in their past.
- That the one who suffers the most may have the most to give.

46. DOWN THE AISLE

Adapted by Fr. John Powers C.P.

A lovely couple had gotten married and desperately wanted to start a family but could not. However, after many years, they had two daughters. They were thrilled. Then, about half a dozen years later, the wife became pregnant again. They were ecstatic.

This time the other two girls were old enough to be helpful to their mother and to go to the hospital with her when her time came. The baby was born – another girl. But shortly after the birth the baby had an aneurism and died. They were all devastated.

The doctor wanted to dispose of the day-old infant, but the family wanted a burial. Usually the church really does not have a ritual for such a newborn child, but the parish priest acceded to their wishes and they had a funeral. There was even a tiny white coffin, the size of a bread box. When the time came for the funeral, the father took the coffin and waited to walk up the aisle with it and put it in its place. The Parish Priest thought that this would be too much for the father.

The Priest said, "Bob, you don't have to do that. The funeral director will bring it up." "No, Father," said the father. "I'll take it up. I made a promise that I would walk all my girls down the aisle."

From *Storytelling the Word* by Bill Bausch, Twenty-Third Pub. P. 68

47. WHAT I'VE LEARNED

Author Unknown

I've learned that you cannot make someone love you. All you can do is be someone who can be loved. The rest is up to them.

I've learned that no matter how much I care; some people just don't care back.

I've learned that it takes years to build up trust, and only seconds to destroy it.

I've learned that it's not what you have in your life but who you have in your life that counts.

I've learned that you can get by on charm for about fifteen minutes. After that, you'd better know something.

I've learned that you can do something in an instant that will give you heartache for life.

I've learned that no matter how thin you slice it, there are always two sides.

I've learned that you should always leave loved ones with loving words. It may be the last time you see them.

I've learned that you can keep going long after you think you can't.

I've learned that we are responsible for what we do, no matter how we feel.

I've learned that either you control your attitude, or it controls you.

I've learned that regardless of how hot and steamy a relationship is at first, the passion fades and there had better be something else to take its place.

I've learned that forgiving takes practice.

I've learned that there are people who love you dearly, but just don't know how to show it.

I've learned that money is a lousy way of keeping score.

I've learned that my best friend and I can do anything or nothing and have the best time.

I've learned that sometimes the people you expect to kick you when you're down will be the ones to help you get back up.

I've learned that sometimes when I'm angry I have the right to be angry, but that doesn't give me the right to be cruel.

I've learned that true friendship continues to grow, even over the longest distance.

I've learned that just because someone doesn't love you the way you want them to, doesn't mean they don't love you with all they have.

I've learned that you should never tell a child their dreams are unlikely or outlandish. Few things are more humiliating, and what a tragedy it would be if they believed it.

I've learned that your family won't always be there for you. It may seem funny, but people you aren't related to can take care of you and love you and teach you to trust people again. Families aren't biological.

I've learned that no matter how good a friend is, they're going to hurt you every once in a while, and you must forgive them for that.

I've learned that it isn't always enough to be forgiven by others. Sometimes you have to learn to forgive yourself.

I've learned that no matter how bad your heart is broken the world doesn't stop for your grief.

I've learned that our background and circumstances may have influenced who we are, but we are responsible for who we become.

I've learned that sometimes when my friends fight, I'm forced to choose sides even when I don't want to.

I've learned that just because two people argue, it doesn't mean they don't love each other and just because they don't argue, it doesn't mean they do.

I've learned that sometimes you have put the individual ahead of their actions.

I've learned that we don't have to change friends if we understand that friends change.

I've learned that you shouldn't be so eager to find out a secret. It could change your life forever.

I've learned that there are many ways of falling and staying in love.

I've learned that no matter how many friends you have, if you are their pillar you will feel lonely and lost at the times you need them most.

I've learned that life can be changed in a matter of hours by people who don't even know you.

I've learned that even when you think you have no more to give, when a friend cries out to you, you will find the strength to help.

I've learned that writing, as well as talking, can ease emotional pain.

I've learned that the people you care most about in life are taken from you too soon.

I've learned that although the word "love" can have many different meanings, it loses value when overly used.

I've learned that it's hard to determine where to draw the line between being nice and not hurting people's feelings and standing up for what you believe.

I've learned all these things through my successes and my failures, my experiences and my choices.

I've learned them because I have lived.

Author unknown

48. GRACE FILLED

Collected and Written by Fr. John Powers, C.P.

I believe that God gives all of God, all the time, to all, in equal measure, that you can't get more or less of God. God is the very act of giving. There won't be any more God in five minutes than there is right now. The giving of God is Grace, it's what God does for a living and for the living.

Even to discuss God/Grace in terms of amount and quantity does a disservice to the mysterious nature of Grace. Grace is beyond our control but persistently present. The giver and gift are one.

There is something triumphant in the word Grace. It is, however, easier to describe than define. Spiritual guides, psychologists, philosophers, theologians, scientists, and mystics have tried to do both. I have collected some of the attempted and tempting descriptions.

- The wild good.
- Supernatural assistance.
- God's affirming influence.
- Charity squared.
- The very and varied activity of God.
- The gravitational pull and push of the universe.
- God's unbidden abundance.
- Merciless beauty.
- The One-ing Power with and for, not over.
- Numinous energy.
- Geo-gravitational field of consciousness.
- The actual, uncreated, created, operating, cooperating and prevenient power of God.
- God's goodwill toward the universe.
- The perpetual, motivating love.
- The quasi-formal cause.
- The higher power.
- The innermost of God.
- Compassion
- The invisible behind all myths.

- The reconciliation of the self with itself.
- Subjective indwelling power.
- Cosmic extension.
- The Hard Good.
- The Divine Virus.
- The primordial reality.
- Supportive atmosphere.
- The acceptance of that which is rejected.
- The abiding love of God, and our response to it.
- The secret presence of God in life.
- God's self-communication, disclosure, expression.
- The God Molecule.
- Sacred Fondness
- Nature's urge toward perfection and wholeness.
- The creative, relational, purposeful power of God.
- God's steadfast love.
- The dynamic, personal presence freely given.
- Universal freedom that creates subjective freedom.
- The "hesed" of the Hebrew bible.
- The "charis" of St. Paul.
- Anima/Animus.
- God's going out as full lavishness.
- God's sheltering personal nearness.
- The daimon.
- God's shadow.
- Soul energy.
- Ultimate guardian angel.
- The God family.
- The beneficial reality.
- The glue that binds in kinship.
- The gift-giving favor of God.
- The Word of Jesus.
- The habitual gift—Donum Habituale—St. Thomas Aquinas
- The intimacy that creates intimacy.
- Secret force of The Kingdom.
- Sheep among wolves.

- Treasure hidden in a field.
- Tiniest seed in a garden.
- Pearl of great price.
- Lost coin.
- Light under bushel basket.
- The Inner light.
- A pinch of yeast worked into bread dough.
- A sprinkling of salt on meat.
- The dancing Trinity.
- The passionate heart of God beating in the human heart.
- Sacred Spirations.
- Drippings of Divinity.
- A scent of a flower we have not found.
- The echo of a tune we have not heard.
- News from a country we have not yet visited.
- Wisdom, as described in the Hebrew Scriptures,

“I have known everything we see, and everything hidden, because Wisdom (Grace), author of all, taught me. In her is a spirit that is intelligent, unique, subtle, active concise, pure and lucid. It cannot corrupt and loves what is good. Nothing can restrain it; It is dependable, calm, though almighty. It sees everything and penetrates all spirits, however intelligent, subtle and pure they may be.”⁸. Wisdom 7:21.

49. "THE LISTENER," – BY TAYLOR CALDWELL

Introduction: On a very personal level, the most influential, important, and valuable book I've ever read, aside from the Bible, is a book I've read almost every year since 1974 is "The Listener," by Taylor Caldwell, a Christian woman who, like all of us, struggled and grew in faith. She writes.

"This is a true story. It may be your story, but certainly it is your neighbor's story. You may find your own face here, and it may anger you. I hope so. Anger is a cleansing agent.

The most desperate need of men (and woman) is not a new vaccine for any disease, or a new religion, or a new "way of life." man does not need to go to the moon or other solar systems. He does not require bigger and better bombs and missiles. He will not die if he dose not get "better housing" or more vitamins. He will not expire of frustration if he is unable to buy the brightest and newest gadgets, or if all his children cannot go to college. His basic needs are few, and it takes little to acquire them, in spite of the advertisers. He can survive on a small amount of bread and in the meanest shelter. He always did.

His real need, his most terrible need, is for someone to listen to him, not as a "patient," but as a human soul. He needs to tell someone of what he thinks, of the bewilderment he encounters when he tries to discover why he was born, how he must live, and where his destiny lies. The question he asks of psychiatrists are not the questions in his heart, and the answers he receives are not the answers he needs. He is a sealed vessel, even when under drugs or while heavily drinking. His semantics are not the semantics of anyone else, not even the semantics of a psychiatrist.

Our pastors would listen – if we gave them the time to listen to us. But we have burdened them with tasks which should be our own. We have demanded not only that they be shepherds but that they take our

trivialities, our social aspirations, the “fun” of our children, on their weary backs. We have demanded that they be expert businessmen, politicians, accountants, playmates, community directors, “good fellows,” judges, lawyers, time for listening, and we do not listen to them, either. We must offer them concrete help and assume our own responsibilities. We forget that they are men also, frequently very tired, always unappreciated, sometimes disheartened, quite often appalled, worried, anxious, lonely, grieved. They are not supermen, without human agony and human longing. Heedlessly, we neglect them – unless we wish them to serve us in material ways when their ways should be exclusively God’s. We demand of them what we would not dare to demand of anyone else, even ourselves. We give them no time to listen, when to have someone listen, without hurry, without the click of a clock, is the direst need of our spirits.

Until we free our shepherds from our insistence that they be our servants, let us remember that there is someone who listens. He is available to all of us, all of the time, all of our lives. The listener.

We have only to talk to him. Now. Today. Tonight. He understands our language, our semantics, our terrors, our secrets, our sins, our crimes, our sorrow. He will not consider you sentimental if you speak fondly of the past, if you are old. He will not turn you away if you are a liar, a thief, a murderer, a hypocrite, a betrayer. He will listen to you. he will not be impatient if you become maudlin, or cry in self-pity, or if you are a coward or a fool. He has listened to people like this all his life. He will continue to listen.

While he listens, you will find your own problems solved. Will he speak to you, also? Who knows? Perhaps. Surely, if you ask him. If you listen, too.

“The Listener,” Taylor Caldwell, Doubleday and Company, Inc., Aeonian Press, Inc. Mattituck, New York, 1960

50. CONSCIENCE VERSUS AUTHORITY

"Over the pope as expression of the binding claim of ecclesiastical authority, there stands one's own conscience which must be obeyed before all else, even if necessary, against the requirement of ecclesiastical authority. This emphasis on the individual, whose conscience confronts him with a supreme and ultimate tribunal, and one which in the last resort is beyond the claim of external social groups, even the official church, also establishes a principle in opposition to increasing totalitarianism".

(Joseph Ratzinger in: Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II ,Vol. V., pg. 134 (Ed) H. Vorgrimler, New York, Herder and Herder, 1967).

51. STANDING ON ONE FOOT SERMON

An isolated tribe in sub-Saharan Africa has a method for avoiding overly long speeches, which they consider are injurious to both the speaker and the audience. The custom is that the speaker must stand on one leg while addressing his audience. As soon as his second foot touches the ground, he must stop speaking.

52. CAN YOU EVER REALLY LEAVE HOME?

A love letter addressed to the visible institutional church.

How much I criticize you, my church and yet how much I love you!

You have made me suffer more than anyone and yet I owe you more than I owe anyone.

I should like to see you destroyed and yet need your presence.

You have given me scandal and yet you have made me understand holiness.

Never in the world have I seen anything more obscurantist, more compromised, more false, yet never have I touched anything more pure, more generous or more beautiful.

Countless times I have felt like slamming the door of my soul in your face – and yet, every night, I have prayed that I might die in your sure arms!

No, I cannot be free of you, for I am one with you, even if not completely you.

Then too – where should I go?

To build another church?

But I cannot build another church without the same defects, for they are my own defects. And again, if I were to build another church, it would be my church, not Christ's church.

No, I am old enough. I know better!

"Several years ago, Carlo Carretto, one of great spiritual writers of our time, returned to Italy from the Sahara Desert after many years as a monk among the Bedouin. He then wrote a spiritual testimony, *I SOUGHT AND I FOUND* (DLT, 1984), within which he chronicles his journey toward, and struggles with God. He ends the book with a letter that I have found to be a magnificent description of the church flawed yet divine, mediating God's presence even as it obstructs it! From "Forgotten Among The Lilies, by Ronald Rolheiser, Doubleday, NY, 2005, pp. 303-30

53. UNCOMMONLY HONEST CONFESSION

“Let me make an uncommonly honest confession. In the course of half a century I have seen more Catholic corruption than you have read of. I have tasted it. I have been reasonably corrupt myself. And yet, I joy in this Church, - this living, pulsing, sinning people of God, love it with a crucifying passion.

Why: For all the Catholic hate, I experience here a community of love.

For all the institutional idiocy, I find here a tradition of reason.

For all the individual repressions, I breathe here an air of freedom.

For all the fear of sex, I discover here the redemption of my body.

In an age so inhuman I touch here tears of compassion.

In a world so grim and humorless, I share here rich joy and early laughter.

In the midst of death, I hear here an incomparable stress on life.

For all the apparent absence of God, I sense here the real presence of Christ.

Walter Burghardt, S.J. , TELL THE NEXT GENERATION: Paulist, 1980 p. 135

54. a FIVE SOUNDS OF STORY

by Father John Powers, C.P.

Ha-ha – amusing grace how silly the sound,
Aha! – amazing grace how surprising the sound,
Ahhhh – assuring grace how soothing the sound,
Ah-men – accepting grace how sacred the sound

b. THE WAYS OF DISCOVERY

Name it, Claim it, Reframe it, Sustain it, and proclaim it.

55. "TO HIM WHO WAITS

"The Rod, the Root and the Flower" by Coventry Patmore

All things reveal themselves provided he has the courage not to deny in the darkness what he has seen in the light,"

(to which I would add) "and the courage not to deny in the light what he has felt, touched or heard in the dark.."

56. THE STUPID

"The stupid neither forgive nor forget; the naive forgive and forget; the wise forgive, but they do not forget." By Thomas Szasz (to which I would add, "they do, however, learn from the remembering, "after all, if it's the truth that sets you free then it's remembering that keeps you free.")

57. MY CHOICES

by Fr. John Powers. C.P.

"I choose today to: Tell the truth rather than own it, Be a learner rather than a teacher, Be courageous rather than just unafraid, have faith rather than get religion, Make plans rather than excuses, Care for someone rather than control anyone, Be honest rather than right, Be hopeful rather than certain, Make conscious choices rather than practice wish-craft. Be charitable rather than greedy, make friends rather than enemies, author a good life rather than only a good book, forgive rather than just forget, And Listen more than speak."

58. THE LION WHO FORGOT HOW TO ROAR
by Fr. John Powers, C.P.



In a jungle far away, lived a family of lions.

Theodore was the newest baby cub born into the Pride family.

Theodore learned to walk like all other lions but when it came to the roaring noise, Theodore was silent.

He could purr and growl like his brother and sister lions but when it comes to roaring loud and strong, he forgot the sound that was in every lion's heart all along.

Every lion in the Pride tried to teach Theodore how to roar. His father showed him how to take a deep breath and throw out his chest. His mother showed him how to hold his mouth just right to make a big noise, but when Theodore tried, no sound came out.

Theodore's brother, sister and neighbor lions thought he was different and dumb and would laugh whenever he tried and failed again to roar. All the lions of the Pride, except for his mother and father, made fun of Theodore, hurting his heart so deep that he wanted to hide from the Pride. One day, Theodore, ran away from the laughing Pride.

He'd never walked in the jungle by himself before so when he became lost, he didn't even know it.

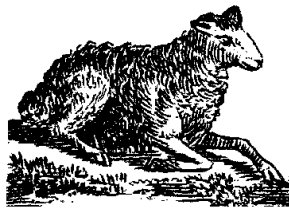
“Running and playing, purring and growling were fun when there were no other lions poking paws at him because he was different.” Theodore thought

The young monkey’s Theodore met in the jungle didn’t care if he could roar or not, nor did the birds or bugs, antelopes or giraffes. They only wanted to play.

As Theodore chased a beautifully colored butterfly around a big rock he ran smack into a little white ball of fluff walking the other way.

After both animals landed with a bump Theodore asked the white ball with legs, “what kind of animal are you?”

“I’m a sheep”, came the answer.



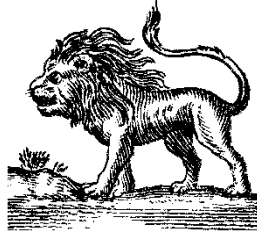
“Actually, I’m a lamb and my name is Hew. What kind of animal are you?”, Hew asked in return.

“I’m King of the Jungle,” Theodore growled. My name is Theodore and you knocked me over.”

“I’m sorry,” Hew answered. “I didn’t see you coming around the big rock. I know what a shepherd is but I’ve never met a King. I’ve been told, however, that lions can be very ferocious and that I should run as fast as I can when I hear one roar. The problem is that I have never actually heard a lion roar before. Could you make the lion roaring sound so I’ll know to run from a King next time I hear one.”

Theodore put his head down at the lamb’s question, pawed at the dirt and purred. “I don’t know how to roar. I forgot how. I try, all the time, watch.”

Theodore took a deep breath, thrust out his chest, opened his mouth wide, pushed the air out as hard as he could, but again no sound was heard.



To the young lions yawning silence Hew said, "I'm sorry you've forgotten how to roar Theodore, but I've forgotten something to, my way home. I have been trying for hours to get back to my flock, but I keep getting more lost all the time. I have an idea though." Hew concluded.

"Let's be friends and that way..."

"We are too different to be friends." Theodore said interrupting. "After all, I'm a mighty lion and you're just a gentle lamb. I'm supposed to be your enemy and you are supposed to be my prey. We can't be friends."

"We aren't that different." Hew responded. "After all, we are both lost, in our own way. If we become friends, Theodore, we can then help each other find what we have lost. I can try and help you remember how to roar by asking all the animals we meet to make the roaring sound and you can help me find the right road home to my pasture and shepherd. I'll help you remember your roar sound and you help me remember the road home. What do you say, Theodore? Shall we be friends and help each other?"

"I've always been taught that friends help each other so I guess if you help me remember how to roar and I help you remember how to get home we will be friending each other anyway. Ok, let's be friends.

"Theodore concluded.

As Theodore and Hew walked along a path in the jungle that they thought might lead to where the jungle met the pasture, they came upon a monkey swinging lazily from a tree.

"Where are you two going?" the monkey screeched.

The lamb spoke up to answer. "This is Theodore, King of the jungle and I am Hew, Lamb of the Pasture. He is helping me find my way home and I am helping him remember how to roar. Do you, Mr. Monkey, know what a lions roar sounds like?" the lamb asked.

"Of course, I do." The monkey squealed. "I hear it all the time and then climb the nearest tree as fast as I can.



"Can you make the lion noise for my friend, Theodore?" Hew asked, "so he can practice."

"Certainly," said the Monkey, a lion sounds just like me only louder." The monkey then threw his arms in the air, jumped up and down on the tree limb and squealed and screeched, as loudly as he could.

"HE-HE-HE-HE WOO-WHO-WHO-HE-HE WOO-WOO HE."

"That's what a lion sounds like to me said the monkey, only even louder."

"That's not the sound of a lion," Theodore growled. "I may not be able to roar myself," he continued, "but I know what a real roar sounds like and that was certainly not it. Since Mr. Monkey can't help me remember how to roar, perhaps you can tell us which road leads to the shepherd and pasture so my friend, Hew, can find his lost flock."

"I'm sorry," said the monkey, "but I don't know what a shepherd or flock is and have never been in a pasture. I'm told there are practically no trees in a pasture to swing on so why would I want to go there. I can't help you find your way home, Lamb," the monkey concluded.

"Thank you anyway," replied the lion and lamb, and off they went in search of another animal.

As they came to a rise of a hill, they spied a snake sunning herself on a big rock just off the path.

"Excuse me, Ms. Snake," Hew said, "I don't mean to interrupt your sun bath but my friend, the lion, and I were wondering if you could help us.?"



"Beacausse you didn't run away in fear when you sssaw me sssunning myssself on the rock," said the snake, " ass mossst other animalsss do, I'd be happy to help you in any way that I can."

Hew then spoke up. "Do you know what a roaring lion sounds like?" He asked.

"Of coursse, I do," said the snake. "I've heard many a roar in my daysss of sslithering through the grasssss. A roar sssounds jusst like me, only louder. Thisss iss what a roar sssoundsss like to me."

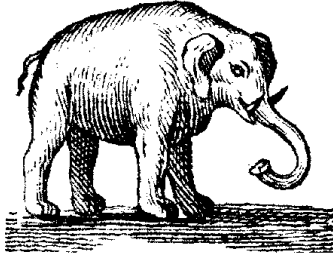
Ms. Snake lifted her head high and went SSSSSSSSSSSSSS.

"That's not what a roar sounds like." Theodore said. "There are no S's in a lions roar. Since you can't help me learn to roar," Theodore continued, "perhaps you know the way to the sheep's pasture. My lamb friend has lost his way."

"Sssad to sssay," said Ms. Snake, but I don't know the way to the passsture either. I ssstay sssafly in the jungle mossst of the time. I have a sssuggesstion though. Jusst down the path a bit iss a river where the elephantsss wassh and play. They sssay that elephantsss never forget, sso perhapsss one of the elephantsss can teach your lion friend the roaring sssound and ssshow you the proper road to the passsture."

Theodore and Hew made their way together to the edge of the river where the elephants were splashing, spraying or rolling in the mud. To the big gray elephant swaying gently on the shore of the moving water, the lamb said,

“Excuse me Mr. Elephant, but can you help us? I’ve forgotten my way home to the pasture and my lion friend has forgotten how to roar.”



The elephant flapped both big ears toward the lamb and said, “What did you say? You’ll have to speak up. I have very poor hearing. Please speak up, lamb.”

“Do you know how to roar?” Hew bleated as loudly as possible.

“Snore,” the elephant asked. “You want to know how to snore. Yes I know how to snore. Very well, as a matter of fact. Just ask any of the other elephants and they will tell you that I am the best snoring elephant in the herd. Here we go.”

The handsome tall elephant lifted his trunk, flapped his ears and snorted and blew, making a sound like nothing the Theodore or Hew had ever heard before.

“Just because he has big ears,” Hew finally said to Theodore, doesn’t mean he can hear. Let’s travel on.”

After a few hours of walking in the cold, Hew and Theodore grew tired. As the sun began to duck down into dusk the friends came upon a large rock with a crevice just big enough for them to lay down and rest. Laying down close, close together to warm each other the friends fell fast asleep. As Theodore, the forgetful Lion and Hew, the lost Lamp, laid down together another animal crept into the cave.

It was the lamb who woke with a startle when he thought he heard a familiar growl in a dream.

With eyes wide open Hew looked behind him suddenly coming face to face with the green eyes of a prowling wolf.

Hew bleated as loudly as he could to wake up his friend, Theodore. "Two are better than one when facing a hungry enemy," Hew remembered.



"What are you two doing in my den?" the wolf snarled.

"We're sorry," Theodore growled, "but we were tired and cold from our travels all day in the jungle. "You see," he went on, "I am searching for an animal to remind me what a roar sounds like and my friend, Hew, the lamb is trying to remember which road will lead him home to shepherd, flock and pasture. Can you help us, Wolf?"

"I could help you both, if I wished to, but first tell me," the wolf snarled, "what do I get in return if I make the roar sound and show the lamb the road home to the pasture I know so very, very well?"

Theodore answered bravely. "All we have to give is our thanks. We have nothing but gratitude. Will that be enough?" He asked.

"No, it is not enough. I can't eat thanks," the wolf snapped, "and I grow very hungry as night falls. I will, however, make a deal with you young lion. I will remind you how to roar like no lion ever roared before, a roar so royal it will terrify even the other lions. You, however, you must first allow me to eat your friend, the lamb."

"No", growled Theodore, loudly. You cannot have Hew for dinner. I will not allow it."

“How do you intend to stop me?” The wolf howled. “If you can’t remember how to roar like a lion should, perhaps you also can’t remember how to bite down hard on a wolf like me. I think I will take my chances and eat your lamb friend anyway. At least, then, I won’t have to travel all the way down the path just beyond the cave to prey on the flock in the pasture.”

With fangs showing sharply, the wolf turned slowly toward the lamb.

Hew was stunned with terror at the thought that he might be the wolf’s supper.

The wolf crouched low and crept toward Hew. The wolf smiled as he looked directly into the shaking lambs’ eyes and flashed his teeth as though they were his greatest pride.

While the wolf inched closer and closer toward his prey the young lion became more and more afraid for his good friend, the lamb kin.

Theodore’s fear quickly turned into anger and anger then turned into a furious and mighty love. Theodore could not allow the wolf to hurt his friend.

Deep inside the young lion’s heart a rumbling of ferocious friendship could be felt that began to rise into his throat, burst into his mouth, bounce around his tongue and teeth.

Just as the wolf was about to pounce on Hew, Theodore opened his mouth and the great sound of the lion came forth to protect his friend.

RRRRRRRRRRRRROOOOOOOOAAAAAAAAAAAAARRRRRRRRRRRR



The wolf stopped dead in his tracks with surprise as the roar echoed in the cave.

RRRRRRRRRRRRROOOOOOOOAAAAAAAAAARRRRRRRRRRRR

Theodore, surprised by the might of his roar, proclaimed his friendship for Hew once again with a pride that sounded like this.

RRRRRRRRRRRRRRROOOOOOOOAAAAAAAAAARRRRRRRRRRRR

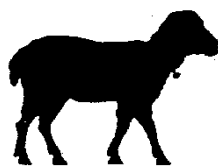
“If this young lion has remembered how to roar,” the wolf thought, “perhaps he recalls how to bite as only a King of the jungle can bite. If his bite is as big as his roar, I had better leave Hew for another time.”

The wolf bounded out of the cave and disappeared into the thick jungle.

Theodore and Hew looked at one another with surprise.

“Thank you, friend,” Theodore said to Hew. “Without your help I would never have remembered the roar that lived in my heart all along, waiting for friendship to set it free.”

“Let me also thank you dear lion friend,” Hew said, “for saving me from the hungry wolf and for learning which path leads to the pasture. Now I can make my way with pride, back to the flock where I belong.”



“I can also go home again,” roared the lion. “Now that I have remembered how to roar my brothers, sisters and neighbor lions will not laugh at me again. I shall return to my pride.”

“I am happy we were able to help each other Theodore,” Hew bleated gently, “but I’m also sad that we must go our separate ways.”

"I will not forget you either Hew," Theodore said. "You were a warm friend to huddle with in the cold, and you never laughed at me because I'd forgotten how to roar."

"I will also remember you young lion." Hew answered. "You never laughed at me because I was lost and gone astray, and you were as gentle as any lamb I've ever known. I am proud to call you my friend Theodore."

At that Theodore, the lion, went home with pride and Hew made his way to the flock, each hoping that they would meet again someday where the jungle meets the pasture.

