

## NOTES FOR THE REFLECTIVE PRACTITIONER

Volume Nine, Number One (October 2007)

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"What we have loved, others will love, and we will teach them how."  
(W. Wordsworth, from "The Prelude")

### NOTES FROM READERS

>>What you think<<

It is a week of rituals of various sorts – Reformation Day for Lutherans, All Hallows' Eve for children of all ages, and All Saint's Day for the company of witnesses – and I'm reminded of how the ritual of these bi-monthly Notes (now beginning its 9<sup>th</sup> year) offers us the opportunity to reflect, to mark out a discipline for our lives, to find common purpose...and I give thanks.

Long-time reader, Dianne Johnson, president of Endowment Builders in St. Louis, writes: "...I always enjoy storing a few issues (of Notes) up for those times when the activities of life need to be pondered & sifted through before we can move forward. Now is one of those times.

Your piece in April on Peace Education which included the wonderful question raised by John Courtney Murray of how we will recover our capacity for "conversation" brought to mind a wonderful quote:

"Insight, I believe, refers to the depth of understanding that comes by setting experiences, yours and mine, familiar and exotic, new and old, side by side, learning by letting them speak to one another." (Mary Catherine Bateson, writer & cultural anthropologist). Thanks, Dianne – Bateson is always insightful, especially on the ways we learn.

Susan Whealler Johnston, executive vice president at the Association of Governing Boards, and former board colleague at Rockford College, writes: "I have just finished a short column for AGB's *Trusteeship* magazine that was inspired by one of your essays in "Notes" from perhaps a year ago. I wanted to thank you for that inspiration. Your topic was time, and mine is time and trusteeship. When I read your essay, I thought about the need for trustees to understand the different pace of time in the academy and the notion of perpetuity, certainly an alien concept for most of us these days." Thanks, Susan – I'll look forward to sharing your thoughts in a future issue of Notes.

Occasionally, I (or my colleagues) refer to items from previous issues of Notes. If you have not been a subscriber previously, and wish to review our conversations, past issues of Notes are available on-line at [www.jgacounsel.com](http://www.jgacounsel.com). The website version of Notes also includes helpful hyperlinks to sources for purchasing or subscribing to the various publications mentioned in Notes. I thank my friends at Johnson, Grossnickle & Associates for their many years of abiding support for our reflective practice.

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## REFLECT ON THIS

>>Pray for me<<

I preached the following homily at the opening of our academic year. It is based on the New Testament epistle, Paul's Letter to the Philippians 1: 1-11. I think you'll note some abiding themes of relevance to our work as leaders – no matter the setting.

“How could we ask for a more compelling beginning to our academic year than these remarkable words of prayer from Paul and Timothy to their fellow faithful in Philippi? I wish for all of us that we have communities of memory and faith whose prayers hold each of us and all of us in the embrace of such comfort and joy.

I will say that, as a college president, I have a sense (and some evidence) that there are lots of people out there praying for me. I get letters and phone calls, and it is not unusual that some complainant might conclude a diatribe about some subject or the other with the kind reminder: “I'll pray for you” or perhaps, “I'll pray for your soul!” or perhaps...well, I think you get the point – these prayer offers are sometimes tinged with a bit of irony.

I also get sincere prayers that sometimes make me wonder whether the world is about to end. Shortly after I commenced my tenure at Rockford College, one of my senior staff members, asked to offer the invocation at a major alumni gathering, put on his best Charlton Heston imitation and proceeded to call down the mercy of a benevolent God. “Awesome and all-righteous God, be with President Pribbenow in all the burdens of his office. Keep him healthy, keep him strong, give him wisdom, for the climb is steep, the obstacles many, the outlook not so good.” The sad thing is that he was right about the tasks ahead – I should have listened more carefully...

So how do we learn to pray as Paul and Timothy pray – the sort of prayer that comforts us when we are lonely, that proclaims joy when we have reason to celebrate, that calls us to common action when the world needs us?

I have learned much about prayer – especially as it relates to my work as an educator – from the writings of Parker Palmer. Palmer writes in *To Know as We are Known* that “prayer is that capacity to enter into that vast community of life in which self and other...are intricately intertwined.” Prayer then is about our common lives, our relatedness to God and to each other. At the same time, Palmer says, prayer “means opening myself to the fact that as I reach for the connecting center, the center is reaching for me...In prayer, I begin to realize that I not only know but am known.” Prayer is the attitude, the posture, the understanding that we cannot separate our knowing from being known. Too often – especially in our educational journeys – we are much too certain that it is all about knowing and not much about being known – too certain we can do it alone, too certain we can control all that happens in our lives. And that is a most precarious

place to be, because it is in that false certainty that we often fail to recognize the love that is ours in being known!

That is what Paul and Timothy knew as they prayed for their brothers and sisters at Philippi. Our prayers, Paul wrote, are that you will be known, that you will be loved, that you will recognize that you cannot control everything with your knowledge or your behavior. Our prayers are that you will love each other as God loves you in Jesus Christ. Now that is a great prayer!

So how shall we pray for each other? I'm sure many of you have had a religion class along the way that taught you the various forms that prayer takes in different religious traditions. Allow me to say a few words about how our different sorts of prayer might help us to link knowing and being known, loving and being loved...

We pray to confess our sins and ask forgiveness I'm drawn again and again to Joseph Sittler's thought that the entire Christian faith can be summed up in the liturgical formula, "Almighty God, from whom no secrets are hid." So how do we find the common and loving in the act of confessing? This seems to me such an important sort of prayer for our Augsburg community. Academic institutions and those of us who populate them are pretty sure of what we know and how important our knowledge is for other people. Prayers of confession challenge us to remember what we don't know, what we can't do without help, the mistakes we make and the need to be forgiven. This is really tough – it's hard to be humble, I don't like to admit that I don't know, I'm supposed to know. Sittler's point is that it is precisely in this lack of knowing that we are known – fully and genuinely known, like it or not – by the One who loves us, and once we accept that gift of faith, we find the remarkable centering power of lifting up our sins, our lack of knowledge, our pride, and letting the gift of forgiveness free us to be loved, to keep on learning, to serve others who also need the embrace of forgiveness. As a community, may we learn to pray to confess our sins and ask forgiveness so that our common work might be accomplished.

We pray to intercede Intercessory prayer has always seemed to me rather formulaic. We pray on behalf of those who are ill or dying, on behalf a community coming together after time away, on behalf of a world in need of love and compassion – all important themes but sometimes just a bit too abstract and generic. Abigail and I and the kids were drawn to our church home here in Minneapolis, Our Saviour's Lutheran Church, by the ways in which the Prayers of the People, which are the usual form of intercessory prayer, were offered on one of the first times we visited. The person doing the prayers that Sunday used the intercessions to ask for help managing his email, to thank God for the children who cried throughout the church service and made folks uncomfortable, to ask for guidance for the man who had robbed the church building earlier in the week. Now, I thought, this is praying! Our prayers of intercession need to be prayers about the ordinary aspects of our lives because it is in the mundane and ordinary that we are known. We do a pretty good job of this sort of praying here in the chapel – you will hear names and issues in our prayers here that are central to our daily lives at Augsburg. But we could do a better job of this sort of praying if we figured out that our daily lives are

prayers – it is in the mundane and ordinary moments of our lives that we connect what we know and do with what it means to be known and loved. God loves us even as we struggle to manage our email or text messages or whatever your favored form of cyber-communication!

Finally, we pray to give thanks. You’ve heard me talk from this pulpit and elsewhere about how much joy I find in the daily work of the Augsburg community. I wish we could find the courage and strength and wisdom to give thanks for this college and its mission-based work as if we were praying without ceasing. Whatever it is that gets in the way of our joy – whether it’s the Lutheran thing about not boasting or the possibility that we all don’t feel the joy – our faithful duty, it seems to me, is to pray with thanksgiving for the privilege to be in this community, for the gifts of education for service, for the company of witnesses and saints who have helped to build this college and keep it strong, for our neighbors who are our partners and teachers in the city, for the challenge to seek the truth so that we might be free. These prayers of thanksgiving are the fitting and meaningful ways in which we link what we know and do and believe – as insufficient as our own knowledge and practice and faith may be – to the gracious gift of being known, of being loved, of finding peace that passes all human understanding.

Pray for me and I’ll pray for you – to confess and ask forgiveness, to lift up the ordinary, to give thanks – and to join with the apostle Paul who prays “that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment.” May we know as we are known. Thanks be to God.”

>>More on ethics as reflective practice<<

The following is an excerpt from an essay I was asked to write about the future of ethics for professional fundraisers. The full essay will appear next spring in a wonderful book of essays (by some distinguished fundraisers) about the ethical issues faced in the work of philanthropic fundraising.

“When I was asked to reflect on the future of ethics for philanthropic fundraisers, my first thought was of how daunting an assignment this seemed. Surely in our fast-paced, increasingly complex 21<sup>st</sup> century professional lives, fundraisers have only begun to scratch the surface of the ethical challenges and opportunities that will accompany new technology, increasing pressure to raise more and more philanthropic dollars, diverse and new strategies to do our work, and heightened public scrutiny of our efforts.

But then I was reminded of a lesson I learned well from my friend and colleague, Robert Payton – former college president, corporate foundation president, director of the Center on Philanthropy, and professor to all of us who study and care about philanthropic studies. The lesson always began with Bob reaching into his wallet and presenting “the card” for you to see.

Bob’s card had three lists on it:

- The seven deadly sins: pride, lust, gluttony, sloth, envy, covetousness, and anger;

- The cardinal and theological virtues: prudence, justice, fortitude, and temperance; along with faith, hope, and love; and,
- Gandhi's "seven deadly blunders," which include (among others): wealth without work, knowledge without character, and politics without pride.

The lists illustrate a couple of ideas that are crucial to ethical reflection. First, the classic virtues and vices remind us that there is great wonder in human experience. As fundraisers, we are guilty time and time again of having a limited perspective on our moral lives. We tend to focus only on the current ethical dilemma, forgetting that ethics also is about the values and commitments that make our work possible. Too often, we lack the imagination needed to see beyond the techniques of our work, beyond the dollars we raise, beyond the structures of our organizations. We easily lose sight of the wonder of the philanthropic covenant, the process of promise-making and promise-keeping that is at the core of a vital, healthy human relationship. Bob's lists are full of ethical promise and intrigue. We could use some promise and intrigue in our fundraising.

Second, the lists also challenge us to think about the common history we share as human beings. Bob's lists are primarily from Western sources. Your lists may come from different experiences. The point is that the values and commitments reflected in our lists remind us that an essential part of the human experience is our striving to find the common in what we feel, what we value, what we care about, what we seek to make real and genuine in our world. Contemporary Americans spend much more time worrying about differences and individual rights and personal opinion than they do about the common good, the body politic, and public conversation.

Think about how often you or I or our colleagues engage each other in genuine conversation about the common values that ground our work. We have codes of ethics, we have certification processes, we have research and curriculum and education, but do we have genuine conversations with the public we hope to serve and with the other participants in the philanthropic process? Those conversations are important, and too often overlooked, parts of our ethical reflection.

Bob Payton keeps that card of lists in his wallet and shares it with his friends and colleagues and students because he knows that we are not in this alone, and that we do not need to reinvent the wheel when it comes to ethical reflection--but that we do need to know our history and be willing to talk about it!

That, then, is how I understand what is important about the future of ethical reflection for fundraisers. The poet, William Wordsworth, tells us that "What we have loved, others will love, and we will teach them how." I find this story about the "lists" particularly instructive because the fact is, that no matter the specific ethical challenges and opportunities we may face in our professional work, we have what we love – these rich and remarkable resources at our disposal – to help each other learn how to reflect ethically. Our challenge is to recognize and make those resources available for ourselves and our colleagues.

I am not naïve about the complexity of the ethical issues we will face as fundraisers in the future. Surely the essays in this volume offer all of us a healthy dose of reality about the

sorts of ethical challenges and opportunities we will face in the years ahead. But if we focus only on the dilemmas we may face as we pursue our professional work, we may miss the many sources of guidance and inspiration that come from the ages.

This is particularly important because of the tension we all know in our work as fundraisers (and by extension for all professions) between our ideals and the reality of daily experience. The question that professions in the American context have faced time and again in their evolution is the tension between the social compact for professions, the ideal aspirations of professional work, and the economic and expertise side of professions, the reality of life in the trenches. As professionals, our ethical reflection and decision-making must explore and address both the ideal and the real.”

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## PRACTICE THIS

>>Diversity-Competent?<<

Augsburg College has long had an intentional commitment to diversity as a core part of its mission statement. During the past several months, we have engaged in a strategic planning process for diversity which seeks to involve the entire community in considering how that mission commitment to diversity has an impact on our everyday lives. The following 14-point framework for institutional change related to becoming a diversity-competent organization has been a helpful guide for our work. Crafted by Kent State administrator and faculty member, Steven O. Michael, the article (*University Business*, June 2007) is a fine synthesis of lots of research that helps ground a diversity perspective. How does your organization measure against these points?

- 1. Mission Statement** – Diversity-competent institutions reflect their commitment to diversity in their mission statements. Diversity-competent institutions provide legitimacy for diversity initiatives in their mission statements.
- 2. Diversity Definition** – Often institutions invest resources in diversity activities without actually defining what they mean by diversity. Diversity-competent institutions embrace comprehensive diversity definitions that enable institutions to continue to strive for excellence.
- 3. Leadership Commitment** – Successful organizations have effective leaders who are committed to the vision articulated in the mission statement. Diversity-competent institutions have leaders with a deep commitment to diversity, embracing it as a value and vision that permeates institutional culture and compels institutional investment.
- 4. Structure** – A growing number of institutions are centralizing their often fragmented and disjointed diversity-related activities. One result of this is a change in organizational structure to include a senior or chief diversity officer.

**5. Diversity Plan** – A diversity-competent institution has a living diversity plan. In short, diversity-competent institutions do not operate in the dark but under the light of a well-developed plan.

**6. Diversity Model** – A diversity model provides a conceptual illustration of diversity variables that are critical in realizing diversity vision.

**7. Assessment and Progress Report** – An important characteristic of a progressive organization is attention to data. Diversity-competent institutions measure progress over time and utilize data generated to redirect institutional efforts.

**8. Accountability and Reward** – Beyond assessment, diversity-competent institutions establish accountability and provide performance incentives. Diversity-competent institutions include diversity progress in the annual evaluation of chairs, deans, vice presidents, and unit leaders.

**9. Visible Diversity** – An inclusive campus reflects the diversity of society. A diversity-competent institution is a campus bubbling with people from many races, religions, economic, and political backgrounds, as well as genders and cultural lifestyles.

**10. Academic Diversity** – Reflecting the adoption of a comprehensive diversity model, diversity-competent institutions expand diversity activities beyond recruitment and retention. A diversity-competent institution attends to diversity curricula, and it ensures educational experiences aimed at equipping graduates with knowledge and skills to function effectively in an increasingly diverse world.

**11. Healthy Tension** – A diversity-competent institution is not a dormant, conflict-free school but a place where healthy tension exists and where conflicts of ideas provide opportunities to learn and grow. A diversity-competent campus provides opportunities for cultures to "clash," evolve, and flourish, and for people to change and adapt in a nonviolent manner.

**12. Contributions to Society** – Diversity-competent institutions accept their role as catalysts, as agents for societal change and transformation. They engage in consultations to further the course of diversity in organizations and communities.

**13. Pervasive Ethos** – Diversity-competent institutions embrace diversity not to placate agitating interest groups and not as a ploy for political correctness. A diversity ethos permeates the campus at diversity-competent institutions and serves as a force that galvanizes faculty, students, and staff toward inclusive excellence.

**14. Diversity Celebration** – Diversity-competent institutions have well-established programs for celebrating diversity. Beyond celebration, they use this opportunity to broaden knowledge and enjoy the dividends that can accrue from well-managed diversity.

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PAY ATTENTION TO THIS

>>Resources for your reflective practice<<

I've referenced here before my admiration for the work of the Southern Law Poverty Center, and its journal, *Teaching Tolerance* ([www.teachingtolerance.org](http://www.teachingtolerance.org)). The fall 2007 issue offers some rich and instructive material on teaching religious tolerance in public schools – material that I believe is relevant for all of us who wonder how we might support respectful public discourse about faith and society.

The Education 2007 issue of *The Wingspread Journal*, published by the Johnson Foundation ([www.johnsonfdn.org](http://www.johnsonfdn.org)), is dedicated to the topic of civic engagement and higher education. Among its insightful articles, I especially appreciated Judith Ramaley's "Reflections on the Public Purpose of Higher Education" and Ira Harkavy's "Civic Engagement in Higher Education." The issue is available for download on the Johnson Foundation website.

>>Seven Deadly Sins<<

Here is a whimsical poetic take on one of my favorite topics – the seven deadly sins – by Peter Pereira from *What's Written on the Body*. (c) Copper Canyon Press, 2007.

### **Reconsidering the Seven**

Deadly Sins? Please -- let's replace Pride  
with Modesty, especially when it's false.

And thank goodness for Lust, without it  
I wouldn't be here. Would you?

Envy, Greed -- why not? If they lead us  
to better ourselves, to Ambition.

And Gluttony, like a healthy belch, is a guest's  
best response to being served a good meal.

I'll take Sloth over those busybodies  
who can't sit still, watch a sunset

without yammering, or snapping a picture.  
Now that makes me Wrathful.

>>Subscription information<<

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>>Topics for the next issue (December 2007)<<

- Liberal arts in China – a personal journey
- Faith and living
- Giving and values

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