

Your Favorite Page ...

At the end of December I was reading a news article online telling about the new laws that were coming into effect starting January 1st. One new law in New York was labeled as very strange and I hafta agree: as of January, it will be illegal for a person to take a selfie with a lion, tiger, or other big cat. Apparently young men on some dating sites wanted their photos to reflect their manliness. Manliness? More like stark raving stupid. Well, that got me thinking about what other really stupid laws might be on the books. There are some prize-winners for sure!

- In Alabama, it is illegal for a driver to be blindfolded while operating a vehicle. *Does the passenger get to wear a gag to keep from screaming?*
- In Alaska, you may not wake a sleeping bear to take a photo. *Mr. Bear, smile at the camera, not me!*
- In Chico, CA, detonating a nuclear device within city limits results in a \$500 fine. *So, who collects it?*
- Connecticut: a pickle is not officially a pickle unless it bounces. You can also be stopped by police for biking over 65 mph. *And if a speeding biker rides over a bouncing pickle?*
- New Jersey: it is still illegal to slurp soup. In Newark, ice cream cannot be sold after 6:00 p.m. unless the customer has a note from his/her doctor. *Can I get a Slurpee after 6:00 p.m. without a doctor's note?*
- In New York, while riding an elevator, one must fold his hands, not talk, and look at the door. *Ya mean we can't look at the floor numbers any more?*
- Ohio: it is illegal to fish for whales on Sunday. *Here all along I thought it was geysers erupting from Lake Erie!*
- Tulsa OK: It is against the law to open a soda bottle unless you're supervised by a licensed engineer. *Tulsa dentists lobbied against this law. They wanted more business.*
- Tennessee: More than 8 women may not live in the same house because that would constitute a brothel. *Get thee to a nunnery!*
- Indiana: Liquor stores may not sell milk. *But I need some Bailey's Irish Cream and Creme de Menthe!*
- Texas: When two trains meet each other at a railroad crossing, each shall come to a full stop, and neither shall proceed until the other has gone. *"My train's bigger than your train."*
- In Arkansas, it is legal to take road kill home for supper. *That's why possum tracks ice cream outsells moose tracks ice cream.*
- Idaho and Illinois: It is illegal to fish from a giraffe's neck. *Picture the neck as a fishing rod and dental floss as the line.*
- In Pennsylvania, you may not catch a fish with your hands. *But you can use a giraffe ... you knew that was coming, didn't you?!*
- Rhode Island: Any marriage where either of the parties is an idiot or lunatic is null and void. *Would this be before or during the marriage?*
- Nebraska: Drivers on mountains should drive with caution near the right hand edge of the highway. *Good advice. The highest point in Nebraska is 840' above the surrounding countryside.*
- In Louisiana, biting someone with your natural teeth is "simple assault," while biting someone with your false teeth is "aggravated assault." *Just goes to show that Poligrip Super Grip is the best denture cream.*

In conclusion, the thing you have to realize is that these laws are passed because people actually do those things!! It's not the laws that are silly; it's the people!!

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CONGREGATION OF HOLY CROSS, UNITED STATES PROVINCE OF PRIESTS AND BROTHERS
Holy Cross Association Post Office Box 771 Notre Dame, Indiana 46556-0771 Phone: 574.631.6022 association@holycrossusa.org hycost@holycrossusa.org

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Dear hearts and gentle souls,

For some reason, this first page has become the hardest part of the Links to put on paper. The feeling is almost like "What do you say after you say hello?"

For sure, one thing I want to do is to thank all of you who inquire about my Mom's well-being (Dad died in May 2014). After all these years of sending you notes and inquiring about your well-being, it's different to have the experience myself. I was down to Atlanta at the end of January and spent a few days with Mom while my sister Joanne and her husband Greg took a much-deserved trip to Costa Rica. She (Mary) will be 90 in March and is still quite sprightly! Memory and balance issues are cause for some concern, but she claims, "I'm good for 5 more years!"

FIFTY DAYS OF PRAYER

Do you know anyone who could use some extra prayer? Family, friends, neighbors, co-workers? You yourself? Jot the names on the enclosed Prayer Sheet and return it to us.

We in Holy Cross will happily remember them during our Easter Season prayers and Masses. The men at Holy Cross House and Fatima House have been given the specific assignment of praying for you and for your loved ones.

No offering is required for this remembrance, but if one is given, it will be used to aid the mission of Holy Cross to make God known and loved in the USA and throughout the world. That's no small task in a world that teems with violence and mistrust.

The sands of time did run out for two Holy Cross men. On December 14, 2014, Rev. James Blaes, C.S.C., passed from this life to the next. Fr. Jim's priestly ministry moved from high school teaching to parish ministry to hospital chaplaincy. From 1985 'til his death, he resided at Holy Cross House.

Next in the line to join their brothers in heaven was Rev. Eugene Gorski, C.S.C. What I personally remember most about Fr. Gene was his extraordinary singing voice. Wow ... the heavenly choirs are rejoicing at his presence. Fr. Gene spent most of his ministry at Notre Dame as a teacher and a beloved hall prefect.

The reflection inside was the result of several little things coming together at once. Lent (repentance) and Easter (new life) were obvious factors. I've noticed that the days are getting longer and that the sun is slightly more to the north, hence warmer on the skin. Driving through the countryside, I see fields that are plowed and ready for fine-tuning and fields that have been lying fallow since the Fall harvest. There's also consciousness of the swift passage of time; it won't be long 'til our nation's farmers will be working to feed us and feed the world. I pray they have good weather for the sowing.

Speaking of weather, our prayers go with the folks in the Northeast, pummeled by all that snow. You've been having what we had last year in the Midwest. May your spirits be revived by the hope of Spring.

And with that, I invite you to entertain yourselves with Page 4 (which you probably already have done!), and to reflect on and take to heart the suggestions for enhancing the new life of Easter/Spring for yourselves and your little corner of the world. Happy Easter, dear ones!

Fr. Herb

☺ Hugs!

FERTILIZING NEW LIFE

Drive out into the countryside this time of year, and chances are good that you will see farmers preparing their fields for new life. A necessary task is fertilizing the soil with the needed nutrients. The exact blend of nutrients depends on the chemical composition of the soil and the crop to be grown; one size does not fit all.

Generally, every fertilizer has three main components: nitrogen, phosphorus, and potassium. There are also secondary elements and trace elements within each blend. Controlled release over a period of time is desirable. One can get and use the individual elements (for example, blood meal is pure nitrogen), but application must be made very carefully. Too much or too little in the wrong place at the wrong time can stunt or destroy whatever you're trying to grow.

Lent has always been seen as a time of preparation for the new life of Easter. So I got to thinking: what are the components of a good spiritual, mental, and physical fertilizer that will best nurture new life within myself? What can I apply to the soil of my life to nurture my growth and ensure a bountiful harvest when that time comes?

There is a catch, however. A farmer can do everything right, but he is still at the mercy of Mother Nature. We, too, can do everything right, but we are at the mercy of human nature (our own and others) as well as disease or disaster. All we can do in those times is rely on the grace and goodness of God who makes all things new with what are sometimes very crooked lines.

Just as fertilizer has three main elements, so too does our spiritual fertilizer. Those three are: gratitude, self-knowledge, and service. Let's look at them.

I deeply believe that the single most powerful nutrient to new spiritual life is gratitude. Day by day, God pours blessing upon blessing upon blessing on us. They can range from getting up in the morning, to having shelter and food, to having people who love you, assistance when you are sick, and so on. The blessing of a lovely day or an exquisitely starry night can fill your being with a song. A smile and good word from someone cheers you up. Hitting all the green lights in a stretch of road when you're late for an appointment is cause for gratitude. So can finding just the right greeting card, or just the right gift. Ditto for getting a coupon for a free appetizer at Bonefish Grill.

Though you have undoubtedly worked hard for what you have, you could not have done it all without other people's support. Everything we do is a result of what many other people have done to us and for us. Are you grateful for those folks?

What about the choices you've made? Always remember that with a bad choice yesterday, your whole life could be different today. Are you grateful for the Spirit's guidance and the advice and support of those who know and care for you? Are you grateful for the mistakes you've made and what you've learned from them? Are you grateful that you are alive at this moment in time? After all, today could be the day your good choices change your life. God is wonderful in the way we are given second and third and fourth chances!

The second element of our spiritual fertilizer is self-knowledge. All the great mystics, Christian and otherwise, say that this is crucial. Spending a significant amount of time in solitude – I'm talking weeks and months here – has always been a favored way to come to know yourself. But for most folks, that length of solitude is not possible.

So what would be another option? Believe it or not, your mistakes and your faults!

A person who lacks self-knowledge is often a person who is fond of criticizing and judging others. Those habits are an implicit way in which we set ourselves up as the norm, the center of the universe, the perfect man or woman.

A person growing in self-knowledge is usually able to admit their own faults. They realize that every criticism or judgment about another person says more about who they are than about the offending person. Ironically, catching ourselves in criticism of others is one of the best ways to reveal our own flaws. If I, for example, get impatient with someone who is slow or reluctant in making a decision, how true would it be that I am equally as slow? Could someone make that same criticism of me? Seeing my flaws enables me to work on them. Growth and personal improvement are a life-long process.

Another sign of growth in self-knowledge is one's ability to admit they've made mistakes. Although you may fear that people will be angry and frustrated with you, it is always better to admit than to cover it up. Admitting your mistakes will enable people to respect

you more, whether they are your own children or your co-workers. Others will appreciate the fact that you're willing to admit that you're not perfect and that you're working to improve yourself and the situation. Admitting your mistakes shows that you're not stubborn or selfish, and that you're willing to be imperfect.

Along the same line, don't be afraid to make mistakes. Some of the greatest discoveries in human history have come because ordinary men and women tried and failed and tried again. Having the courage to try something new or finding a new way of accomplishing your goals not only breeds confidence in oneself, but also humility. And if nothing else, you won't go through life wondering "What if I had tried this or that or the other thing?"

A person who has a good, humble grasp of who he or she is will not be one who brags. It's okay to have healthy self-esteem and to feel proud of your accomplishments, but nobody likes it when someone constantly tries to bring attention to themselves and their own achievements. If you feel like you really have done something great, chances are people will have already begun to notice that, and they will come to respect you even more for your humility. This doesn't mean you should lie about achieving something – if someone asked if you ran a marathon then it's perfectly acceptable to say 'Yes'. But don't constantly talk about how absolutely amazing you were for running the marathon, or about your perfect marriage or perfect child or perfect vacation. There ain't no such creature!

The third element of a deeply satisfying human life is service. Here the service I have in mind is not about you, but it is always about those you are helping. It implies a deep respect for another human being, regardless of age, gender, sexual orientation, religion, etc.

There are many obvious ways of serving others, such as parish ministries, social organizations, blood drives, volunteering, etc. But sometimes folks are unable to participate in those formal ways of service, for whatever reason. Are there alternatives? Absolutely – I can think of several, and every one of them will facilitate new life not only for yourself but for others.

For example, be considerate in conversations. Don't talk down to anyone, or interrupt them. Don't one-up them – if it was awful for Chris, don't come back and say how REALLY awful it was for you. Everyone, including you and me, has their own goals and dreams, their own

dilemmas and problems, their moments of pride and joy. Let them talk about their achievements or sorrows and rejoice or be sad with them.

Don't take all the credit. Who we are now has a lot to do with other people's influence and guidance. We are all helping each other to accomplish our goals. Share the love. Recognize others who have helped you on your path to success. Acknowledge those who have contributed to a particular project or activity.

Appreciate the talents and qualities of others. Challenge yourself to look at others and appreciate not only the things they do, but also who they are. Everybody is different. Relish the chance you have to experience different people. You will still have your personal tastes, your likes and dislikes, but train yourself to separate your opinions from your fears and you will appreciate others more. Being able to appreciate the talents and qualities of other people can also make you recognize qualities that you want to improve or attain within yourself. Give a compliment a day and before long you'll be looking at the world with different eyes.

Don't be afraid to defer to others' judgment. In many cases other people – even people who disagree with you – may be right. Deferring to your spouse's wishes, to a law you don't agree with, or even, sometimes, to your child's opinion takes your recognition of your limitations to a different level. Deference is also a way of telling the other person that what they think and say is of value to you.

Remain teachable. Nobody is perfect or the best at anything. There will always be people who are better than you at something, and therein lies the opportunity to learn from them. Find people you aspire to be like in certain areas, and ask them to mentor you. This can help you realize that everyone is good at different things and we all need to help each other in order to become better people.

I can go on and on with other ways of service. Go last instead of having to be first in line. Apologize when you've made a mistake, and resolve not to make the same mistake again, especially if it hurts others. Listen more than you talk; you've heard the old adage about there being a reason why God gave us two ears and one mouth. Be gentle towards oldsters, children, creation, animals.

Happy fertilizing, happy harvesting, happy Easter!!!